Expanding the Frame/ing of Gendered Violence: A Multidimensional Analysis of Gendered Workplace Violence

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ABSTRACT: Women's experiences of violence have been the subject of significant feminist advocacy and scholarly research, however the strategically narrow, if compelling, focus on violence against women continues to precipitate a relatively one-dimensional depiction of interpersonal acts of aggression by (individual) men, a framing visible everywhere from posters, to textbook covers, to the news. This article mobilizes cultural critic Susan Sontag's reflections on the politics of depicting the pain of others as a point of entry for a more fulsome theoretical elaboration that uses the insights from the established violence against women scholarship alongside symbolic, structural, and slow violence to expand the parameters of the conversation to include workplace violence. To that end, drawing on original research, we mobilize our theoretical framework to think through elementary school teachers' experiences of student-initiated workplace violence in Canada.

KEYWORDS: Feminism; Gender-based Violence; Gendered Violence; Structural Violence; Symbolic Violence; Slow Violence; Teachers; Workplace Violence

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Introduction

Since the 1970s when feminist consciousness-raising drew attention to violence against women, the issue has become the focus of substantial scholarly research, public engagement, and political attention. Feminists' passionate appeal to end violence against women led to important legal and social changes. However, the strategically narrow, if compelling, focus precipitated relatively one-dimensional scholarly and popular depictions of the violence women experience characterized by gender essentialism and a focus on interpersonal violence; in turn, the widespread support for legal 'solutions' has left little room for considering the broader mechanisms through which women's options are conditioned. Indeed, even contextually rich contributions – for example taking into account intersectionality – are limited by conventional understandings that do not capture the complex ways that austerity measures reverberate through women's lives, or attend to the ways women can be perpetrators of gendered violence. And the dominant framing of violence against women continues to proliferate the same, one-dimensional image of the lone woman victim – visible everywhere from posters in community spaces, to textbook covers, to the news. We contend it is time to move beyond this image by using a broader array of conceptual tools.

This article mobilizes cultural critic Susan Sontag's (2003) reflections on the politics of depicting the pain of others as a point of departure to think through a more fulsome theoretical engagement that integrates symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1992), slow violence (Nixon, 2011), and structural violence (Galtung, 1969). In so doing we build on the work of Donna Baines (2006), who argued to expand the framing of gendered violence beyond interpersonal acts of violence perpetrated by men against women. We examine the challenges faced by one particular population of workers in a predominately female occupation – women elementary school educators – attending to the interconnected social, structural, and discursive contexts that not only create the conditions for, but also shape the experience of, and response to, the student-initiated violence they experience.

Naming and Framing Violence Against Women

Lifting violence against women out of the shadows and transforming what was a (shameful) private trouble into a social problem is unquestionably one of the great successes of the modern (i.e., post 1960) women's rights movement. In the face of push back from state, religious, and civic authorities these women activists and scholars persistently problematized the intertwined issues of

women's inequality and violence. Change occurred not only at the discursive level but, consistent with feminist commitment to social change, at the level of policy as well, with the 1983 reframing of rape as sexual assault in Canada's *Criminal Code*, the introduction of mandatory charging and pro-prosecution policies in cases of intimate partner violence, and the strengthening of provisions against workplace sexual harassment in the *Canada Labour Code* in 1985 (Bruckert and Law, 2018).

While well-intentioned and pragmatic, these responses have been critiqued as limited both by the unreflexive privilege of the feminists who advocated for them and by the nature and reach of law itself. For example, though mandatory charging was introduced to "equalize power between women and their male abusers, provide a credible threat of prosecution, and empower abused women" (Johnson and McConnell, 2014, 118), it disregards the victim's wishes and the reasons she may not wish to pursue legal action, including her need for her abuser's financial support and the risk of retaliation. Legal responses to sexual harassment similarly fail to address structural factors including deeply entrenched sexism in many workplace cultures and the potentially devastating consequences of reporting on career advancement; instead, as with victims of sexual assault in the criminal justice system (see Craig, 2016; Doe, 2012), women are disincentivized from engaging with a lengthy and onerous process that culminates in few if any sanctions (Deschamps, 2015; Phillips et al., 2019).

Of course, violence against women has always been a site of vibrant debate and conflict within feminism, and feminists were never united in their support of legislative 'solutions'. As Joan Sangster (2015) meticulously details, while "the presumption of an 'essentialist' and 'universalist' second wave politics [has become] almost de rigueur" (384) in practice feminisms of the 1960s and 70s engaged deeply with questions of racism, capitalism, and broader social inequity. Throughout the 1980s critical feminist scholars routinely problematized feminist law and order strategies and questioned law's potential as an emancipatory instrument (e.g., Davis, 1983; Smart, 1989; Valverde, 1985). Preceding and simultaneous to Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) coining of the term intersectionality, a robust Canadian literature warned not only of the risk of legitimating the androcentric state as a mechanism to protect women from violence (e.g., Pitch, 1985) but documented the detrimental consequences of punitive state intervention on those it purports to 'save' (e.g., Rifkin, 1982), flagged the excluded voice of working class and racialized women in the mainstream battered women's movement (Findlay, 1988), took on claims of

"women's standpoint" by adroitly unpacking "the ways that white middle-class privilege finds expression in contemporary feminist thought" (Kline, 1989, 37), and drew harsh light on the stereotypical tropes of Black women permeating the feminist movement (Thornhill, 1989).

