Student Evaluations of Teaching and Student Cyberaggression: The Impact of Keyboard Warriors in Tertiary Education

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Abstract It is well established that student evaluations of teaching in universities have long been contested. Many see value in them for ongoing improvement and to hold faculty to account for their pedagogical practice. However, the anonymity of these online surveys that permit students enrolled in units to provide feedback on teaching and learning can produce 'keyboard warriors'. Anonymous surveys can serve to provide a platform for students to engage in cyber-aggressive behaviours that are damaging for staff health and wellbeing and are of a concern to workplace safety. We draw on published results from an existing study of student evaluations of teaching to signal that in the worst instances student evaluations of teaching evoke student cyberaggression. A relationship is identified between neoliberalist ideology that supports a market logic where academic teaching is commodified, and students are positioned as mere consumers. Principles of academic contrapower harassment which align with cyberaggression are also identified. An argument is presented for the removal of anonymous online surveys due to the harm associated with cyberaggression in the workplace. Finally, suggestions are proposed to combat cyberaggression in the university which allow for both critical reflection on teaching courses and safe, supportive environments for students and lecturers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Student evaluations of teaching (SET) in higher education institutions have been of significant interest for decades (Denson et al., 2010; Dunkin, 1990; El Hassan, 2009; Jones, 1988) with their initial origins in the 1920s (Remmers & Brandenburg, 1927, as cited in Berk & Theall, 2006). They are now an orthodox element in the North American, United Kingdom and Australian university landscape (Darwin, 2012). The purpose of SET are to procure student feedback about teaching in order to engender development and to lay out a pathway to support improvement in the instructional design, the materials used and enhancements in teaching (Denson et al., 2010).

Student evaluations of teaching comprise student perception data where ratings instruments are deployed to collect a compilation of views from a cohort of students about their experiences in a unit or course taught by a higher education lecturer. In this article we raise questions about contrapower harassment in higher education, how SET are used to leverage continuous improvement in universities and the impact of marketisation and consumerism on the well-being of academics. Contrapower, which involves harassment of those who are in formal positions of power and authority by those that are not, has been an emerging field of interest in the academy (Christensen et al., 2020; King, 2019; Lampman et al., 2016; Mohipp & Senn, 2008).

Although there is extensive existing literature on SET with the topic being the most researched topic in higher education (Linse, 2017), no other authors have drawn a connection between this quality assurance process, the experiences of lecturers in higher education, and the notion of cyberaggression. Because the SET survey data is gathered anonymously, there is licence for students to use the opportunity to write comments that are hurtful and harmful. This article draws on international research and data about academics' perceptions of SET to conceptualise how cyberaggression is legitimated in higher education institutions.

In the following sections, we proceed with an outline of literature on neoliberalism in higher education which sets the scene for the role of SET in the university sector. We outline literature pertaining to the use of SET in the Australian higher education context and offer an argument that anonymous student feedback where gathered through surveys can be seen as a mechanism that supports contrapower harassment and can be a form of sanctioned

cyberaggression. We outline published results from an existing survey from the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) research in 2018 of over 3000 respondents that investigates how Australian academics experience student evaluations of teaching and undertake a further examination of this data to explore whether there was evidence of cyberaggression. While these Australian findings suggest that SET can open a door to student cyberaggression in universities, the results can be applied internationally. The article concludes with a recommendation that student evaluations of teaching should be repositioned by universities to support authentic and respectful feedback on teaching practice.

2. THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

The Orwellian discourse of neoliberalism has proliferated across global education contexts over the last 40 years (Connell, 2013). Writers have suggested that there is 'neoliberal fatigue' and the term has dulled within critical academic discourse with overuse in scholarly "cycles of novelty and boredom" (Elliott & Harkins, 2013, p. 2). However, the term is useful with its tenets of markets, commodification, and performativity (Ball, 2012) as a means to create space for discussion, push back and on-going critique.

In any neoliberal system, academics are equipped to teach and research in the natural and physical world, however they can be limited in their ability to pursue social, cultural and philosophical fields (Rhoads, 2011). One stance cannot meet the needs of all professions although "such notions as 'high leverage practices' that are guaranteed to be effective at all times, in all places, and with all people…are highly prized in colleges of education" (Smagorinsky, 2018, p. 4). Teaching and research are valued if it is observable and there is a demand for "high productivity in compressed time frames" (Mountz et al., 2015, p. 2). Relations between people and education institutions are reconstituted in neoliberal terms as economic transactions where higher education institutions are businesses and student 'end users' are recast as consumers. Connell (2013) critiques the reduced focus on collective interests and the production of knowledge that can assists societies to understand themselves.

