Chapter 3
Gender and Sexuality Policing: The Violence That 'Doesn't Count'

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Introduction

> To understand structural or systemic violence, one needs to move beyond positive accounts that limit our understanding of how violence works. And one needs to find frameworks that are more encompassing than those that rely on two figures, one striking and the other struck. (Butler, 2020, p. 2)

In the opening pages of Judith Butler's *The Force of Nonviolence,* she offers us much to think about in terms of discursive constructions of 'violence', with a particular focus on the ways that the state defines 'violence', and those that are labelled as 'violent', as well as the repercussions of these attributions. Her thesis begins by articulating that states and institutions actively seek to name certain practices as violence for political and strategic purposes. For example, "demonstrations, encampments, assemblies, boy-cots, and strikes are all subject to being called 'violent' even when they do not seek recourse to physical fighting, or to… forms of systemic or structural violence" (2020, p. 3). While these opening arguments from Butler are easily understood as being applicable to global events such state retaliations upon the Black Lives Matter and Hong Kong democracy movements, they also provide us with a way to critically examine local and institutional iterations of meaning around violence- especially those that are informed by the state. As violence is determined and prosecuted by the state in governance of institutions and organisations as well as in major legal and policing operations, the definition of violence, of who is violent, and of who is oppressed, each produce subjective positions and attendant possibilities for action. This chapter seeks to demonstrate the ways that existing 'frameworks' that define violence – and more specifically

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'bullying' – in schools have direct implications for those that are connected to them: students, teachers and the immediate and future communities that they reside within. Through using data from these groups, the chapter will argue that a more encompassing framework, that pushes beyond the notion of "two figures, one striking and the other struck" (Butler, 2020, p. 2) is desperately needed in schooling communities, lest violence continues to be defined in a way that oppresses marginalised students and erodes possibilities for their peace and freedom, while simultaneously eroding the bonds between teachers and students.

Educational Research, 'Bullying' and 'Violence'

A central argument offered by Butler, and often missed in broader public and political discourse, is that violence is not a static or definitive object. Instead, "'violence' and 'nonviolence' are used variably and perversely" (p. 6) and that the definition of violence "is subject to instrumental definitions that serve political interests and sometimes state violence itself" (p. 7). In the poststructuralist tradition, she illustrates that violence cannot be easily or discretely defined, and that it is constructed in a variety of ways by different agents for different strategic purposes. A key agent in this process is the state. How the state defines violence in any one moment also determines who is violent at that time: perhaps protesters acting against police brutality become defined as rioters or thugs, in order for the State to enact further violence against them. In this case, the violence becomes sanctioned, and sits more easily in hegemonic discourses of national security and citizen safety.

While school environments may seem distinctly different from these topical and global examples, the concept of violence defining those who are violent, and those who are not, and which violences are violence, and which are not, applies in their contexts with enormous relevance. Let's consider for a moment the way that school violence as a term has been continually resisted in government policy for decades. Rather than applying words like 'violence', 'sexual harassment' or 'sexual assault', we instead see the widespread use of the term 'bullying'. As Stein (2005) argues, 'bullying' is a more palatable term that obscures violent and illegal incidents and deflects schools' responsibility and potential liability. First coined in the 1970s by Norwegian scholar Dan Olweus (1978, 1993), the term is used globally in education systems that are developed, funded and regulated by the state. Critically, the almost universal term has embedded a fixed definition, one that resists Butler's scepticism that violence can be ubiquitously and equitably defined. When deployed, 'bullying' deploys inextricable, specific, and discrete criteria for any incident to be labelled as such, and thus garner the requirement for authoritative intervention (Walton, 2011). These criteria are that a person "is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. It is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another… [and there is] an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship)" (Olweus, 1997, p. 496), in other words, where the student exposed to the negative

actions is "helpless" or "weaker" (Olweus, 1997, p. 496) than those performing them.