Intersectionality has been widely embraced by present day feminists and we see echoes of (if not always credit given to) earlier analyses in today's more nuanced understanding of how the intersections of class, race, dis/ability, citizenship, and sexual orientation condition women's vulnerability to and experience of violence as well as their interactions with the justice system. These critical engagements notwithstanding we also continue to see the individualizing framing and reliance on state solutions of mainstream second wave feminism being adapted and perpetuated. A case in point: the #MeToo movement, which largely focused on shaming and calling for the punishment of individual 'bad men' – powerful Hollywood producers and actors who sexually assaulted, harassed, and coerced young women into sexual activity – rather than on the systems and structures that enabled their behaviour (Zarkov and Davis, 2018). #MeToo's successor, Time's Up, has begun to problematize these issues by arguing that a lack of diversity in the workplace, gender and racial wage disparities, the absence of federally mandated maternity leave (in the USA), and tolerance for bullying all contribute to workplace sexual harassment (Time's Up, 2019; Time's Up Now, 2020). However, the central focus remains on sexual misconduct and as such continues to be mired in the mainstream framing of violence against women as a collective experience of personal harm perpetrated by individual men.

Conceptual Underpinnings

Despite feminism's laudably broadened scope of inclusivity and the concerted efforts of labour activists and a handful of Canadian scholars who argue for a gendered analysis of workplace violence beyond sexual harassment (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2011; Baines, 2006; Premji, 2018) it would appear that the conversation remains resolutely about violence against women by men – sexual harassment, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. Visual representations are telling in this regard: the dominant image of the woman who has experienced violence – on textbook covers, in educational campaign imagery, and online – is surprisingly consistent with earlier framings; all too often it draws on the same compelling emotions and individualizing rhetoric. Almost invariably alone, the victimized woman is downtrodden, dejected, looking away or blankly forward, bruises or other visible injuries marring her often otherwise (conventionally)

attractive face; sometimes a hand covers her mouth or she is raising her arm against some shadowy menace lurking just outside the frame. She is – compellingly, utterly, undoubtedly – a victim, her ascribed "master status" (Hughes, 1945, 357) eclipsing all other aspects of her identity, circumstances, and experience. The myopic focus is further reinforced by the accompanying text: she is someone's sister/mother/daughter (even the updated version, she is someone, still isolates the problem); a certain number of women will experience violence in their lifetime; a certain number are murdered every week. Like the woman in the image, the language is passive – not he beats her, but she is battered (Penelope, 1990).

Sociological (e.g., Hall, et al. 1978) and criminological (e.g., Barak, 2007) theorists, and perhaps most famously Michel Foucault (1982), have emphasized the power of discourse to shape our perceptions of social problems. That violence against women has lent itself so well to visual depiction, however, warrants particular attention. In this regard we look to cultural critic and philosopher Susan Sontag. Considering the visual documentation of human suffering as a cultural practice, Sontag (2003) argues photographs of victims "are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus" (6). To read into such lurid depictions (both visual and textual) of other people's pain only what confirms one's opinion – a general abhorrence of violence – is to ignore and abdicate responsibility for engaging with questions of culture, nation, politics, and history (ibid). Sontag brings our attention to what photography cannot capture: the social processes and structural mechanisms of violence that culminate in tangible suffering.

As Sontag succinctly asserts, "to frame is to exclude" (2003, 46). And while the aim was to make violence against women political rather than personal, the feminist framing of violence as inter-gender and interpersonal excludes important systems and structures that not only contextualize, facilitate, and precipitate interpersonal violence but are violence in their own right. Moreover, excluding from the frame much of the gendered violence that permeates women's lives inhibits our ability to undertake a multilayered and intersectional analysis. Echoing Crenshaw's (1989) insistence that women's experiences are invariably conditioned by multiple aspects of their identities including race and class, we contend the much-utilized term gender-based violence – a phrase that suggests gender is the most important factor – is the very antithesis of intersectionality. Instead, we see gendered violence as occurring in various forms and enacted through various mechanisms in women's lives; it may pivot on diverse aspects of

a woman's identity such that gender is neither the only nor even the most relevant, and different forms violence may create the conditions for each other, occurring simultaneously or successively over the life course. Here the concept of interlocking systems (Hill Collins, 1991) can illuminate the interplay, mutual reinforcement, and co-constitution of systems including capitalism, colonialism, and hierarchies of (among others) race, gender, and ability – the multiple dimensions in and through which violence plays out.