Rather there is an emphasis on individualism and private advantage at the expense of others. She writes that universities "who are supposed to be beacons of truth and critical thinking -become purveyors of spin, image-making, manipulative marketing, organized boasting and sometimes more toxic forms of deceit" (p. 106). Further, McCarthy et al. (2017) outline that due to the impact of

neoliberalism lecturers have "had their skills appropriated from them, through an all-embracing system of quantification" (p. 1017). Mindful of the metanarrative of global neoliberalism that structures relations and decision making in higher education, we now outline how neoliberalism influences teaching in higher education in Australia.

The political strategy of government directs the governance of higher education. Marketisation, globalisation and entrepreneurialism are "watchwords for all Australian universities, each provoking the need to demonstrate competitive standing in learning, in research and in industry and community engagement" (Garrett-Jones & Turpin, 2012, p. 271). Universities are directly involved in sustaining socio-political development in addition to welfare state provision because governments hold the university purse strings (Schuetze et al., 2012). This is a volatile situation where universities can be subject to budget cuts that align with the political focus of those elected to parliament. In 2014, for example, the Australian government decided to introduce a 20 percent cut in the university funding of teaching; a cancellation of the cap on student fees; and the requirement that student loans are repaid at an earlier date (Jericho, 2014). Again, in 2018, a further 15 percent of Australian university base funding was frozen (Conifer, 2018).

In 2020 the Australian Government announced plans to more tightly align education in universities with industry under the Job-ready Graduates Package which focuses the public investment on national priorities for employment (Australian Government, 2020). This initiative where little if any additional funding is provided to the sector reflects a move in universities to incorporate sophisticated measurement-oriented mechanisms to ensure accountability for productivity (Ingvarson et al., 2014). Furthermore, as government funding is reduced, universities have become more dependent on student fees, and this has enabled the lecturer to become accountable to the student-as-customer (McCarthy et al., 2017).

3. THE RISE OF STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING

As market liberalism took hold in Australia and globally, alongside the decrease in government spending for universities, came the need for a market mechanism

to ensure the efficiency of the university. Because they paid fees to access university, higher education students were recognised as market consumers with buying power authority within their institutions. Thus, SET became a mechanism linked to an assumption that students can act as rational consumers if they were able to inform teaching quality in the 'marketplace', and that this would in turn improve the efficiency and the quality of teaching (Harris & James, 2010). A central measure of this emerging 'marketplace' over time has been primarily formed around quantitative student feedback-based evaluation. This was to institutionalise a new and competing motive for generating student feedback, whose role was about to change significantly in institutions and across the higher education sector more generally, as it was rapidly assimilated as a standard measure of teaching quality in internal and external quality assurance processes (Barrie & Ginns, 2007; Davies et al., 2010)

Student evaluations of teaching are not regarded as problematic by all (Hammonds et al., 2017; Spooren & Christiaens, 2017). There are a range of conflicting perspectives to be found in the literature. McDonnell and Dodd (2017) determined that feedback from SET can enable lecturers to optimise the learning environment through making concrete changes in response to the feedback. Moreover, El Hassan (2009) found that most of the faculty participating in his study did not object to SET and moreover they valued making improvements in response to the students' comments. It has been argued that SET serve a necessary function to preserve the financial investment in education by students and governments (Hammonds et al., 2017). However, there are contradictions in the use of SET, their effectiveness and what motives universities to use them (Darwin, 2016).

One contradiction to the argument that SET supports teaching, and by implication learning, is noted by Anderson (2006) who signals that SET can alienate academics from their teaching and lecturers regard SET as something that they must comply with rather than use to addresses student knowledge acquisition. The use of SET constructs the academic as 'the problem' who must be made to conform with the university accountability regime (Fitzgerald et al., 2012). The positioning of lecturers as subservient to student evaluation feedback is further problematised by McDonnell and Dodd (2017) who question whether students should have the power to change the teaching of a course. The consequence of both neoliberal underpinnings in higher education and the

insistence on universities to implement the SET processes can undermine lecturers' sense of efficacy as specialists in their given field (Simpson & Siguaw, 2000).

