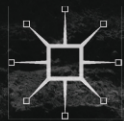# Gender Regulation, Violence and Social Hierarchies in School

'Sluts', 'Gays' and 'Scrubs'

Victoria Rawlings

Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education

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palgrave
macmillan

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For everyone who has ever been 'different'

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CONTENTS

Introduction

It was a baking hot, windy day when I first arrived at Wilson High School. The previous day I had made the seven-hour car journey from Sydney, and I now approached the school's gates, surveying the brown brick buildings that were surrounded by brittle, dry grass. I made my way into the air-conditioned front office with a sense of relief from the oppressive heat, and was introduced to my research contact at the school. She advised that she had found a space for me to conduct the first of my two focus groups with the female students, and showed me up to the small meeting room adjacent to the school's library. After a brief wait, five girls (aged 15 and 16 years) entered the room. They were full of life and laughter and I was immediately caught up in their positive energy, knowing that they would be a talkative group for the session that I had planned. Despite a brief moment of apprehension, the girls happily obliged when I encouraged them to ignore the red light of the voice recorder and chat amongst themselves as they would normally.

Part way through the focus group, I asked them about whether they could talk about any moments that they had seen, heard about or experienced in regard to someone trying to intentionally hurt someone. With this question, they began to talk about an incident that they had experienced the day before.

Bec:	Yesterday this girl made a Facebook group, and it was like . . . (whole group groans)
Alice:	Did you hear about that?
Bec:	Kick a slut in the head day right
	[. . .]
Vic:	So explain to me what happened because I'm not really clear on this
Jennifer:	Ok, a girl made a Facebook group [. . .] And so yesterday at school like all the boys were going around kicking girls in the head.
Linda:	Like they actually were
Kathryn:	They were violently
Bec:	I got kicked in the head
Alice:	You did?
Bec:	Yeah
Jennifer:	So did I
Alice:	Really?
Bec:	Yeah

Immediately, I felt a mixture of interest, concern and shock about this event. I was here to do a study on gender-based aggression in schools, and a critical incident had happened just the previous day. However, I was also appalled that the girls in the school had been both subjected to this event, and surprised that it was another girl that had set it in motion. Knowing that these lively, intelligent and articulate girls in front of me were in an environment that had such overt violence against them was troubling, and this feeling of unease redoubled when the girls went on to describe a particularly violent outcome from the day.

Jennifer:	[. . .] one girl, a group of boys pushed on the ground and kicked her in the head, like actually kicked her, hard. When we did [get kicked] it wasn't that hard, like we knew it was a joke
Linda:	But that's a joke, yeah
B & Alice:	Yeah
Jennifer:	But these boys took it like, to the next level, and were actually kicking her in the head. And like in the back and all that stuff while she was on the ground.

The imagery of this incident has stayed with me for a long time. One girl from the school was violently attacked by a group of male students just the day before. How could this happen? What could cause such a brutal and

senseless act? And if this had happened so fortuitously close to my research commencing, I had doubts that it was a one-off incident. Was this environment constantly risky or unsafe for girls? Were there similar incidences where boys were targeted? All of these questions swam in my mind while the girls continued to describe the incident and their feelings about it. While I listened to their words, I wondered about what the school's response had been, at the same time I was hearing some of what the school's response had been already. After all, these girls were part of the school and they were responding to it through their talk:

> *Linda:* Was it like a girl who actually had a name for herself though?
> *Alice:* Yeah
> *Bec:* I think so
> *Linda:* That would be why, like, and ... boys are just ... boys. They're just like that!

This response began to illustrate to me that this environment was already presenting signs of acquiescence to these behaviours. While the girls' talk may be positioned as a recollection of the incident, this talk actively functioned to (re)constitute it. Through their words, the girls demonstrated what the incident meant. There could have been an infinite amount of meanings applied to the event, including (for example) a feeling of shock, fear for their own personal safety, anger at the conduct of the boys, solidarity with the girl who was attacked (especially in the light of their own experiences of being kicked) or frustration with the girl who promoted the event. However, these responses/constructions were not forthcoming. Instead, Linda presented two reasons why the violence should have been expected – first, that the girl who was beaten 'had a name for herself' (as a slut) and as such was a prime candidate for the violence; and second that 'boys are just boys' – that this behaviour should be anticipated and accepted as an inherent and unchangeable part of their sex/gender. Both of these discourses drew upon notions of what a girl and boy should be. The girls were expected to maintain some kind of socially sanctioned sexuality to avoid being a 'slut' and thus avoid the violence that this girl experienced. The boys, however, were positioned as being 'boys' due to the violence that they exerted. The verbal submission of 'boys will be boys' showed that violence and being a boy were inseparable in that moment – the violence should be expected from boys – it was portrayed as being their nature. As such, we can see that in this incident, gender (and

connected sexuality) is an integral factor in the determination of responsibility, as well as the active construction of expectations (and warnings) about future behaviours. These two discourses constituted two framings of the incident, or two ways of constructing it. While they were not the only two, these particular discourses were not isolated to Linda's account, nor were they the only ones that failed to acknowledge the young woman's suffering. Instead, many participants in this study engaged with a range of discourses that positioned the event as bad but not unexpected and not particularly serious. All of the discourses that emerged constituted the 'school response' – the attitudes, constructions and perspectives of that moment that held far-reaching implications for future practices. In this book, I argue that these conversations and discourses have far more impact than any institutional reaction or policy could have, not only in this incident, but also in all aspects of school life, social and procedural. I have written far more extensively on 'Kick a slut in the head day' in Chapter 6, including a deep examination of the event and the discourses (from both teachers and students) that constructed it. However, I open with this incident to begin an explanation and dialogue about the content of this book.