Multidimensionality also allows for dynamism, movement – attending to interlinked processes, categories, and systems that are themselves either evidently in flux (e.g., financial and labour markets) or less perceptibly so but still shifting over time (e.g., organized religions). In turn, dynamism allows for the possibility of resistance – an acknowledgement that while marginalization is complex with concrete ramifications it is not absolute or wholly determining. In this respect rather than taking the marginalizing effects of social structures and dominant discourses for granted, a multidimensional perspective on gendered violence expands the frame that isolates the pitiable image of the victimized woman, to consider the materiality and complexity of everyday life as it plays out in interconnecting social, ideological, economic, and political fields including in the workplace.

Workplace Violence as a Gendered Issue

The robust literature on sexual harassment (e.g., Johnson, 2017; McDonald, 2012; Crocker and Kalemba, 1999; Hearn et al., 1989), and the attention paid to intimate partner violence that spills into the labour site notwithstanding (e.g., CLC, 2015), workplace violence has received limited attention from feminist scholars and activists. This is attributable to the narrow framing of violence against women problematized above: if women's victimization is envisioned as victimization by men then gendered violence against women perpetrated by either men or women (or for that matter violence rooted in the actions of state actors) in the context of the capitalist neoliberal labour market falls outside the parameters of the conversation. However, when we do consider workplace risks through a gendered lens a number of things quickly become evident: workers in predominantly female occupational sectors experience dramatically elevated levels of workplace violence (Perreault, 2015); indeed, health care and social service workers comprise an astounding 61% of all incidents of reported workplace violence in British Columbia (WorkSafe BC, 2016).

The impact of gender becomes further evident when we distinguish between workplace risks and workplace violence: with the exception of police and correctional officers, most of the occupations populating any top ten most dangerous careers list – firefighters, logging, steelwork, fisheries, construction – expose their workers (predominantly men) to risk of accidental death (e.g., by fire or falling from a building). Conversely workers in predominantly female occupations – in education, health, law, social and community services, where workers representing only 18% of Canada's workforce suffer 33% of incidents of workplace violence (Perreault, 2015) – face the risk of situational violence, that is, aggressive acts perpetrated during the course of a work-related exchange (Lowman, 2000). Moreover, Lanthier, Bielecky and Smith (2018) concluded that, based on their examination of Canadian General Social Survey victimization data from 2004 to 2014, women not only had "more than twice the risk of workplace violence compared to men" (1012) but that this could be explained by women's disproportionate employment in the health, education, and hospitality sectors. A recent longitudinal analysis of Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board data concluded "that male/female inequalities in workplace violence are increasing in Ontario, driven by an increase in workplace violence among women" (Chen, Smith and Mustard 2019, 8.) This data certainly suggests that workplace violence is a "violence against women" issue. Notably, while there is a growing body of literature on the everyday violence experienced by healthcare workers (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2011; Brophy et al., 2018; Moylan et al., 2014), the pervasive violence in other predominantly female sectors of the labour force has received much less scholarly attention. To expand the conversation, and in keeping with our focus on dynamism, change, and temporal considerations we mobilize symbolic, structural, and slow violence to consider the workplace violence experiences of elementary school teachers, 84% of whom are women (Statistics Canada, 2014).

Methodology

In this paper we draw on the limited empirical Canadian research that attends to gender in relation to educator-directed violence (e.g., Chen et al., 2019; Lanthier et al., 2018; Taylor, 2019; Santor, Bruckert and McBride, 2019; Wilson, Douglas, and Lyon, 2011; Younghusband, 2010) but foreground research led by Chris Bruckert. For that project 70 Ontario elementary school occasional (3/70) and contract/fulltime (67/70) teachers were interviewed about their experiences of workplace violence (from students, administrators, colleagues, and/or parents)

in the last five years. Quotes from these interviews are used throughout this article to illustrate the framework we propose.

The interviews were conducted in May and June 2019. Fifty-five participants took part in individual semi-structured interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes while the remaining 15 joined one of the four two-hour long focus groups. The sample comprised, as one might expect given the gendered makeup of this occupation, 56 women and 14 men. While there was some diversity in our sample (e.g., 17% indicated they had a disability and 13% were part of the LGBTQ community) it was racially homogeneous (91% of the sample was white; of the five racialized participants, two identified as Asian, two as Black, and one as Indigenous). It was also, perhaps due to fear about speaking out, skewed towards more seasoned teachers with most participants being above age 41 (48/70); over half (38/70) had taught for more than 16 years. Most taught in regular English (36) or French immersion (6) classrooms, although 16 worked in special education or contained classes and 11 were either itinerant (4) or rotary (7) teachers. In addition, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of processes and practices, ten key informant interviews were conducted with officials (i.e., released officers) from four ETFO (Elementary Teachers Federation Ontario) Locals. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using N-Vivo software according to a semi-organic codebook with conceptual codes (from the theory and scholarship), information codes (from the interview guide), and grounded codes (emerging from the interviews). Subsequently, a horizontal trans-interview analysis was undertaken (Borkan, 1999; Pires, 1997).