There is a significant corpus of research into SET that indicate that they can reflect bias in the student community. Bias is an inclination or the notion of favouring one over another or giving differential treatment based on expectations (Cochran, 2016). The gender (Mitchell & Martin, 2018), race (Chávez & Mitchell, 2020), and age of the lecturer (Zabaleta, 2007), can significant impact on evaluations. Research by Boring et al. (2016) has shown a bias against female lecturers that is large and statistically significant. Further, the research indicates a positive relationship between marks given and ratings. Wagner et al. (2016) found a negative effect of being a female lecturer (up to 11% less likely to attain the teaching evaluation cut-off for promotion compared with men). Age served as detrimental for both genders, although SET scores are lower for older females than older males (Wilson et al., 2014). Chávez and Mitchell (2020) not only concluded that gender bias is inherent in SET, but people of colour receive lower SET scores than white males. In addition, there is a well-established body of research of prejudice towards non-native speakers from SET data, where lecturers with foreign accents are perceived to be less credible and skilled, less intelligent and competent (Fuertes et al., 2012). While it has been clearly established that SET scores can be biased toward gender, race and age, there is a further concern that they are part of the weaponry that students exercise that shifts earlier face-to-face harassment which in turn is reflected in SET (Burke et al., 2020; Duggan, 2017).

4. STUDENT EVALUATIONS AND CONTRAPOWER HARASSMENT

Academic contrapower harassment is widespread in higher education (DeSouza, 2011). Benson (1984) coined the term contrapower harassment to describe the shifted power dynamic where an individual with lesser power attempts to exert control or influence over a person with greater authority or status, that is, a student over a lecturer. Academic contrapower harassment can encompass a range of student behaviours that are uncivil, rude, or disrespectful; challenge a lecturer's authority; use bullying, threats, or intimidation; are hostile or aggressive; or involve racial/ethnic or sexual harassment (Lampman et al., 2016).

Academic contrapower harassment is considered to be exacerbated by the free-market principles of higher education where fee indebtedness may explain the rise in this phenomenon across recent years (Cassidy et al., 2014; Waldon Pearson & Athota, 2018). This is where students who are paying for their studies expect good customer service from those 'delivering' their education. While incivility has been identified as the most common type of academic contrapower harassment, links have been made between initial incivility and later bullying behaviour (Twale & De Luca, 2008). Additionally, Bjorklund and Rehling (2011) explore the relationship between cyberbullying as an academic contrapower harassment and Cassidy et al. (2014) explain the anonymity of online communication, the feeling of disconnect with online teaching, the removal of negative percussion with anonymous postings, encourages and perpetuates aggressive behaviours. Further, these same reasons have been linked to explain student aggressive behaviours within the SET process (Lindahl & Unger, 2010).

In one of the few research studies analysing the relationship between academic contrapower and SET specifically, Burke et al. (2020), identified inappropriate and unwanted student behaviours towards lecturers that they described as "uncivil" (p. 27) and "harassing" (p. 2) (e.g., 'made a comment about your appearance or body'). We believe that these definitions serve to reduce the severity of the perpetration and consequences of the inappropriate behaviours. We define this hostile aggression in SET as cyberaggression and can be explained through the practice of academic contrapower. We argue that if these behaviours are described in any other language it diminishes their intent to harm.

5. CYBERAGGRESSION IN THE ACADEMY

We now turn to forge a link between the notion of cyberaggression and the anonymous surveys used in SET. Cyberaggression is usually a term associated with interpersonal violence between adolescents (Wright, 2020). Less has been written about cyberaggression between adults (Han & Vasquez, 2019). A definition from Grigg (2010, p. 144) is used here that cyberaggression is the "intentional harm delivered by the use of electronic means to a person or a group of people irrespective of their age, who perceive(s) such acts as offensive, derogatory, harmful or unwanted." We differentiate the concept of cyberaggression from cyberbullying. Cyberaggression refers to behaviours such

as threats, insults and spreading rumours however it does not necessarily include acts of repeated aggression that defines cyberbullying (Grigg, 2012).