There is a wealth of research about bullying in schools. Journal articles, book chapters and entire manuscripts have devoted significant time and energy to detailing the harm that can come to students as a result of bullying and ways to attempt to disrupt these incidents. In contrast to these materials, this book offers a snapshot of two secondary schools in New South Wales, Australia, and the ways that the students, teachers and principals within them see 'bullying' as well as the contemporary social structures and events that occur in the lives of the young people that attend the schools. Rather than asserting one 'truth' or a silver bullet about school bullying, the aim of this book is to undermine that these 'truths' actually exist in a static and predictable form. Walton (2011) notes that despite the intensive time and effort put in by principals, teachers, policy makers and community members, anti-bullying approaches are not working in schools. The traditional principles of bullying research that these approaches rely on have little or no relevance to the lives of contemporary young people. Instead, we need a new way of conceptualising the workings of the social lives and lived realities of those attending high school. If any anti-bullying initiative is going to succeed, these need to begin with an upheaval of common understandings about bullying and a transformation of practice. As a starting point, this requires a shift in perspective. Bullying can no

longer be understood as a deviant, inexplicable or deplorable individual act. Instead, we need to recognise the particular social, cultural and institutional factors that encourage the persecution of others.

THE DEMANDS OF INCLUSION

> ...the fact remains that schools are the place where children spend more of their time between the ages of five and eighteen, and thus play a seminal role in either confirming prejudice or combating it. It's the first public place our citizenry shares, and as such is the crucible where democratic values are put to the test. It's the place where we either learn to get along or learn to hate. Too often it's the place where prejudice becomes ingrained.
>
> (Jennings 1999, p. x)

> Inclusion thus demands certain behaviours, language, attitudes, which are linked with being [a] 'normal' girl or boy...Such strategies reduce the risk of ostracisation, of being labelled as other and different, and being rejected by the prevailing culture. To not 'go with the crowd', to resist the mainstream, is a hazardous activity, with high risks of social exclusion.
>
> (Warrington and Younger 2011, pp. 153–154)

The concept of schools as sites that 'ingrain prejudice' rejects the more hopeful and positive perspective of schools as safe spaces for young people to flourish, to establish their identity and to recognise and pursue their individual interests. Instead, the quote from Jennings (1999) suggests that schools are sites that do not necessarily have a positive influence on autonomy, nor on individuality; rather they are places where young people may learn to recognise, resist and persecute any forms of difference. This is obviously not the only possible outcome; they are also spaces that can foster a sense of community, activism or social justice. While schools have an undeniable role in shaping these outcomes, there remains a lack of recognition or investigation of how and why different schools produce these varying results. What are the procedural, systemic or contextual differences between a school that fosters prejudice and one that encourages the celebration of diversity? Attempting to deconstruct something as abstract as student attitudes to diversity raises a host of questions about learning that occurs outside of a formal syllabus; for example, who arbitrates what should be taught, and what should be silenced? Who decides what can be learned at school, and what lies outside our

knowledge requirements? How do diverse identities come to be known, valued or rejected inside 'the walls' of schools? If school really is the 'place where we either learn to get along or learn to hate', who teaches this knowledge, and if it is not taught, how does it become learned? How does 'prejudice become ingrained', if it is not formally sanctioned and valued?

These questions dominated my thinking in preparation for and throughout the following book. They emerged from a complex intersection between my personal schooling experiences, my training and work as a secondary school teacher, and my ongoing engagement with research that interrogates the sociocultural meanings that emerge within and from schools. In each of these environments, I have encountered moments where some young people have been marginalised, excluded and isolated due to a transgression of some social requirement. The boundaries of acceptable behaviour may be well known or obscure, but the exclusion almost always results in painful emotions of uncertainty, fear, shame and isolation.