Interpersonal Violence Against Teachers

There is mounting evidence that student-initiated violence against Canadian educators is a pervasive problem. For example, Santor, Bruckert and McBride found that "54% of educators reported experiencing one or more acts of student-initiated physical violence during the 2017-2018 school year" (2019, 3), and a 2017 survey of elementary school teachers in Ontario found 70% had experienced or witnessed acts of violence in the previous school year and 38% "suffered mental stress, physical injury or illness as a result of workplace violence" (Stratcom, 2018, 3; see also OECTA, 2017). According to Karen, a special education teacher,

> "Teachers are going to work every day knowing and expecting that they will be physically assaulted throughout the day. That

> is the reality of many teachers' work situations. And administrators are fine with that – nobody's saying, 'Wow, you know, you were punched five times yesterday and I see you were kicked in the leg, you were spit in the face, and somebody pinched you so that it left a bruise that's going to be there for five weeks.' This is not ok!"

Not only do high rates of violence in this predominantly female occupational sector suggest that workplace violence against elementary school teachers is a gender issue, and not only is physical violence often accompanied by verbal aggression including the screaming of gendered expletives (e.g., bitch, cunt, whore), but women teachers experience higher rates of workplace violence than do their male counterparts. A recent study by Chen et al. (2019) examined workers' compensation claims and concluded that in the education sector "the relative risk of workplace violence for women (compared with men) [was] at least fivefold" for the period 2008 to 2015 (6). Similarly, Santor et al. (2019) concluded women educators experienced higher rates of both acts and attempts (though not threats) of physical violence than did their male counterparts (see also Wilson, Douglas, and Lyon, 2011). Moreover, as is the case for violence conventionally included under the violence against women umbrella – intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment – intersecting identities and interlocking systems condition vulnerability to violence (Crenshaw, 1989). Notably Santor et al. (2019) found "rates of harassment and [physical] violence from students were statistically higher among educators identifying as racialized, disabled, LGBTQ, or women than among educators who did not identify with those groups" (22).

Of course, it is not only rates and vulnerability that need to be considered, but also the gendered nature of the response to workplace violence. Here we can think of the reframing of student violence as, for example, 'blowing off steam,' 'learning frustration,' or 'misplaced aggression' and, relatedly, accepting violence as a 'normal' aspect of an educator's job: "A superintendent once said to me 'that's just part of teaching and we just need to get used to it'" (Jessie, ETFO released officer). This normalization operates in conjunction with the widespread failure to acknowledge the challenge of workdays spent triaging chaotic work environments on the one hand and the negation of the physical and mental harm engendered by student-initiated violence on the other. This is not only hurtful – "I said [to my administrator] like what is this? Punch me repeatedly in the back, pinching me and you're saying it's not violent. And besides being

demoralizing, are we not people? Are teachers not people?" (Jennifer, primary-classroom teacher) – but also reiterates the societal devaluation of women's work. Instead, administrators encourage teachers to be resilient: "Chin up. Tomorrow will be different. Tomorrow will be better. You can do it. It's alright" (Millie, primary-classroom teacher). Furthermore, the normative response implies that educators who are impacted and who do problematize workplace violence are either lacking in resilience or – evoking gendered stereotypes – hyper-sensitive. For example, when Megan, a junior and primary-level rotary teacher, "wrote an email to [her] administrator, union, and the superintendent indicating that this is violence [and] has to stop" her administrators suggested she "take time off work because they didn't think that I had a normal reaction to what was going on at school."

We also see the downloading of responsibility onto educators – for example, by requiring teachers to remedy disruptive behaviour without additional supports or resources (e.g., Educational Assistants [EAs]) (see also Stratcom, 2018; Younghusband, 2010) – exponentially increasing workload. In this context, participants noted that both male and female administrators routinely fault them not only for their inability to cope but more specifically for a lack of skills, competencies, and/or the most gendered of traits, caring. Relatedly, half of the women teachers (27/54) – but only one of the 14 men – who participated in the interview research indicated they were blamed for the violence they experienced. All too often reporting violence is met with a barrage of questions: "I've been asked 'What did I do?' 'What did I do to create the problem?' 'Why didn't I do whatever it was I needed to do.' 'You need to do this next time.'" (Cindy, junior-classroom teacher, French immersion). Other times gendered expectations are unambiguously evoked when teachers are chastised for their failure be nurturing and told to "spend a little more time building attachment with these students" (Leanne, primary-classroom teacher). Not only does this once again conjure up the trope that women are less competent and foreground the importance of gendered caring but it echoes the normative response to other violence women experience (e.g., the rape myth that implicates a woman's attire to fault her rather than the perpetrator), responsibilizing women to protect themselves and blaming them when they are unable to do so. Such responsibilization also creates a powerful disincentive to reporting victimization – most especially for precariously employed short term and occasional teachers; Anne, who worked as an occasional teacher for over five years prior to securing a permanent position, explained she did not report student-initiated violence "because it was about my ability as a

teacher to handle the new normal in teaching […] there is intense pressure to prove that you can handle it so someone will hire you."