Since its publication, this definition has colonised educational, psychological and social science research with extraordinary breadth. In the past 50 years, countless articles have been written about how bullying, as defined by Olweus, might be best identified and curtailed, and in doing so affirming that 'bullying', and therefore school violence, can only exist within these particular boundaries. As Duncan and Rivers (2013, p. 255) notes, with very few exceptions these studies examine "the nature, frequency and distribution of bullying behaviours among young people". Many of these, especially those from educational psychology, argue that bullying behaviours and identities can be revealed by locating particular combinations of variables. Utilising quantitative methods, these studies often aim to determine whether some students are 'bullies' or 'victims'- arguing that these identities are inherent, but behaviours may be managed or modified. These approaches form from what I and others have termed the essentialist discourse of bullying- which places "more emphasis on the behavioural characteristics of those involved" (Horton, 2011, p. 268) rather than how particular situations and context specific cultures result in violence (Rawlings, 2017).

In response to these shortfalls, more recent poststructural works have begun unpicking these claims and arguments and questioning the value of applying 'bullying' in context-free and definitive ways (see, for example: Adriany, 2019; Horton, 2011; Kofoed & Staksrud, 2019; Lunneblad & Johansson, 2019; Odenbring & Johansson, 2019; Sundaram, 2014; Walton, 2011). This emerging field of scholarship contributes to findings that affirm Butler's arguments of violence; 'bullying' as a school-based term is constructed and deployed in strategic ways, with outcomes that construct subjects and their actions with performative and subjective effects.

This is particularly the point made by researchers that have investigated intersections of violence with gender, sexuality, race and disability. Structural oppression is relationally enacted by individuals through violence- and part of this oppression can be determinations of what violence 'counts', and what does not. As Butler (2020, p. 6) argues, there are "schemes by which state violence justifies itself" and maintaining a state's monopoly on violence depends upon a naming practice. Hegemonic bullying policies operationalise this naming, and in doing so, preclude what can be defined as violence, and what can escape this recognition. As such these policies have the capability of entrenching violence, enabling broader systems of patriarchy, white supremacy, or other structures of oppression to be enacted unnoticed or undisrupted in negotiations of relational power and privilege. For example, Elizabethe Payne and Melissa Smith argue that standard definitions of bullying fail to give attention "to the persistent patterns of peer targeting" (Payne & Smith, 2016, p. 128) that are faced by those that do not ascribe to dominant, idealised gender norms. Their research around the experiences of sexuality and gender diverse students at school suggests that 'bullying' as defined by state policy fails to capture the violence that these students repeatedly encounter, and that the concept of 'gender policing' provides a greater recognition of how various "cultural expectations for 'normal' masculine and feminine expression" (p. 129) are socially enforced- ranging

from microaggressions to overt verbal and physical violence. This affirms previous contributions from Ollis (2013) who indicates that gender is likely to be an underlying aspect of any violent incident in schools, but is often not recognised as a defining feature of violence by school staff or policy.

Prominent scholars Jessica Ringrose and Emma Renold have also undertaken poststructural and feminist examinations of school violence and 'bullying' – asking the critical question about what 'counts' as violence. In their seminal work on normative cruelties, Ringrose and Renold identified that gender informs how 'bullies', 'victims' and violence itself is constructed in complex discursive configurations (Ringrose & Renold, 2010). This work, and others' (Dytham, 2018; Eriksen, 2018; Pascoe, 2007; Rawlings, 2017, 2019) indicates that in schooling environments moments of violence are dependent on the discursive constructions around them. As peers, teachers, school leaders and broader community members are faced with moments of violence, their behavioural and linguistic constructions of violence-often most visible through their short- and medium-term reactions to violent moments- classify, define and (re)produce what violence is acceptable. These are, however, mediated by the resources that are available to them- and in schools this is at least partially determined by state policies that determine institutional and therefore interpersonal interventions.