In some literature, and indeed in wider contexts, many people understand this system of persecution as 'bullying'. This is not an erroneous assumption. Previous and well-known definitions of bullying may encapsulate individuals being marginalised, excluded or harassed due to social transgressions or difference; however, this book challenges the broadly held and used definition of 'bullying' that is currently applied in schools by identifying its theoretical and practical shortfalls. Instead, my aim here is to look more broadly at social relations of 'fitting in' (inclusion), being socially successful (popularity) and the role that performances of gender and sexuality play in these outcomes. An integral part of this understanding is recognising that while there may not always be commonalities between those who are persecuted, there are certain aspects of gender performances that are consistently targeted in contemporary high school environments. To make this distinction clearer, we can ask two types of questions about social persecution in schools. First, we can investigate who prejudice is against – who is left out, who is included, who fails to 'fit in', and who differentiates between and maintains these categories. Although these questions are based on the 'who' that prejudice impacts upon, of equal or perhaps even higher importance is the 'how' of these outcomes. *How* do individuals and groups develop and communicate meanings within schools? How do these meanings function to delineate structures of social or personal worth? This question has the potential to investigate social processes and provide critical information for future

interventions. In other words, research into these mechanisms aims to illustrate the ways that we 'learn to get along or learn to hate', whether they be applied through social or institutional mediums.

While these questions can be applied to any kind of minority group or individual within schools, my particular interest is with young people's emerging understandings of gender and sexuality, and how these can be safely and successfully taken up within their social environments. Warrington and Younger's quote that I have placed below Jennings' alludes to the difficulty of 'inclusion' that young people experience in relation to gender and sexuality. They assert that the 'how' of avoiding prejudice occurs through performance, through performing the identities of 'a "normal" girl or boy'. In their research, individuals were required to align their gendered and social performances to one of these groups, each with binary expectations of a range of behaviours. Those who failed in this task experienced significant marginalisation and persecution, themes common in research detailing gendered expectations of students and teachers in schools (for example, Blaise 2005b; Glynn 1999; Pascoe 2007; Renold 2003, 2006). Phenomena such as these highlight what it means to 'fit in' at schools. Are these gender and social performances inherent, something that students 'naturally' perform? Or do our/their interactions require dynamicity; continually shifting in response to others? Warrington and Younger suggest that if individuals move outside of what it is to 'fit in', rejecting their role to perform normatively, they are presented with a dangerous social reality even within the 'safe' space of schools. In other words, there is an ongoing requirement of students to perform to contextual expectations. To move outside normative standards (for example, of gender and/or sexuality) means to face punishments for transgressions from collectively endorsed boundaries.

Perhaps this is what Jennings alludes to where he illustrates that 'we either learn to get along or learn to hate'; to learn this requires understanding and responding to what is acceptable and expected, both in the performance of self-identity and in the encouragement or punishment of others. Schooling is not only about learning to read, write and solve problems, but also learning how to 'reduce the risk of ostracisation, of being labelled as other and different, and being rejected by the prevailing culture'. These factors may be seen as a parallel and equally important 'social curriculum' where individuals learn their (and others') place and how to alter it; they learn how to 'go with the crowd'. Through recognising that this social curriculum is at work, educational research has the

potential to view social and institutional practices that inform these meanings; that inform the ways that we confirm or combat prejudice through the schooling process.

Perhaps here is a good point to reference my own personal journey. To me, the most relevant aspect of my educational experiences was growing up as a same-sex attracted teenager in an urban girls' school. I was lucky enough, at the age of 14 onwards, to have a group of friends who supported my coming out journey for several years. This support was definitely needed, as despite a (little L) liberal upbringing in a progressive family, and the positive contributions of friends around me, I felt a deep sense of unease, largely constituted by hatred of my (continually denied) sexual orientation. In retrospect, it is easy for me to recognise that being surrounded by 'certain behaviours, language, attitudes, which are linked with being [a] "normal" girl or boy' and the connected compulsory heterosexuality (which I ascribed to for many years) was more powerful than the support of my family and friends during this period of my life. This understanding acted as the starting point for this research, as I aimed to explore the often-invisible (or at least, taken for granted) boundaries that are produced and performed in moment-to-moment transfers through discursive practices. I believe that these were the ultimate factors that largely depleted my sense of self-worth and led to a long-term and premature rejection of my current (exceptionally content) identity.

This acknowledgement features here for two reasons, namely to situate my personal interest in the following research and to illustrate my initial movements, both of which influence my research position and the outcomes that will follow. Although a personal investment may have been the ignition point for this book, the depth of theory and possibility in viewing and responding to prejudice, inclusion, exclusion and performance in schools cemented my research interests. These moved from being specifically based in gender and sexuality to a more diverse conceptualisation of what it means to 'go with the crowd' and perform to normative and endorsed standards.

USING POSTSTRUCTURALISM

The first aspect of this discovery was a re-conceptualisation of what schools are and what they represent. Poststructuralism offers a particularly relevant theoretical perspective to assist with this process. Within poststructural

frames, schools can be viewed as productive sites of knowledge, power and discourse that inform (and reflect) understandings of students, teachers and broader communities. They set clear programmes for the production of social identities including those of principals, teachers, students, parents and carers (Epstein and Johnson 1998). Through producing curricula, policies and everyday practices that are either formally sanctioned or informally permitted, schooling institutions function to facilitate or marginalise, produce or disable particular types of knowledge.