As described above, the same mechanisms that enable bullying and harassment in the university from students explain student aggressive behaviours within the SET process (Lindahl & Unger, 2010). For example, in higher education institutions, SET lend themselves to acts of aggression as the data are gathered anonymously and anonymity is considered a key component of cyberaggression (Wright, 2013). Furthermore, "the anonymity offered by the digital environment sometimes influences one's desire to engage in cyberaggression" (Wright, 2013, p. 858). Anonymity creates impulsivity and disinhibition as a result of the distance that is provided in the digital space and there is a perceived protection against the consequences of a person's action (Mason, 2008). The student does not witness the hurt caused and there is of course no right of reply for the lecturer. Confidence in anonymity and not believing in the permanency of the online content can support cyberaggressive behaviour (Wright, 2013). Reduced social accountability can make it easier to engage in cyberaggression (Lindahl & Unger, 2010). Therefore, the reduced likelihood of punishment by authority and retaliation by their target can encourages people to behave in cyberaggressive ways (Wright, 2013). While there is a record of the survey in SET for the administration, the students do not see their data again and there are no consequences they write text that is deliberately intended to cause harm. Further, Wright and Li (2013) found that many young adults believe in the acceptability and appropriateness of cyberaggression in online contexts.

While there is a dearth of research on cyberaggression in the adult population, young people who experience it as recipients can exhibit psychosocial adjustment problems such as depression and loneliness, and poor coping strategies (Wright & Li, 2013). Additionally, the relationship between perpetrator and the target of cyberaggressive behaviour has the potential to be circular where perpetrators become victims who then become perpetrators of aggression (Wright & Li, 2013). Given the prevalence of cyberaggression in young people (there can be up to 56% of Facebook users who experience Facebook victimisation) (Walker et al., 2011), its frequency can result in cyber-displaced aggression. Cyber-displaced aggression is motivated by the individuals' inability to retaliate against someone who has harmed them. The resultant anger and

frustration can be vented in the online space at innocent targets (Wright & Li, 2013).

In one of the few research studies addressing cyberaggression in education, Kopecký and Szotkowski (2017), reported the impact of cyberaggression on schoolteachers and found that the impact of online attacks included emotional (anger, sadness, anxiety), physiological and behavioural harm (muscle tension, headaches, reduced work concentration). In the higher education sector, cyberaggression is more often discussed in different terms in the SET literature with words used such as "negative" and "cruel" (Lindahl & Unger, 2010, p. 1) and "hurtful" (LeFebvre et al., 2020, p. 1). All of these terms serve to moderate the significance of the impact of harm that we understand from the aggression literature. It also diminishes, by definition, a student's intention to cause harm, which is important to realise when we consider positive alternatives to SET.

By bringing together the theoretical construct of cyberaggression and contrapower harassment, we provide a conceptual framework that shows the relationship among these ideas and how they relate to the present study. We theorise that within a university context, contrapower harassment explains the cyberaggressive behaviour of students.

6. METHODOLOGY

Primary source: Initial 2018 survey findings

In 2018, the NTEU conducted an Australian-wide online survey of NTEU members about their experience of SET within subjects or units. The survey consisted of a total of 31 questions which covered a range of topics including issues related to the structure and conduct of SET, as well as how the results are used. The survey also asked a series of questions about the extent to which survey responses contained disrespectful or abusive comments, and how staff and institutions responded when this occurred. NTEU members who taught at least one higher education unit were invited to participate in the survey between 17 April 2018 and 4 May 2018. Of the 3,065 responses around 2,500 were sufficiently completed to be considered relevant for analysis.

The key findings of the survey were:
- *Poor response rates:* Almost six-in-ten reported a response rate of 30% or less on student evaluation surveys
- *High rate of use in appraising staff performance, contrasting with low staff confidence in them as a tool for this evaluative purpose:* Almost nine out of ten reported that the surveys are used to appraise and manage staff performance. But well under one-in-five respondents reported that evaluations gave an accurate measure of their performance.
- *Informing improved teaching and delivery:* Six-in-ten survey respondents felt that student evaluations could be used to inform and improve teaching or the delivery of subjects of units, while only four-in-ten agreed that they were used for this purpose. (2018)