In this chapter, I seek to reapply Butler's recognition of the complex applications of 'violence' to moments of school violence. Through looking at data from teachers and students, I will illustrate some of the dissonant constructions that they bring to the notion of 'bullying' and 'violence', and how these definitions clash and compete. I will argue that gender and sexuality play key and inextricable roles in constructing violence and whether it is named as such by school policy, thus negating possibilities for intervention. In doing so, I will illustrate how only some violence 'counts' in these contemporary school environments- and that violence which escapes these definitions can be repeated in cumulative and relationally destructive ways. To do this, I draw on data that I have expanded upon in detail in a previous monograph (Rawlings, 2017). The study focused on how students and teachers in two co-educational government schools understood, experienced and constructed 'bullying' and violence, especially in relation to their local contexts of gender and sexuality. Based on an in-depth case study of two schools, the data comes from focus groups of students and teachers, as well as interviews with school leaders (principals and deputy principals). At each school, two focus groups with head teachers (leaders of their faculty) were undertaken, as well one focus group with girls (aged 14–16), one with boys (aged 14–16), and one interview with the school principal (Grove) or two deputy principals (Wilson). Both schools were in regional/rural settings in Australia, and – like any school – had complex and unique contexts of class and race and other resources that informed their school cultures. In this chapter I revisit some of this data from 'Wilson' and 'Grove' High Schools while considering Butler's recent work.

The Naming Practice of Violence: Encountering State Definitions of 'Bullying' at School

Violence is constructed and named by different actors at different times, for different reasons and with different outcomes. In the data below, state policies that are utilised to qualify violence and ostensibly to protect students are invoked by arbiters of violence (often teachers, but also in less institutionally endorsed ways, by students) with varying effects. These policies are often seen as related to 'bullying', and not distinctly related to gender, sexuality or other identity markers- as the following data will illustrate. I've chosen to commence this review of data with the voice of Richard, the principal at Grove High School, who gave the below response when I asked him about how he might respond to an incident of homophobic violence at his school. I have included his extended response here, where he specifically talks about whether, in a scenario like this, he considers possible community backlash from parents in the town- a town he identified as educationally and socioeconomically disadvantaged:

> Richard: One of the best words of advice I got was off a principal a couple of schools back who always said 'policy will protect'. So with sticky situations like that one, it's a case of 'this is what I'm instructed to do' and I take emotion out of the situation. 'This is what I'm instructed to do and this is what I'm doing'; so a parent could be going out of the tree: 'I don't care what that fucken poofta rararara', all this sort of stuff, and you're not buying into that, you know, you're not arguing against their point of view, you're not saying well 'look you're in the 1950's, come on', you're not challenging them or anything, you're just stating quite calmly and simply that, you know, 'I work with the NSW Department of Education, this is the policy that I work under, and this is the consequence that I must put into place. If by any means, you know, if you've got any issues with that, you can refer it up to the next person in charge, and you can refer it on and make an issue with it. But I just have to do what I have to do', and most parents at that stage will recognise that I'm not involved, I'm doing what I have to do, so they'll still go out grumbling but it's not, you know, it extinguishes the situation for me.

I begin with this piece of data because there has been somewhat a lack of discussion in recent years about the many pressures that teachers feel when responding to violence between students. I invite readers to consider, however briefly, the scope of Richard's work as principal of a large high school, and the multitude of tasks that he must address in his everyday practice. Richard's response demonstrates his awareness of the implications of decisions about violence- decisions that have been politicised and previously received extensive media coverage. He speaks of needing to stick to the policy, which will 'protect' him when dealing with violence. We can infer from this that Richard feels at some risk when encountering 'sticky situations' (like homophobia) at school, and that resting on institutional directives gives him some comfort and guidance. This is unlikely to be an experience that is solely Richard's. In the Australian context, how schools respond to homophobia, or more specifically the inclusion of diverse sexualities, has been under intense scrutiny over the past several years- especially in relation to the "visceral hostility" towards the Safe Schools (Thompson, 2019) and Crossroads

programs (Baker, 2018). While common refrains of 'things getting better' around the inclusion of diverse gender and sexualities at school remain, the volume of public dialogue around these identities and their place within schools dramatically increased between 2015 and 2020. When media 'flare ups' occur, teachers become increasingly aware of how their decisions are interpreted and reacted to by their immediate communities and more broadly. In Richard's case, we see that he relies on official policy to ground his actions through these moments, enabling an anchor point that can provide clarity and certainty.