Pedagogy has been theorised by Epstein and Sears as all the 'myriad ways in which we learn and are taught to position ourselves within the regimes of truth through which we understand our gendered, heterosexualized, racialized, and classed world; the punishments for transgressions as well as the rewards for conformity' (1999, p. 2). In this poststructural reading of schools, they are understood as sites of education not only for a formal curriculum, but as also for communicating informal messages about the broader world and our place/s within it. While intentional teaching takes place, this 'hidden curriculum' is also at work, and student learning is often taking place in ways that teachers are unaware. Individuals within schools continually receive information about what is allowable and prohibited in terms of their own actions and the actions of others.

Through viewing schools as productive sites, questions about the process of this production can be asked. What happens in schools to communicate certain boundaries and norms? How do students and teachers learn and contribute to these systems? It has become clear through a range of contemporary research in schools that certain identities are not valued equally to others; some 'fall short' in terms of their social, academic or cultural presentations. Particular ways of seeing and being in the world are valued within schools and, crucially, these are contingent on the participation of those who reside within them (Epstein and Johnson 1998; Epstein and Sears 1999). Individuals and groups learn ways to move and perform in particular spaces to gain rewards and gratification and to avoid discipline or punishment (Foucault 1991). Equally, these same individuals engage with the policing of boundaries to affirm their knowledge of norms and social requirements and maintain performative integrity. These processes become a 'stylized repetition of acts' (Butler 1990, p. 140) which constitute a repeated performance as a truth, and consequently as a verifying authority. In other words, as values are formed, fortified and iterated, they encourage the collective knowledge that they are immovable and definitive, and consequently reaffirm their own production. As we consider each

of these aspects, it becomes evident that the process of meaning making is complicated and continual. The way we talk, move and act over time and space creates or eliminates possibilities through illustrating what is socially allowed (what is okay), and what is not. This raises immediate questions about how students and teachers contribute to systems of meaning, or 'regimes of truth' within schools. What performances are sanctioned, and how? Who benefits, and who is marginalised? These questions again have dominated my journey throughout the following book. By using a range of material from Judith Butler and Michel Foucault I have attempted to highlight their procedural implications through discussions of intelligibility and disciplinary power of whose identities can be known, sanctioned and appreciated, and whose identities remain unknown or abject.

While Butler and Foucault allow a frame of reference for theorising social boundaries and processes, Warrington and Younger (2011) demonstrate the practical and corporeal realities that can emerge from these schooling processes. Young people within schools face social peril if they are unable to demonstrate their ability to 'go with the crowd' and be a 'normal' girl or boy. The binary expectations of 'boys' or 'girls' present a meaningful research opportunity, as individual experiences are contingent on how they are constructed and equally how they negotiate these constructions. Depending on the theoretical background, research can function to classify and essentialise performances along gendered lines, or it can critically engage with the discourses and implications of positioning individuals into these groups. Where the former often operates within psychologically based quantitative studies, the latter offers opportunities to examine qualitative data and analyse the implications of particular kinds of acts and knowledges. Poststructuralism represents a theoretical framework that attempts to disrupt these binaries and elucidate the ways that they have come to be understood and recognised as 'truths'. Using poststructuralism makes it possible to show that the widely used terms of 'boys' and 'girls' represent more than their physiological foundations and are instead socio-culturally constructed categories. As these hold intrinsic collective and subjective meanings, they don't necessarily represent equality or equity. Through examining the expectations that are imposed upon the individuals who are assigned either one or the other without the ability to transcend, it becomes possible to understand how power functions within and around the groups. Indeed, this framework has the potential not only to examine the situations of research participants, but also to interrogate research

that informs them from different paradigms. This is the foundation of the research presented in this book. In it, I have attempted not only to envisage and illustrate the 'realities' of the participants, but also to demonstrate the ways in which dominant research ideologies are effective in positioning them. These ideologies manifest in the discursive practices of teachers, other students, family members and the media, and can function to position individuals into categories that they may not ascribe to or identify with.

Although the foundation of 'boys' and 'girls' represents a critical engagement point of this research, other binary research foundations additionally produce identity consolidations. Within the understanding of prejudice, inclusion and exclusion in schools, a pertinent example is the conception of 'bullying', which can be approached from many different research paradigms. Some of the questions that these raise include 'What is a 'bully'?' 'How do 'bullies' behave?' 'What is a 'victim'?' 'Whose fault is this?' and 'How do we conceptualise 'bullying'?' These questions illustrate ideological and discursive contentions, but are also importantly relevant at a micro level. As we approach them either implicitly or explicitly, the answers hold distinct discursive implications for the individuals that invest in them or those who have them applied to them.

In recognition of the above, I have aimed in the following chapters to explore the ways in which knowledge and values are produced in schools and how schooling processes, both formal and informal, affirm or negotiate these. Through adopting a critical, qualitative and poststructural approach, I acknowledge that I am interested in undermining 'taken for granted' or 'common sense' truths that operate to affirm normative values in schools like 'girls' and 'boys', or 'bully' and 'victim'. Indeed, these constructed identities represent avenues of power and possibilities of prejudice as they operate to define who is 'in' or 'out' through inferential attributions. By examining how individuals and groups construct ideas about 'others', I hope to demonstrate the power of language and dominant discourse in creating hierarchical social realities, where investments in norms can result in valued or discarded identities and demonstrate to others the ways that they should 'be'.