The survey findings also found that:
- *Disrespectful and abusive comments:* Six-out-of-ten respondents said that some students had used the evaluations to make disrespectful and abusive comments. Based on open ended responses, by far the most common category of these comments related to an individual's competency to teach a subject. Other common themes were comments about were gender, cultural background and spoken English, age (too old and too young), personality/attitude, favouritism and political views.
- *Response to disrespectful and abusive comments:* seven-in-ten respondents who reported comments recorded feeling more distressed, angered, fearful, self-conscious or embarrassed after reading the comments. Although lower, still significant numbers also experienced real *physical symptoms including loss of sleep or appetite or loss of motivation.*
- *Making a complaint:* Just over one-in-four respondents who were the subject of disrespectful or abusive comments made an official complaint.
- *University responses:* The survey results indicate that universities only undertook an investigation in just over one-in-ten cases after a formal complaint was raised. Very little effort seems to have been made to identify or discipline students. A common response to a formal complaint was to offer the staff member support or counselling or agreeing to modify the evaluations process by the removal or redaction of offensive or abusive comments. (NTEU, 2018)
- *Disrespectful/abusive comments:* The data showed that:

- o overall about six-out-of-ten (61.9%) of respondents indicated that they had received disrespectful or abusive comments in open ended responses;
- o 30.2% received such comments in relation to appearance;
- o 14.4% received such comments in relation to spoken English;
- o 27.3% received such comments in relation to religion, culture, sexuality or disability

Additionally, the report summarised how respondents reacted to these comments, for example, feelings of anger, distress, and difficulty sleeping. The NTEU summarised the findings of the SET, concluding that:

> there is little wonder that just over one-in-ten respondents were satisfied with the student evaluation of teaching survey at their institution. Not only are the value of these evaluations all but meaningless in terms of appraising or managing staff performance, they also potentially raise workplace health and safety issues, as well as potentially cases of unlawful discrimination… (p. 37)

As a consequence, they recommended the abandonment of SET teaching as they are currently being used in universities. This summary position by the NTEU is presented as an argument for change and is supported by other findings from research on student behaviour, in particular aggressive behaviour in universities.

7. SECONDARY ANALYSIS

In this article we report a secondary study based on further data content analysis of the initial 2018 NTEU survey report findings. Permission was sought and obtained to use the NTEU findings in the current study. Secondary analysis involves the re-use of data derived from pre-existing research studies (Heaton, 2008). In this research we interrogate the initial to investigate an additional research question: *In what ways do the SET results reported in the NTEU study of 2018 meet the criteria for cyberaggression?*

Taking the report, we conducted the content analysis (Curini & Franzese, 2020), by highlighting all references to words and phrases that met the criteria of cyberaggression. Examples included the use of aggressive language ('hopeless, a joke') and responses from the target to the aggression ('feeling anxious', 'trouble

sleeping'). We also analysed language that did not meet the criteria of the definition. As outlined earlier, we define cyberaggression as intentional harm delivered electronically to a someone who perceives it as "offensive, derogatory, harmful or unwanted" (Grigg, 2010, p. 144). We assume that using hostile language assumes an intent to harm as other research in SET supports this definition (LeFebvre et al., 2020).

In order to determine whether the data contained in the 2018 report content met the criteria of cyberaggression, we adopted Wright's (2018) examples of the perpetrator behaviours that constitute cyberaggression. These behaviours include harassment, insults, physical threats, verbal taunts, malicious teasing, spreading nasty rumours, manipulation or coercion, and humiliation. While there are other examples of cyberaggression, these occur in mediums not relevant to a SET online survey. Such mediums and behaviours include social network sites and text messages where behaviours such as pretending to be someone else, and the malicious sharing of photographs may occur (Wright, 2018). Further, to assess themes we cross-referenced Gutiérrez-Esparza et al'.s (2019) clusters of common cyberaggression behaviours (e.g., aggression against women, aggression against sexuality) that occur in online spaces.

Finally, we assessed the NTEU reports of the consequences of the perpetrator's cyberaggressive behaviours as they affected higher education lecturers and drew links with existing SET literature that reported on the hurt and harm caused by student comments. These included reports of: depression, anxiety, social phobias, paranoia, adjustment difficulties (Cowie, 2013; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012), stress, loneliness (Wright & Li, 2013), disrupted work performance (Wright, 2016), anger, sadness, fear (Dehue et al., 2008), sense of shame (Wolfe & Mayes, 2019), humiliation, guilt, and helplessness (Tomczyk, 2015).