In this sense, therefore, we cannot argue that bullying policies are entirely 'bad'. To do so would miss these benefits and nuances. It's clear that such institutional guides can benefit actors within schools by providing a clear mandate for what to do when violence happens. Teachers, on the whole, did not enter the profession with a wish to further violence on students- and their actions reference that they are seeking to make sense of violence and respond in responsible and positive ways. Policies can provide teachers with confidence and support in a field where they face intense scrutiny. However, the nature of these policies also has distinct effects. 'Antibullying' policies are configured by the state with particular constraints and produced outcomes. This is because policies hold discrete definitions for what constitutes violence, and enacted violence is not necessarily captured by these static and fixed criteria. Teachers and school leadership often face great diversity in behaviours, and numerous instances of violence in any school day. One Deputy Principal from Wilson High School, Tony, who oversaw student discipline relating to violence, elaborated on this:

> Tony: It's difficult cos I, you know… with fifty odd staff out there, they're required to report bullying to us, but what they perceive as bullying is very different as well, and that inconsistency about what people perceive as bullying is very difficult. So, some teachers may deal with it in the classroom, and not feel the need to pass it on. Some will want to pass on every little bit of information that they think is bullying and so can become quite difficult about where we go with it.

Within Tony's school, he faced multiple navigations of what 'bullying' was and was not. Despite clear guidelines within state policy (intention, repetition, imbalance of power), teachers demonstrated uncertainty about what and when to report. His contribution illustrates that not all moments of violence are equal- and treating them as such would be operationally and ethically impossible. This individual negotiation of what to escalate and how to respond ensures that individual judgements about what is named as violence (or in this case, 'bullying') become crucial to critically investigate. In other words- some violence warrants reporting, recording, and responding to- and others does not. As such, teachers are required to make judgements about what violence is acceptable or not. They will determine what can be 'let go'; what can be dealt with in their classroom interactions with students; what needs to be escalated to a senior staff member; or beyond.

As I asked teachers about how they might determine what would be considered more serious- they consistently returned to the word 'bullying', and how it could be defined and applied to a variety of scenarios. As mentioned in the literature review, Australian (and in this case, the state of NSW) policy clearly defines school bullying

utilising Olweusian standards: intention, repetition and imbalance of power. This was emphasised by one Deputy Principal, who focused on repetition- or whether something happened 'constantly':

> David: …bullying will actually become when it's something that is constant, when that person continues to do that. That's when it's bullying.

Another teacher at Wilson reflected on the feature of an 'imbalance of power':

> John: Bullying to me is like someone's in a position of power and they want to exert their power onto this poor soul.

This was a theme also taken up by Richard, the Principal at Grove High:

> Richard: but bullying and harassment is basically somebody exerting some sort of power over somebody else, in a way that that other person isn't comfortable with or doesn't understand… bullying can be continual as well… so it's that sort of imbalance of power that doesn't have a justification

Dylan, a teacher at Grove, suggested that:

> Dylan: Bullying is long term, persistent, repetitive

The allure of such a clear definition of 'bullying' in a sea of diverse, dynamic and potentially incomprehensible violent incidents is clear. Through referring to it, and implementing it, teachers may determine that they are responding equitably and consistently to all students – as well as feeling supported or 'protected' by the broader educational institution – courtesy of the state. However, the definition's lack of inclusion of any intersectional factors equates in a significant problem – that difference that is routinely targeted and exploited by multiple actors (for example in the form of race, gender, disability or sexuality) is not acknowledged as being repeated. As such, greater cultures of exclusion, oppression or violence that are experienced by minorities are often missed. One demonstration of this came from Sarah, a science teacher at Wilson High, as I asked her group about how they might respond to gendered violence at school:

> Vic: How do you all feel about responding to bullying of that type? Gender based or homophobic? I mean, is it easy for you to recognise it?
> Sarah: I don't know that I distinguish between any type of bullying. I think I just step in as soon as I realise that something's there- I can't say that I analyse it and say 'this is this type of bullying', I just try and deal with the situation no matter what type of bullying it is
> Grace: Yeah, treat it the same way
> John: Yeah, good point

It's clear here that Sarah (and by extension, Grace and John) are concerned with addressing violence in schools – and that their position is steadfastly against violence of 'any type'. However, their approach is rooted in applying the definition of bullying consistently to the point that they do not wish to 'distinguish between any type' of violence in terms of its motivation or content. This again fits strongly within the state policy around bullying that makes no mention of identity characteristics, of structural power differences, or of repetition by cultural or social forces. It's clear here then, that violence that relates to social inequities does not register as different

to any other 'kind' of bullying, regardless of whether this violence is cumulative from the broader social contexts of those affected.

Determining 'What Counts'

If bullying definitions that are widely relied upon by teachers for reasons of equity, consistency and protection do not specifically contain recognitions of student identities, there are significant implications. For example, the notion of repetition is produced solely as an individual act – if one person or group repetitively targets another specific person. This would miss, however, if an individual experiences constant low-level violence from a number of actors around the school- a reality often experienced by minority groups in school populations. Norms around race, gender, sexuality, disability and class are all actively produced within and outside of school environments. The patriarchy and white supremacy, for example, do not wait at the school gate. Students in this research were particularly aware of dynamic cultures of inclusion, subordination and exclusion, and how violence operated to crystallise these boundaries. For example, when I asked the boys at Grove if they could tell me about any gendered violence that took place at their school, Max was very certain in commencing the conversation:

> Max: Well first of all, I'd like to say if you were gay at this school you would be put through the shredder, absolutely.
> Andrew: Well there is one in…
> Sam: Ohhh… Jesse Martin?
> Rob: Yeah, he's got a boyfriend, his boyfriend came to school the other day
> Liam: Oh- what, who is he?
> Rob: Um, Steven Johns I think, he's 22
> Liam: Whoa!
> Rob: And they were kissing each other on valentine's day? Everyone was just calling him gay
> Max: Yeah… see… He doesn't really go to this school does he? He just like, hangs around?
> Rob: He comes and goes
> Max: Like if he was here full time, he would be put through the grinder… he'd probably have to leave.

This exchange attempted to locate and place tangible queerness in the school and make sense of how it could function in this particular space. Several other anecdotes told by the boys, constructed their school as an unwelcoming and unsafe environment for those with diverse sexualities, that you would "have to leave" if you were openly not heterosexual. The girls at Wilson had a slightly different exchange, with a similar theme:

> Linda: Like, if my friend told me she was a lesbian I'd be shocked, but
> Kathryn: You'd still support her
> Jennifer: You'd get over it though cos they're the same person
> Linda: Yeah, but if a guy did, like in my year, I'd be like, oh I dunno – that'd be weird. I would be like 'oh'.

Jennifer: Yeah and they'd cop so much crap, like, 'oh I'm not standing next to him in the change room, like he's looking at me, he's gay'. No wonder why people don't talk about it.

While here the girls speak about gender differences in homophobia, and their own constructions of sexuality in friends, they continue the theme that it was not a safe environment for peers to come out – especially not boys at their school. The girls constructed this gender disparity as being partially due to the patriarchy that operated in the school- the boys saw that sexual encounters between girls were desirable, and that this made it acceptable for them in a matrix of heterosexual masculinity (for more on this, see Rawlings, 2017). In comparison, teachers at both Wilson and Grove tended to produce a different line about if and how homophobia manifested in their schools.