Speaking to the importance of attending to intersecting identities, this downloading of responsibility and ascription of fault is experienced by both white and racialized teachers however the latter are experiencing both the violence and the gendered response in a workplace context all too often characterized by comments, actions, and inactions that reveal the implicit bias of their administrators. Bobby, an Asian-Canadian primary school teacher, spoke of feeling unappreciated and unseen; she noted, "there is no evidence that you can really point to, but you can only say because that's how you feel, it's the tone, it's a sigh, it's a look, it's in the body language." These microaggressions – everyday indignities that intentionally or unintentionally express discrimination, disrespect, or hostility towards racialized people, women, or members of other marginalized groups (Sue et al., 2007; Basford et al., 2014) – can be ambiguous and elusive but can also be more overt, if nevertheless nebulous. Merisa (junior-classroom teacher) explained, "I mean it's not somebody like looking at me and calling me a wagon burner right. It would be an administrator saying, 'Oh I don't know why we need to do all of this First Nations stuff.' 'You know those Indigenous people – well I don't mean you'. [and] 'Oh, I didn't know you were Indigenous – you are so well spoken'." Moreover, racialized teachers not only experience elevated risk of harassment from administrators, the rate of reprisals for reporting workplace violence is twice that of their non-racialized colleagues (Santor et al. 2019). In real terms this means there are significant barriers inhibiting racialized teachers' ability to report violence and, in turn, to access even the fragile support (e.g., debriefs) and limited protective mechanisms (e.g., revised student safety plans, walkie talkies) available.

In short, educators are not only vulnerable to intersectional gendered violence at work, but the response is shaped by both gender and racialization. However, as with the simplistic depictions of war and violent crime that Sontag problematizes, the feminist mobilization of imagery of women's suffering at the hands of men excludes the experiences detailed above. Indeed, in a cultural context replete with visual depictions framing violence as barbaric and bloody, subtle and intangible forms of violence such as microaggressions are not just outside the frame; they are invisible.

The Impacts of Structural and Slow Violence on Teachers

While workplace violence and harm are very real, elementary school students whose behaviour is "out of their control and [who are] not able to understand what they're doing" (Sophia, special education teacher) do not intend to harm and are therefore not perpetrators in the conventional sense. In this context a gendered lens – even one that is intersectional – is too narrow. Feminists have, of course, long advocated for expanding the definition of violence, for example by drawing attention to psychological and emotional abuse in intimate relationships (e.g., Johnson and Dawson, 2011; Adams et al., 2008; MacLeod and Cadieux, 1980); they have also theorized the relationships between social structures, inequity, and gendered violence (Ristock et al., 2019; Abraham and Tastsoglou, 2016; Gillis and Diamond, 2002). Arguably there is value in casting our conceptual net even wider by shedding our continued attachment to the normative framing of gendered violence (comprising a male perpetrator, a female victim, and a direct action) to include structural violence – defined by Johan Galtung as "that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance" (1969, 168). Unlike interpersonal violence, structural violence need not have an identifiable perpetrator since "the violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (Galtung, 1969, 171). It is a violence that can be direct, when the "means of realization are not withheld, but directly destroyed," or indirect, when "insight and/or resources are monopolized by a group or class or are used for other purposes" precluding equitable access (ibid, 169). This provides a point of entry to think about violence without intent: the banal acts of bureaucrats and the ostensibly neutral laws and policies that devastate individuals and communities while advancing the interests of more privileged citizens (Cooper and Whyte, 2017).

Recognizing antecedents positions us to broaden the frame beyond the lone, victimized woman by connecting interpersonal violence back to the structural – in Sontag's words, to link "faraway suffering" to the systems and events playing out close to home (2003, 99). Santor et al. (2019) argue "harassment and violence against elementary school educators in Ontario has emerged and intensified over the past 15 years," indeed based on previous research, they argue that "rates of harassment have at least doubled, and rates of physical violence have increased seven-fold" (34; see also Chen et al., 2019). Teachers say much the same thing: "five years ago it was the odd class you had evacuating and kids trashing the room. Now it's like everywhere! Which is frightening" (Kate, primary-classroom

teacher French immersion). This begs the question, why has there been such a dramatic increase in violence against women workers in the education sector? Clearly the answer to that question can be neither simple nor unidimensional.

