

**Complicit institutions: representation, consumption and the
production of school violence**

Doctor of Philosophy

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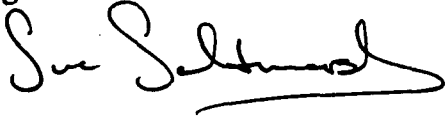
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This study integrates sociological theories of social class with poststructuralist theories of subjectivity, representation and consumption, to consider the complex ways in which the representational practices of institutions and individuals are implicated in the production of violence in schools. This work draws particularly on a case study of incidents of sexual violence which occurred at an elite private school in Sydney during 2000, in which four students were charged with a range of offences committed against younger peers over a period of months. The assault incidents received widespread media coverage and sparked intense public debate, in response to which a media strategies consultant was engaged by the school to liaise with members of the press. This study demonstrates the extent to which the interrelationships between systems of signification (in particular, written and visual texts) and other social systems, (for example, families, schools, and political economy) function in the constitution of subjectivities and the production of meaning, and takes as its focus the interrelationship and functioning of texts, discursive practices and social practices which pertain specifically to the assault incidents described above. Data are derived from a range of sources and genres, including promotional materials, personal and general correspondence, media reports, and interviews, necessitating a variety of qualitative analytic methods. Informed by critical post-structuralist theory, in particular the work of Bourdieu, Foucault, and de Certeau, this work considers questions pertaining to the operation of power within social institutions, with particular emphasis on the constitutive function of discourse. The analysis extends current conceptualisations of school violence through a post-structuralist interrogation of, and linking of violence to, educational consumption, which has predominantly been theorised according to sociological or economic models. The argument is made that the market ideologies which pervade contemporary social and educative practice, together with the representational practices and disciplinary regimes of schools, function in the constitution of social subjects who occupy multiple ambiguous subject positions in the patriarchal hierarchies which characterise the power relations and institutions under consideration, thus implicating institutions in the production of violence.

Submission Statement

This work is solely the work of the stated author, Sue Saltmarsh. The work of all other authors has been duly cited throughout. This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Saltmarsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Sue Saltmarsh

Date: 16 July 2004