8. RESULTS

Table 1 maps the results of the words and phrases that were reported in the NTEU report (2018). Both statements made by the student and the lecturer recipient of the SET are included. The left-hand column lists cyberaggressive behaviours. In the right hand 'Example' column, student statements are indicated by (S) and lecturer reports are indicated by (L). Insults, verbal taunts,

and malicious teasing and humiliation were grouped as a result of the overlapping nature of these behaviours.

Table 1. Words and phrases meeting the definition of cyberaggression in the NTEU Report

Cyberaggressive Behaviours	Example
Harassment (statements based on gender, race, age)	Told I should be at home with my child (L)
	A coconut (S)
	Bitch (S)
	Femonazi (S)
	Passed his sell-by date (S)
	I am 'too feminist' (L)
Insults, Verbal taunts, Malicious teasing, Humiliation	Doesn't know what she is talking about (S)
	Character assassination (L)
	This course is a waste of time (S)
	Hopeless (S)
	Abusive comments related to my conduct (L)
	Shouldn't be teaching at a university (S)
	Nails down a chalkboard (S)
	Should be fired (S)
	Stupid (S)
	Get rid of (S)
Physical threats	I had students make threats to my physical safety (L)
Spreading nasty rumours	False accusations…that I was using drugs (L)
	Favouring one cohort of students over another (L)
Manipulation or coercion	Threatened that if I did not give them a sufficiently high enough mark for their assignments, they would lodge a complaint (L)

As Table 1 indicates, examples of cyberaggressive behaviours were found in each of these cyberaggression descriptions. Additionally, when cross-references were made with Gutiérrez-Esparza et al.'s (2019) clusters of cyberaggressive behaviours, we concluded that the NTEU report also provided clear summaries of cyberaggressive behaviours being made in relation to gender, sexuality, and religious or cultural backgrounds. The NTEU report data:

> clearly shows that females, member of the LGBTIQ community, people with observable disabilities, people not born in Australia or who do not speak English as first language people and people from what might broadly be described as non-Anglo ancestries all suffer incidents of this type of abuse at higher rates than the average for all respondents. (NTEU, 2018, p. 27)

Table 2 illustrates the relationship between the reported consequences of cyberaggression in the NTEU report (left-hand column) and authors who have identified these responses in the cyberaggression literature.

Table 2. Words and phrases aligning with the consequences of cyberaggression as indicated in the NTEU Report

Consequence	*Evidence of Consequence in Cyberaggression Research*
Feelings of anger, fear, self-consciousness or embarrassment	Dehue et al. (2008)
Distressed	Bauman and Baldasare (2015)
Difficulty sleeping	Jose and Vierling (2018)
Loss of appetite	Cowie (2013)
Trouble paying attention and staying focused on work	Wright (2016); Farrell et al. (2018)

Lower participation in group meetings	Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006)
Wanting to avoid teaching/tutoring classes	Liu et al. (2018); Melander and Hughes (2018)
Desire to use sick leave to avoid going to work	Giumetti et al. (2012)
Anxiousness or depression	Cowie (2013)(2013); Schenk and Fremouw (2012)
Thoughts about quitting	Rathore (2020)
Avoidance	Madan (2014)

The results in the two tables above clearly indicate a connection between SET and the construct of cyberaggression. There are links between the consequences of SET for lecturers' wellbeing as detailed in the NTEU study and other studies on the consequences of cyberaggression.

9. DISCUSSION

The research question for the current study explored the ways in which SET results reported in the NTEU study of 2018 met the criteria for cyberaggression. The results of the secondary data analysis of the NTEU report clearly show that in some instances SET can permit acts of cyberaggression to be perpetrated on lecturers. This finding is important in that it delineates the comments that are made in SET as hostile acts of aggression, rather than such comments merely being regarded as 'negative' statements (Simpson & Siguaw, 2000). Attacks on lecturers within SET are acts of cyberaggression and we specifically use this term to identify the seriousness of the action as well as to identify the harm that is caused as a consequence of this behaviour. Cyberaggression can be a weapon of choice for some young adults (Wright, 2018) and it can cause harm in ways that are perceived by this group as normal and unproblematic (Wright & Li, 2013).