Here the concept of slow violence – violence that "occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space" (Nixon, 2011, 3) – is useful. Like structural violence, slow violence does not focus on the acts of aggression by an identifiable perpetrator that we conventionally think of as violence. Rather, it attends to the decisions made by, and in the interests of, state or nongovernmental agents that set the stage for harm or violence, sometimes years or decades later (Nixon, 2011). To illustrate the utility of thinking about gendered structural violence through an intersectional lens we can start by reflecting on the far-reaching impact of austerity policies. Indeed, the evidence that austerity policies not only create and perpetuate social inequality but have clear and measurable detrimental impacts is well established in the literature (e.g., Cooper and Whyte, 2017; O'Hara, 2015; Perreault-Laird and Silver, 2019).

In the case of educators, we can trace the violence playing out in schools today to 1995 when Premier Mike Harris came to power, financing lower taxes through deep cuts to the educational system, social assistance, and healthcare. Typical of neoliberal education reform efforts, Harris's attack on the educational system used "'weak' student outcomes to frame the teaching community as ineffective and, along with their unions, only concerned with the interests of teachers at the expense of the needs of children" (Aggarwal et al., 2012, 158). In Ontario, this rhetoric was used to justify dramatically slashed budgets starting with "a reduction of $400 million in the education budget and the introduction of user fees for junior kindergarten" in 1996 (MacLellan, 2009, 60). A year later the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, which aimed to remove "an additional $600 million in 'waste' out of the education system" (Rose, 2002, 106), was introduced. Among other things the *Act* increased teachers' workloads, decreased administrative support, restricted the scope of union bargaining, undercut teachers' labour rights, and prohibited school boards from accessing property tax funds (ibid). Scrambling to balance ever shrinking budgets, school boards increased class sizes and made deep staffing cuts (e.g., EAs, administrative staff) (OFL, 2002).

Over subsequent years programs for at-risk children were dramatically cut to the point that "less than 1% of potential early childhood clients [are] reached" by Ontario's Healthy Babies Healthy Children program (Public Health

Ontario, 2014, 10). There have also been significant shifts in the province's education policy, including mainstreaming (placing complex needs students in regular classrooms), standardized testing, and ministry-mandated "Learning for all" (Ontario, 2013) based on the recognition that "all students learn best when instruction, resources, and the learning environment are well suited to their particular strengths, interests, needs, and stage of readiness" (ibid, 8). Unfortunately, however, funding formulas have not been adjusted to provide the significant investment in infrastructure, materials, professional development, and human resources these programs require. Sid (ETFO released officer) explained how the dearth of resources – including screening and assessment – ripples through the lives of children and 'plays out' in the classroom:

> "Right now schools are allocated one or two assessments a year and if you have more than that, then those children go on a [ranked] waiting list. And parents can't afford the fifteen hundred dollars that it costs to have that psychological assessment done [privately]. So, we have children who aren't being assessed for learning needs or emotional needs. If you've got a student who's struggling because they're cognitively not able to process and you don't have that identified until that child is in Grade 6, how is that child going to demonstrate their frustration? Eventually it ends up in behaviour."

In short, children whose cognitive, developmental, psychological, or physical (e.g., hearing loss) needs would have, in the pre-austerity world, been flagged, diagnosed, and supported now arrive to overcrowded and under-resourced classes; frustrated and struggling, they lash out – indeed they too are victims of systems and structures that deny them access to essential resources. Karen's narrative powerfully illustrates the sometimes devastating consequences of the (slow) violence of austerity and its disproportionate impact on women workers:

> "Since the concussion, it's been really difficult because I can't do the things I used to be able to do and I feel as though I was like a sacrificial victim of the Board. I mean they could have given me the manpower! They knew I was getting punched in the head over and over again. Where did they think this was going to end? They didn't care – that's the bottom line. The bottom

> line was they did not care. My principal knew that her staff were getting hit in the head over and over again; she was passing those reports and the statistics on to the Superintendent. We were saying 'this is not safe, we can't keep the other kids safe, we can't keep ourselves safe' – nobody cared. We would be told 'we don't have the funding'. And now I've got I've got a permanent disability from it. How is that right?" (Karen, special education teacher)

The intermeshing of the Harris austerity cuts with other neoliberal policies further demonstrates how slow violence is not only attritional but also exponential – as Khalida (primary-classroom teacher) put it, "It gets worse and worse all the time and it's a real—it is a whole society problem." Here we can think of growing economic inequity and employment precarity (Lambert and McInturff, 2016) that have precipitated increased hours at work, greater levels of stress and fewer economic resources, which erode parents' ability to socialize and teach their children. In turn, elementary school children's needs – emanating from rising mental health difficulties (Boak et al., 2018), the impacts of electronic devices, and families coping with challenges such as recent migration, the opioid crisis, and the intergenerational effects of colonization – are increasing in a context in which principals have been transformed from principal teachers to managers and administrators (People for Education, 2018).