In recognising these foundations, I specifically seek to examine and deconstruct the gendered and social realities that are experienced (and constructed) within two high schools in New South Wales, Australia. The gendered focus of the research represents my response to both my initial concerns and interests in research as well as the ongoing dialogue

between gender, power and (in)equality in educational research spheres. As researchers such as Jessica Ringrose have demonstrated, there is a wealth of work to be done in 'understanding gender and sexual politics within the contemporary domain of education' (2013, p. 1). By extending this focus to encompass 'social realities', I actively assert that inequality and prejudice can be present across a myriad of social constructions and understandings including racial, cultural, ethnic, disability, sexual, classed or any other differential mode of identification. The term 'social realities' premises my poststructural understanding of these structures as socially based; they are actively produced, reinforced or challenged through interactions. I also acknowledge that not all of these can be predicted when entering novel environments, and that participant accounts are an integral part of ascertaining the inequities that are present in schools.

The above and preceding paragraphs reveal my ongoing interest in the active and constant construction of meaning from individuals and groups. Just as schools are reflected in this work as productive, discourse is similarly framed. Michel Foucault, whose work I draw upon frequently throughout this book, understands discourse as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Discourses are not *about* objects; they *constitute* them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own intervention' (emphasis added) (Foucault 1972, p. 49). As I have recognised earlier that knowledge of particular identities are constructed through talk and actions, Foucault's reflections offer a concrete representation of what this means and the research implications of understanding discourses in this way. Specifically, his words assert the importance of analysing discursive acts that are often taken for granted; that are concealed through their own intervention. This is of specific relevance in educational discourses that pathologise identities and affix labels. Again, a pertinent example is that of 'bullying', producing identities like 'bully' and 'victim' and assigning these with understandings that essentialise aspects of individuals' being, simplifying and individualising complex social and cultural phenomena (Ringrose and Renold 2010). In my research I engage with Foucault's concerns and outline discursive implications in terms of the individuals who participate in these processes and the strategies that they utilise. Through viewing discourses as productive, I demonstrate how particular discourses become dominant in the participant schools, and how this dominance forges expectations and resists challenges.

To achieve these outcomes, it was critical that I adopted a methodological approach that acknowledged the connections between discursive constructions and subjectivities, 'that is, our perceptions of the world, our sense of self and our relations to our environment and to others' (C. Davies and McInnes 2012, p. 136). My engagement with the understandings of Michel Foucault and his theories of discourse, disciplinary power and institutional mechanisms of control supported the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA). The aim of this work is to understand the ways in which individuals make meaning and the implications that these processes result in. FDA accordingly 'aims to map the discursive worlds people inhabit and to trace possible ways-of-being afforded by them' (Willig 2008b, p. 125). Carla Willig's appraisal of the methodological strategy outlines the distinct relationships between how individuals construct objects or phenomenon through discourse, and how these constructions open up or close down subject positions, potential practical actions and subjectivities. These connections are inexplicably significant. They offer a chance to demonstrate how what we say creates the realities for ourselves and for others. They provide a link to show how we either 'learn to get along or learn to hate', and the ways we construct what it means to 'go with the crowd'. By viewing the connections between linguistic constructions and subjectivities, it becomes possible to map how 'prejudice becomes ingrained' in schools and how that prejudice is informed.

Much of the research that has been produced about gendered and sexual identity prejudice in schools has focused on same-sex attracted students in schools and their experience of significant persecution (Ashman 2004; Crowhurst 2001; Dempsey, Hillier, and Harrison 2001; Hillier et al. 2005; Hillier et al. 2010; Kosciw et al. 2014; Mikulsky 2005), with a smaller proportion focusing on the experiences of transgender or gender diverse young people (E. Smith et al. 2014). While this research represents an important contribution, it again subscribes to a normative discourse of homophobia only affecting those who are sexually or gender diverse. These studies reinscribe 'the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972, p. 49), informing discourses that cite homophobic and transphobic performances as a 'minority issue' or as not a (relevant) problem in a number of schools (Chan 2009). I do not dispute that the experiences of these marginalised young people are a vital concern of research; however, this discourse functions to conceal the greater power and depth of gendered and homophobic discourses as

mechanisms of control for *all* who speak or hear them. As such, I depart from these more linear understandings to gain an understanding of how many different individuals within schools experience, reject or contribute to gendered and social realities that sustain persecution for nonconformity. This re-positions homophobia, gender-based violence and general interactions as performances that require continual construction from the whole school community, rather than just being relevant for a minority. It affirms that particular interactions affect all individuals through defining social and performative boundaries and restricting difference and diversity. Rasmussen helpfully reiterates this:

> I want to resist the temptation to construct LGBTI-identified teachers and students as fundamentally different from their heterosexual counterparts or as people who are uniformly abject and in need of protection. Instead, I advocate strategies that support teachers and students in examining the mechanisms that simultaneously sustain and compel marginalization.