The prevalence of cyberaggression is exacerbated by the increased use of online communication and especially by the anonymity of online surveys. We theorise that within a university context, contrapower harassment explains the cyberaggressive behaviour of students. Contrapower harrassment is directed at those in a position of legitimate power/authority from those who are not (Lee, 2006). We suggest that contra-power harassment is a feature of higher education because of the economic investment associated with 'buying' a degree (Christensen et al., 2020) and the sense of academic entitlement (Baer, 2011; Greenberger et al., 2008; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2011) that results from power relations in the neoliberal university (Connell, 2013).

Hershcovis and Reich (2013) signal that perceived injustice act as antecedents for workplace aggression. It is therefore beholden on universities as employers that are responsible for employee wellbeing in the workplace to respond to the raft of concerns of SET legitimacy and consequences not only to in the professional but also personal outcomes (Rea, 2018).

With young adults believing in the acceptability and appropriateness of cyberaggression in digital spaces (Wright & Li, 2013), higher education institutions could support students with education in good digital citizenship (Al-Zahrani, 2015) and online etiquette (Watts et al., 2017) as they may believe that they are justified in making their comments. Feedback on course teaching must support criticism that is assertive and purposeful to the intent of providing it and not hostile and aggressive. Therefore, opportunities to enable feedback practices that appropriately broker the power relations between lecturer and students and support voice and agency is warranted. These practices could include:

- Focus groups student data used for reflective practice gathered as part of a peer review (Garwe, 2015).
- Faculty forums held between students or student representatives and staff to review courses (Ballantyne et al., 2000).
- Share responsibility of student engagement and encourage students to take visible ownership of their learning (Knowlton & Hagopian, 2013).

While addressing student behaviours as pre-emptive strategies is of course favourable, reactive methods to addressing aggressive comments in SET might also be considered. One approach that could be deliberated is where

administration staff delete offensive comments or adjust the offensive language if the intention of the comment is still considered relevant (Tucker, 2014).

10. LIMITATIONS IN THE RESEARCH

There were several limitations in this study that need to be noted. Firstly, in the research design, words and phrases were searched for in the NTEU report that fitted the criteria for cyberaggression, as defined by Grigg (2010), and were summarised accordingly. This method did not include words and phrases which were not part of the criteria. Approaching the data this way runs the risk of confirmation bias (Oswald & Grosjean, 2004).

This would suggest that in our analysis we risk being biased towards sourcing data to support our research question (the ways in which SET results reported in the NTEU study of 2018 met the criteria for cyberaggression). We attempted to manage confirmation bias by cross-referencing resultant words and phrases with Gutiérrez-Esparza et al.'s (2019) clusters of common cyberaggression behaviours (aggression against women, aggression against sexuality) that occur in online spaces as well as content.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the participants of the survey were overwhelmingly NTEU members, and union members may be more likely to speak out and take action against injustice that non-union members (Johnson & Jarley, 2004). Therefore, the participants in the survey may be more predisposed to react strongly when they encounter issues in the workplace.

11. CONCLUSION

Our findings illustrate the detrimental impact that SET can have on academic staff when students behave like 'keyboard warriors' who engage in cyberaggressive behaviours. Although the research was conducted in Australia, this finding is consistent with international research. This study contributes specifically to the argument that SET is not fit for purpose and we advocate for universities globally, to abandon SET as they are currently being used. While there is much debate surrounding the efficacy of using SET to reflect on and improve teaching and learning experiences, it is important to include some mechanism to provide for intelligent accountability (O'Neill, 2013).

Intelligent accountability in higher education is where universities critically investigate teaching practices without distorting and damaging these primary activities through a secondary mechanism that is in place primarily to target

lecturer accountability, institutional improvement and by extension competitiveness in the higher education market. Implementing practices that allow for students to engage in aggressive acts can have an impact on the wellbeing of academics. We contend that SET is not the best mechanism to achieve intelligent accountability. This is particularly so when the comments made by students cause harm and are not intended to improve the course content (Rea, 2018).

To challenge cyberaggression behaviour in SET requires students to see the relationship between themselves and others differently. The choice is either to fight it and raise the sense of entitlement or collaborate with it and find new possibilities. To ensure safe work environments for staff and engaging learning environments for students, strategies are required in universities that provide appropriate professional feedback to improve students' experiences and support lecturers to grow in their capacity to teach.

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