In the face of the rather obvious need for increased social, health, and educational supports, funding formulas are not being recalibrated and austerity driven cuts to health and education continue. To that we can add growing populism and the accompanying devaluation of intellectual authority, the entrenched narrative of teachers as underworked and overpaid, the increased individualism of neoliberalism, and the real possibility there is a snowball effect exacerbating the normalization of violence against educators. Mary, a junior-classroom teacher working in a middle-class school, noted:

> "I mean from a standpoint of accepting violence as the norm, it always troubled me that if I had a student come and report violence at home I have to call CAS [Children's Aid Society]. But yet, students are showing up at school and seeing violence, and it's predominantly violence against women, and we are saying, 'Oh you know it's okay to hit and punch and kick a

> woman' and we're going to actually put you in an environment where that's normalized. Like that is messed up, really messed up."

Here Mary intimates that the slow violence of educational cuts reaches even beyond the classroom, to reverberate through the lives of teachers and students (see also Santor et al., 2019). Sid (ETFO released officer) similarly worries about how the violence will echo into the future: "I fear for the generation of children that are watching this violence, that are taking it in, that are normalizing it. […] I don't know what our society will look like. How callous will our society be? Will they look away when someone is being beaten? Will they think it's all right for someone to domestically abuse someone in their family because violence must be OK because they see it every day?"

Symbolic Power and Symbolic Violence

We can further nuance our understanding of gendered workplace violence in elementary schools by deploying Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power and symbolic violence. Symbolic power – "the power to define" (Hallett, 2007, 149), to create categories, ascribe value, and make distinctions – highlights the significance of who holds representational authority and legitimacy. In this respect symbolic power underlies the rhetoric used by Harris (and more recently Doug Ford) that vilifies teachers – most of whom are women – as over-paid and unprofessional individuals whose self-interested labour actions harm innocent students by suggesting they are protesting "spending a little more time with their students" (Harris, 1997, np). Echoing gendered scripts of feminized labour, teachers' relationships to students are framed not as professional but as pseudo-maternal – expectations of unconditional love and availability override the notion of the finite workday. At the meso level we see symbolic power in administrators' distinction between good and bad teachers that legitimates the responsibilization and fault-finding examined above – embodying the compliant woman who does not make a fuss, the former accepts the 'new normal,' manages the violence, remains steadfastly compassionate and pleasant, and neither complains nor demands resources or support.

Symbolic violence refers to the way artifacts of symbolic power - the hierarchical distinctions regarding what is good/appropriate/right/valued, and conversely what is bad/inappropriate/wrong/worthless - are naturalized and accepted (at least somewhat) both by those who are validated and by those who

are negated, delegitimized, and denigrated in and through these framings. Therefore when Bourdieu asserted that symbolic violence "is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (1992, 167), he was not suggesting that social actors are actively engaged in their own subjugation or incapable of counter narratives; rather he was drawing attention to the ways distinctions are so ubiquitous that they become taken-for-granted truths (common sense) that "get incorporated into the bodies, thoughts, and dispositions of the dominated" (Kennelly, 2017, 157). In other words, symbolic violence is how domination works: "with symbolic violence the mechanisms that sustain and perpetuate inequality are naturalized to such an extent that the structurally vulnerable blame themselves for their social-structural subordination" (Boyd et al., 2018, 37; emphasis in original).

In the context of education, we see symbolic violence play out when teachers recognize that "it's not my skills that are lacking. It's just a situation that's like out of our ability to control" (Claire, junior-classroom teacher, French immersion), and are confident that they work diligently to meet the needs of all their students, yet blame nevertheless circulates through their narratives as they interrogate themselves: "what is it that I'm doing that's wrong that's creating these issues in my classroom? Is it me? What can I change? What can I do differently?" (Jane, primary-classroom teacher). Moreover, at the same time as teachers take issue with administrators' demands of compassion they themselves evoke gendered narratives of caring to both frame their job and articulate their distress at workplace violence – "I treat my students like they're my kids and I always have, and I think about them all the time, and I worry about them at night" (Mary, junior-classroom teacher) – implicitly legitimating the very narratives that are used to responsibilize and, by extension, oppress them.

While women educators challenge administrators' responsibilization and fault-finding and are outraged by their advice to be "curious not furious" (Jamie, special education teacher), the entrenched responsibilization, operating in conjunction with normative tropes of gendered caring, means women educators are more likely than their male counterparts to perceive violent incidents as resulting from their own professional incompetence (Younghusband, 2010). This 'hidden' injury manifests in devastating guilt, the erosion of confidence, and feelings of inadequacy: "So many teachers tell me that they feel guilty. You feel guilty that they haven't done right by the other students, they feel guilty that they have to evacuate the classroom and the other students aren't learning, they feel

guilty that they weren't successful in their efforts to modify the child's behaviour" (Kim, special education teacher).