> (Rasmussen 2006, p. 20)

These 'mechanisms that . . . sustain and compel marginalization' are the focus of this research. As a departure from previous research studies that have especially focused on one aspect of 'difference', this book seeks to provide an original contribution by demarcating its focus on social structures, interactions and 'fitting in' as opposed to essentialist forms of bullying. Rather than focusing on one aspect of difference or persecution, I argue that all difference and diversity is potentially at risk of damage through prohibition or discipline. This includes diversity in gender, race, class or sexual orientation, or more general social or cultural performances. Indeed it includes the 'whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming' (Foucault 1991, pp. 178–179); any departure from the normative standard that results in regulatory processes being applied.

As I have detailed earlier, this book also demonstrates the limits of other research paradigms to investigate these phenomena. As many psychologically based studies have conceptualised discriminatory performances as pertaining to 'bullying', they have contributed to simplistic pathological understandings including typified roles and performances. I contend that 'bullying' is often a simplistic representation of complex and multifaceted interactions within schooling environments – interactions that reference hierarchical structures of being and produce inequalities based upon collective social and institutional understandings. In taking

this line of understanding, I argue that in order to understand incidents of bullying, we need to understand both how bullying is a process of group interactions, and also how these interactions are 'part of power relations within both the immediate context of the school and the wider society' (Horton 2011, p. 268). As mechanisms within and outside of schools function to define social boundaries and hierarchies, identities become restricted to operate in line with sanctioned normative values, reducing the possibilities for performative diversity.

In reference to both the productive nature of schools and of discourses, I refer to 'identities' hereafter as neither being fixed nor innate, but rather performative and iterative of normative social and cultural constructions. In using this flexible definition of 'identity', I aim to highlight individuals' agency in the construction of their own subjectivities and identities (Rasmussen 2006). This emphasises that the performative and discursive movements that we undertake construct both our own realities and the realities of those around us, and reflects the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler who contribute to the understanding of subjective *performances* in light of formative social and cultural sanctions. Butler's understanding of intelligibility and Foucault's understanding of disciplinary power has informed this study's conception and exploration of how acts have embedded power and knowledge drawn from the discourses that surround them.

BOOK STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This book is divided into six chapters that follow this introduction. Chapter 2 details some of the scholarship around bullying. It examines the ways in which contemporary studies have been framed and the theoretical perspectives that they employ. The traditional (essentialist) ways of envisaging bullying are evaluated in recognition of their strengths and weaknesses. In the light of the ways that these perspectives minimise student experiences and reduce teacher perspectives, alternate ways of viewing 'bullying' are suggested, namely through a Foucauldian approach that understands bullying as a 'discursive practice' (Walton 2005a, p. 59).

Chapter 3 builds on this framework to position the study within the concept of 'gender regulation'. It acknowledges that essentialist approaches fail to conceptualise the larger social, cultural and institutional processes that inform student ways of being, and particularly how these

facilitate incidents of persecution. As such, this chapter reframes bullying as an outcome of particular social contexts, rather than a production of a socially or psychologically deviant identity. The literature that examines broader theories of social and cultural power including Foucauldian understandings of discipline and surveillance and Butler's theories of performativity and intelligibility are reviewed. It additionally reviews Butler's 'heterosexual matrix' and how this and compulsory heterosexuality is produced and experienced within schools. Chapter 3 also briefly details the methodological approach that was taken during this study.

Chapter 4 is the first of the three analysis and discussion chapters that explicitly describes and analyses the discursive accounts of the teacher and principal participants at the two cooperating schools, Wilson and Grove High. Chapter 5 follows this with the accounts of student participants. Chapters 5 and 6 share the same structure as they work through the six stages of Carla Willig's (2008b) interpretation of FDA. Throughout these chapters, relevant theoretical and practical literature has been integrated to reflect on the previous findings in this area. Chapter 6 then seeks to analyse the event that featured at the opening of this introduction, 'kick a slut in the head day' that represents a discursive and physical response to the context at Wilson High School. In this chapter, teacher, student and principal constructions of bullying, gender and 'joking' are interpreted and reified in reflection of the previous chapters.

Chapter 7 concludes the book by reviewing the content and major findings. Three major findings of 'gender regulation', 'institutional influence on social norms' and 'inevitability' are outlined and explored against the discourses that were reviewed in Chapters 4–6. In the light of these findings, the book concludes with a discussion on future directions in educational study. The book is then finalised with some concluding thoughts.

Unpacking and Reframing 'Bullying'

The phenomenon of bullying is undoubtedly one of the most prominent, divisive and inflammatory issues faced by schools and educational policy makers in contemporary times. In reflection of this, it has received extensive attention in academic, political and popular discourses over the last few decades. The ways in which it has been constructed in these arenas has impacted upon perspectives and actions related to intervention and policies, as well as individuals involved in bullying incidents.