Tony: I'm struggling to think of any [instances of homophobia].
David: Yeah, and that's um, yeah. It's something that you may sort of sometimes look to see whether it's actually existing if you know what I mean,
Tony: Yeah
David: like sometimes you'll actually look to see some particular student who may be, have a particular sexual orientation and almost wonder whether they're actually going to be bullied because of that reason, but again because it's just nowhere near as open here as what would be at a city school, maybe a coastal school that um yeah, it's just not as pronounced.

Jeremy: I don't think it's a problem at all, and I think it's more manageable than… um… any other type of bullying that goes on

Peter: I haven't seen any problems in my classes… it's never raised, it's never been an issue in all my years teaching.
Vic: And sorry, Pete, which subject is that?
Peter: In Science. But I've never heard kids talking in the background talking or…

Vic: So overall, what do you think the current climate in your school is in terms of gender-based or homophobic bullying and harassment?
David: Well it's not high profile. It's certainly not… We don't, well certainly from my point of view, and we do deal with a lot of bullying incidences, you may sort of notice it because of in the way which kids are sort of interacting with each other, and to what level you aren't going to be able to determine. So I'd certainly sort of say that I'm sure it's stuff that's actually happening but it's not something which becomes a high priority for us. And nobody will report, you know, that type of thing.

While there is much to unpack from each of these accounts, I want to pay specific attention to the dissonance between these accounts, and the notion of silence. Returning to the student accounts for a moment, we can see that they have a clear sense that their contexts were homophobic – that you would not want to disclose a non-heterosexual sexuality if you were at school because "you would be put through the shredder, absolutely", and would "cop so much crap" that it was "no wonder why people don't talk about it". In other accounts, students indicated that many of those that did eventually come out as non-heterosexual would do so once they had "left town" and "moved to Sydney", because "that's Sydney", and constructed as safer to live out diverse sexualities. At the same time, teachers constructed homophobia extraordinarily differently – that it was not "a problem at all"; "never an issue";

"not high profile" and "not as pronounced" (perceptibly as other motivations for bullying).

This dissonance (which has also been reported elsewhere- for example, Odenbring, 2019) speaks to some lack of connection between the interpretation, knowledge or constructions of these groups. I would like to argue that the 'terms of reference' for violence or 'bullying' are at odds here, using both the closing line from Jennifer, "No wonder why people don't talk about it", and some of the evidence from teachers too. Let's take David, for example, the Deputy Principal at Wilson who often dealt with issues of bullying. He notes "we do deal with a lot of bullying incidences", but that "it's [homophobia] not high profile", and therefore not "a high priority". These contributions suggest that while David is across much of the violence that happens in the school, he does not necessarily assign these incidents with motivations or meanings of homophobia. This is not to say that gender policing or homophobia are not operating, but instead that these incidents are not recognisable or attributable to David as homophobic or policing of any other kind of systemic oppression. For David, it is the features of incidents within the state policy that are important- those that are outlined officially as 'counting' as bullying-intention, repetition and imbalance of power. Simultaneously, however, he does recognise that "I'm sure it's stuff that's actually happening". He knows that homophobia operates, and that it is potentially damaging- but still locates it as not "a high priority". This attribution of status cannot happen without a backdrop of official policy, without the knowledge enforcement that that policy produces. The policy itself ensures that only some violence 'counts' and is assigned as violence- and homophobia does not meet this threshold.