Importantly, notwithstanding teachers' engagement with narratives of blame and the ways their acceptance of gendered caring is implicated in their willingness to 'take on' ever-expanding professional responsibilities, teachers do resist. The nature of that resistance is illuminating. While conventional mechanisms (e.g., work refusals, organized labour support, taking leaves) are certainly in evidence the most consistent focus is breaking the silence – and the explicit denial by school boards, politicians, and administrators – that allows educator-directed violence to remain the "best kept secret in education" (Jessie, ETFO released officer). Such strategies include the meticulous documentation of incidents, notifying parents, naming the violence, rejecting euphemistic phrases (classroom evacuations are not 'library walks'), and speaking out in the media and through this research. Illustrating how power – enacted through slow and structural violence and the myriad diffuse and acute harms they precipitate – also produces resistance (Foucault, 1982), Joan (junior-classroom teacher) describes a growing desire amongst educators to resist: "[The violence] is all swept under the rug. The problem is that the rugs have now been swept under for too long and it is about to spill out [and] you see teachers beginning to speak out."

Conclusion

In this article, we have applied Susan Sontag's (2003) critique of strategies of representation that reflect a general abhorrence of violence that forecloses seeing socio-structural context. In so doing, we have suggested that many of the harms to which women are subjected are not typically seen (whether visually or discursively) as violence because they are complex, intertwined, messy, and insidious and often more banal than spectacular. As Sontag asserts, "the pity and disgust that pictures […] inspire should not distract you from asking what pictures, whose cruelties […] are not being shown" (13-14, emphasis in original). Thus, when we look beyond the conventional frame/ing of violence against women, we are able to appreciate that structural, slow, symbolic, and interpersonal violence are neither discrete nor additive but rather exponential. It is precisely the mutually reinforcing nature of – and the interplay between – different types of violence that create the spaces for new manifestations of gendered violence at the same time as they inhibit our ability to recognize both the violence and its grounding in gender, class, and race stratifications. In turn, casting our attention towards the broader and overlapping contexts in and

through which violence manifests – including sites not traditionally recognized, such as provincial policy and workplace expectations – requires us to "set aside the sympathy we extend to others […] for a reflection on how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering, and may—in ways we might prefer not to imagine—be linked to their suffering" (ibid, 102-103).

The multidimensional and dynamic approach to gendered violence we have proposed allows for an analysis that frames women as neither victims exclusively of gender, nor exclusively victims. In so doing it provides a framework for understanding gendered violence at the micro, meso, and macro levels, as well as how factors at various levels shape and interlock with one another. As demonstrated in our exploration of teachers' experiences, gendered violence can manifest at the micro, or interpersonal, level in the behaviour of administrators, colleagues, and students. These instances of interpersonal violence are couched in and informed by meso and macro factors. For example, workplace gendered violence is facilitated through tolerant workplace cultures and organizational practices – for teachers, the normalization of student violence. It is also informed by macro factors: interlocking socio-economic systems and approaches such as neoliberalism and austerity, both of which can be considered slow and structural violence insofar as their effects accumulate over time, and they limit the potential of teachers (as well as students, who may be harmed by, punished for, or come to normalize the violence).

We further contend that our framework can be applied to examine a variety of women's experiences. To this end our focus on teachers illuminates gendered implications of structural and slow violence that might otherwise go unnoticed: whereas analyses of conventional forms of violence against women demonstrate that, for example, structures like the criminal justice system can harm those who fall outside of normatively acceptable identities and behaviours (e.g., racialized women whose sexual conduct and credibility is viciously attacked by defense attorneys [Craig, 2016]), the negation and effects enumerated in this paper evince that structural and slow violence are deleterious even for women inhabiting (various configurations of) privileged social positions. Our incorporation of symbolic power and symbolic violence further allows us to highlight how women's experiences are informed by distinctions (e.g., the good teacher/bad teacher dichotomy as much as the differentiation and devaluation of women's work) and the ways they permeate our thoughts culminating in shame and self-blame. Thus, our multidimensional framework – analyzing the materiality and complexity of everyday life as shaped by dynamic axes that

interconnect at different levels, extents, and speeds – allows the range of intersecting and interlocking factors to be considered as simultaneously shaping women's experiences of gendered violence.

Finally, a multidimensional analysis illuminates power relations by attending to the ways women are subject to but not exclusively or homogenously subjected by these interconnecting factors. Following Sontag's call to reflexivity, it moves us from pitying and voyeurism to possibilities for action. To this end it allows for nuanced acknowledgment, identification, and celebration of agency, contestation, and resistance – Foucault's (1982) chemical catalyst in reverse: knowing what we are up against can equip us to better resist at the same time as it leaves room to acknowledge that oppressive systems restrict (material, discursive, and legal) resources and therefore condition the resistance strategies that can be deployed. Certainly, a more realistic, active, and actionable image than the lone, decontextualized, and pitiable victimized woman.

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