Particularly over the past three decades, international research relating to bullying in schools has increased in quantity and depth. This research has detailed a range of findings relating to rates of prevalence (Solberg and Olweus 2003; Wolke et al. 2001), the student experience (Boulton and Smith 1994), teacher intervention (and non-intervention) (Meyer 2008b), institutional strategies to addressing bullying (Allen 2010; Bickmore 2011), the participatory roles in bullying scenarios (Cornell and Brockenbrough 2004; Dowdney 1993; Holt and Espelage 2007; Omizo et al. 2006; Salmivalli 1999; Solberg et al. 2007), the characteristics (social, cultural and psychological) of participants (Stevens et al. 2002; Thornberg and Knutsen 2011) and other facets. Each of these studies contributes to the broader 'bullying discourse', which can be seen as an assemblage of knowledge and understanding that exists within schools, academia and popular culture, and infers the existence of definitive 'truths' about bullying. The bullying discourse can be seen as broadly informing collective perspectives of how individuals observe,

interpret and react to incidents or scenarios that could be or are positioned as 'bullying'.

The discourse of bullying has particular strength when it is produced at the academic or institutional/school level. Importantly, the discourse that is produced at each of these levels is relevant to the collective understanding of what bullying is and how individuals exist and perform within it. This does not mean to say, however, that these discourses are complementary, or that they combine effectively to produce an inclusive and representative collaboration. Instead, there are tensions both within and between academic and institutional pursuits of the bullying discourse (Espelage and Swearer 2003). Over the past decades the academic understanding of bullying has been contested and divided between different theoretical foundations and research underpinnings. Aspects that have been widely accepted as traditional or 'essentialist' understandings of bullying have been deconstructed, criticised and rejected by more sociological research approaches, yet they remain dominant in a research area that is experiencing growth in interest and investment.

The Essentialist, Traditional and Dominant Assumptions

The term 'bullying' in schools remains largely consistent with understandings embedded in social, cultural and linguistic structures with essentialist histories and identity ascriptions. The traditional definitions of 'bullying' that have these values permeate schools, teacher perspectives and popular culture most successfully (Walton 2005a), and provoke individualistic, dualist and reductionist understandings of student behaviour (Carrera et al. 2011).

This most dominant definition of 'bullying' has primarily been drawn from the social science field (Rigby 2007; Walton 2011), specifically through the work of Dan Olweus (1978, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997). Olweus continues to be positioned as 'the first to focus on bullying as a problem needing to be addressed through empirical examination' (Walton 2011, p. 133). His coining of the term 'bullying' in 1978 represented a shift from focusing only on group attacks to individual or group actions (Carrera et al. 2011). It also represented a change in research focus, placing greater emphasis on the behavioural characteristics of those involved rather than how particular situations resulted

in bullying performances (Horton 2011). Bullying has, since then, consistently been defined by Olweus as follows:

> when [a student]...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
>
> (Olweus 1997, p. 496).

Olweus goes on to suggest that the term 'bullying' is only appropriate to utilise when there is 'an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship)' (1997, p. 496), and more specifically where the student exposed to the negative actions is 'helpless' or 'weaker' (1997, p. 496) than those performing them. This weakness can be real or perceived, physical or mental, or the imbalance may be achieved through numbers of individuals involved in the scenario. Additionally, this imbalance can be achieved when the individual who is perpetrating the bullying is 'difficult to identify or confront as in social exclusion from the group, talking behind the person's back, or when a student is being sent anonymous unpleasant notes' (Olweus 1997, p. 496). This example is particularly pertinent to newer, 'cyber bullying' modes of aggression that tend to operate from behind individual positions of anonymity or altered online personas/ avatars (Cassidy et al. 2009). According to Olweus, teasing, in comparison, is represented as 'of a playful and relatively friendly nature, which is often recurrent but which in most cases cannot be considered bullying' (Olweus 1997, p. 496).

This structured and precise definition promotes possibilities for identifying and understanding bullying using precise criteria. Three distinct boundaries are specifically outlined in the revised 'Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire' as being related to the definition of bullying; '...the intention to harm the victim, the repetitive nature of bullying, and the imbalance in power between the victim and the perpetrator(s)' (Solberg and Olweus 2003, p. 246). These assumptions are carried in the majority of scholarship which is often concerned with categorising the form of victimisation: being indirect, relational, physical, verbal or generic (Hawker and Boulton 2000). Subsequently, schools often refer to and define bullying incidents in relation to motivation, method, the role ascriptions of those who participate, whether they are repetitive and their length of time.

Although these constitutions of bullying are dominant, the introductions of sociological, feminist and critical understandings of education and pedagogy have challenged these foundations and produced new lines of thought. These positions disrupt the 'defined, objectified, categorized and psychologised' (Walton 2005b, p. 57) theories of bullying, and produce newly envisaged complexities which undermine 'any international consensus concerning the definition of school-based bullying' (Carrera et al. 2011, p. 481). These novel approaches have begun to capture the diversity and nuance of how bullying is experienced by different students. In addition, contemporary research has introduced illustrations of how these experiences are informed by wider mechanisms of regulation found within dominant structures of power (Ringrose 2008). These new theories, methodologies and results are precipitating a rejection of the former fixed 'definitions' of bullying. This is a positive change, as these definitional boundaries are problematic in the ways that they close our eyes to the lived realities and harms that students are confronted with. When we constrain acts of violence by particular definitive boundaries, we simultaneously reject some experiences as being meaningful. Perhaps we should start with these questions: Is 'bullying' really a helpful frame of reference? Is it possible for us to transcend a concept embedded with so much meaning?