Both David and Jennifer affirm this through their concluding comments-; "nobody will report, you know, that type of thing" and "No wonder why people don't talk about it". This violence is unspoken, unreported, and disregarded as violence at all. In a policy that does not enable flexible, nuanced interpretations about what violence is, there is little room to consider the ways that identities are minimised and policed culturally, collectively and cumulatively. This restrictive view of violence understands the 'blow' as its defining physical moment, that violence "is something that happens between two parties in a heated encounter" (Butler, 2020, p. 2). While multiple people above may recognise that homophobia operates in the school environment, there is no foothold for them to address this as a school community while this definitional fixity and policy power persists. In turn, dialogue between the groups about what violence is becomes constrained or prohibited. The violence that the students observe, contribute to or experience does not 'count' in these frames, and therefore remains in their domain, but impossible to communicate across discursive boundaries.

Nonviolence

Much previous literature, policy and practice in the area of school bullying has been entangled in a navigation of what 'counts' as bullying. As these enactments take place in school and in research, broader considerations of how violence manifests, beyond discrete definitions of what it looks like, become increasingly important. As Butler reminds us, there is no requirement to dispute the violence of the physical blow, but "sometimes the physical strike to the head or the body is an expression of systemic violence, at which point one has to be able to understand the relationship of act to structure, or system" (Butler, 2020, p. 2).

State definitions of violence that feed into common sense dialogues of what 'counts' as bullying, have an erasing force on those that are often most subject to structural oppression. The Olweusian definitions of bullying that rely strictly on intention, repetition and power imbalance are almost ubiquitously taken up in educational institutions globally. While in this chapter we can see that these definitions grant schools a certain sure-footedness when considering 'sticky situations' or responses to violence more broadly, they are at best unresponsive to the realities of subordinated and excluded subjectivities at school, and the cumulative violence that they face from multiple points. By continuing to endorse these policies, states are arguably reinvesting in structures that further oppress the already disenfranchised populations, whether through racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or other manifestations of oppression. The naming of violence in particular ways erases possibilities for observing, recognising and redressing violence.

A final relevant theme that Butler raises is the prospect of nonviolence – and I wish to turn to this to end this chapter. I want to return, for a moment, to the teachers whose voices constituted this chapter, and the many others that have not yet been heard. There is a propensity for some research to uncritically criticise these people – to suggest that they actively or passively do harm without thought or reflection, or without intention to nourish the lives of learners in their care. I do not believe this to be true. As an educator of future teachers, as the partner of a teacher, as a friend and colleague to many other teachers, as a researcher that listens to teachers, and as a teacher myself, I reflect that teachers overwhelmingly wish to help and support their students. In that sense, there is a relation between teachers and their learners – one that defines them both quite fundamentally. This relation, Butler argues, is a central tenet of nonviolence. If we consider that some actions by teachers (or even students) enact violence against students (or even teachers), we must consider if and how they are relationally connected- that they are implicated in each other's lives. In other words, when someone does violence to another, they also do violence to themselves- because their lives are bound up together. Butler questions if anyone is truly a self-standing 'individual'; arguing that "the most persuasive reasons for a practice of nonviolence directly imply a critique of individualism and require that we rethink the social bonds that constitute us as living creatures" (Butler, 2020, p. 14). Acknowledging this dependency is difficult, but she invites us to pursue and affirm social and ecological interdependence. In schools, for example, we can argue that

students and teachers are fundamentally dependent on one another, rather than individual and isolated actors. If we reconceptualise relations in this way, we can reimagine what a community might look like if there is a collective commitment to nonviolence. This is, however, complicated by state processes that are forcefully enacted in schools- policies, practices and authorities that are determined beyond this interrelationship, and that challenge any community's bonds.

As I dwelled a little on David's comments in the previous section – comments that indicated that he was not able to recognise or assign violence with homophobia, I want to turn to a comment he made as we were concluding our interview. For context, David identified as a white, cisgender and middle-class man- structures that traditionally prohibit or obstruct radical aspects of progressive activism. I asked him about how he would feel personally responding to gendered violence, and I include his response at some length:

> David: I'd sort of… I'd be quite passionate about dealing with those particular situations. I think the ones which we deal with at the moment tend to be the teasing, tend to be you know, kid like behaviours. The ones that you're referring to are the ones that are entrenched in society, and particularly they are minority, well not that women are minority groups, but they are people who are in positions of less power, and in many ways those are the people who we need to be actually helping. So in terms of dealing with those… and because it can be so secretive, it can be so isolating for people who are victims of that particular bullying, then certainly from my point of view it would be ones that you'd actually feel quite passionate about trying to deal with and actually helping particularly the victims there, in those sort of situations, cause they are. And I think it's actually one of those things which is pervasive in our society, people in positions of power, particularly men in positions of power, use that power over females and it becomes accepted. So dealing with that at school, at least making people aware of it, and dealing with it, is something that I certainly think would be something that you would not treat quietly.

While David speaks predominantly here about gendered violence from men against women, we can look quite clearly at his passionate commitment to anti-violence at a systemic and structural level. He recognises that violence can be "entrenched in society" and that minority groups "are the people who we need to be actually helping". We can also see that he recognises that sometimes these forms of violence are hidden from him, and while he indicates that this could be due to the hope for secrecy from the person being targeted, perhaps we can also ascribe that this might be hidden due to the definitions of violence that the school applies and ascribes to that tend to erase acknowledgment of these violences. What is not missing, however, is David's fundamental hopes for the students under his care. His powerful conclusion that dealing with gendered violence, with violence against minority groups "would be something that you would not treat quietly" speaks to his willingness to change, transform and undo structures that subordinate and exclude particular identities from his school. This suggests to us that school personnel are not unwilling, nor unable to be open to new knowledges and practices around reimagining and reassigning 'violence'. They are, however, still required to assess and respond to 'bullying' under clearly defined and fixed terms- terms that distance them from recognising deeper, cumulative and cultural policing of 'difference'.

From this we might argue that the state policy enacted by David and other teachers is not only doing violence through its failure to recognise student

experiences of violence, but also doing violence to those enacting it. As teachers respond to multiple forms of student violence and attempt to help students through these, they may be depleted through the very mechanisms that fail to confront them. This is, of course, dependant on whether teachers are able to assign 'violence' at all to what students are experiencing; if the static bullying definition is complete there is perhaps no propensity for teachers and school leaders to envision events outside of it as violence. These state mechanisms complicate and erode at the connections between students and teachers, and at their very values. As David is currently unable to confront the violence that is done to some, he is in a way doing additional violence to them, and in turn breaking the social bond that he has between himself and those students. In its misrecognition, violence is redone, and redone again, and the ties between those that are fundamentally linked are tested.

Although I have previously focused on the discursive and constructed nature of bullying, and the ways that gender and sexuality inform these constructions, in this chapter I have sought to look more closely at the discourses and systems that constrain teachers when interacting with student violence. Butler's theories enable a recognition of the ways that state assignments of 'violence', and in this case 'bullying', directly produce possibilities for teachers to conceptualise and construct 'bullies', 'victims' and 'bullying'. Future research must continue to critically examine "who is called 'violent' and for what purposes" (Butler, 2020, p. 4). In its current form state bullying policy enacts further violence on already disenfranchised or oppressed groups through its inadequacy to highlight accumulations of violence upon bodies. Through minimising or erasing these othered bodies and interactions, the policy further impacts upon teachers who, as agents of the state, become increasingly disconnected from the students under their care. Some new resources, borne from poststructural investigations of bullying policy, are attempting to redress these fixed definitions. In Scotland, for example, an anti-bullying organisation 'respectme' suggests that neither persistence nor intent should be prerequisites of 'bullying', and that every incident should be looked at in terms of its impact upon a young person (respectme, 2019). An approach such as this would require significant state endorsement – not only a policy change, but a change to the resourcing of schools to increase the capacity of staff to attend to violence between students in more empathic ways. Through changes like these, and further attention in research, disenfranchisement of teachers and students through the dismissal of their experiences might have the potential to be redressed.

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