Researching Bullying: Essentialist Underpinnings

The foundational understanding of essentialism is underpinned by the idea that identities are inherent and therefore incapable of change (Rasmussen 2006). This concept can be seen both in the entity of bullying itself, with its inflexible and definitive boundaries, as well as the fixity of the subjects that the discourse produces (bully, victim). These foundations are portrayed in an essentialist understanding as objective, rational and scientific. Research studies that draw upon essentialist frames of bullying usually engage with the subject matter in a way that emphasises quantitative outcomes, such as the prevalence of bullying in particular situations, the levels of role ascription to bullying 'identities' or the success or failure of particular intervention strategies. Meta-analyses on school bullying research have shown that the overwhelming majority of research into bullying has been conducted by psychologists that frame bullying as a developmental psychological problem among children (Hawker and Boulton 2000; Smith and

Brain 2000) that can be attributed to psychological characteristics and personality or genealogical causes. The theoretical location of this research portrays bullying as a behavioural problem that can be 'fixed' by assessing individual conditions and disrupting these with targeted programmes. Problematically, these programmes emerge assuming universal commonalities. Social, geographical, cultural and even temporal differences between environments are often ignored in both research and interventions due to the assumption of the 'problem' emerging from inherent psychological characteristics of those involved. Subsequently, research and interventions attempt to operate in a 'top-down' context-independent manner that assumes that researchers can formulate universal principles about (and solutions to) bullying (Schott 2014). It also destines bullying to be individualised and pathologised in opposition to children who are 'un-afflicted' by these behaviours (Barboza et al. 2009). Aggression is seen as a deliberate act perpetrated by one individual upon another, simplifying the intersection of multiple values, influences, incidents and power structures to a single event that is then framed within psychological or behavioural assumptions.

While I have so far highlighted the limitations of the essentialist approach, I also recognise the perceived value of essentialist approaches when addressing school bullying. Approaches that adopt these frameworks successfully simplify the complex phenomenon of bullying in order to make the phenomenon easier to understand, and easier to confront in an interactional or procedural fashion (Ryan and Morgan 2011). This aim and procedural undertaking is understandable within schooling contexts where practitioners aim to quickly understand and delineate incidents, interactions or phenomena that have complicated productions and inclusions, yet require immediate action or resolution. Through attempting to dismantle these performances 'into simpler components', teachers and schools can focus on individual variables and attempt to control these to reduce conflict. This intervention strategy can effectively be adapted into formal policies, processes and structures, and demonstrate to school staff, students and the wider community that 'bullying' is being confronted in direct, tangible ways; procedural simplicity and comprehension is increased, there are likely clear and 'direct' disciplinary or interventional procedures, a more coherent practical implementation and ease of problem identification for staff and students.

Essentialist Understandings: Fundamental Identities and Roles

There are various concerns among sociologically and philosophically motivated educational research related to essentialist research approaches. First, the dominance of psychological research leads to the pathologisation and creation of identity typologies that are dualist in nature (Ringrose 2008). In other words, when essentialist frameworks are applied to a bullying incident, the outcome is often that individuals or groups will be ascribed with either a 'bully' (perpetrator of violence) or a 'victim' (receptor of violence) label. These identities are seen as being 'fundamental and therefore…incapable of change' (Rasmussen 2006, p. 86). Some other (less utilised) 'participant roles' in bullying scenarios include the bully/victim, bystander, reinforcer, helper and defender of the victim (Salmivalli 1999). The predominant focus, however, resides with the bully and victim as being largely oppositional figures with particular identities. Power, the key definitional aspect of bullying, is represented as an 'individual psychological and intentional acting out of aggression from the bully to the victim, setting up a bully/victim binary' (Ringrose 2008, p. 510). What is less well understood, however, is that these identities are not simply based upon a conceivable role in any particular incident. Instead, they are constituted by gendered, classed and socioculturally and politically informed values that restrict and facilitate particular subjectivities (Ringrose and Renold 2010). Traditional bullying literature has been critiqued for its lack of focus on these structures, including its inability to successfully investigate sociocultural and situational aspects of identity and power and their role in relation to gender, sexuality and other social and cultural factors (Carrera et al. 2011).

While this dualism has a range of effects, some of the most significant include impacts upon the positioning, practice and subjectivities of those who apply the identities and those who have the labels applied to them. 'Bullies' and 'victims' have particular traits attributed to them through the discourses of others, constructing a particular reality with ramifications for how they are positioned in terms of their behaviour, social ability and emotional characteristics. Although essentialism informs the fundamental nature of these identities, the extent of its influence does not simply reside with the labels of bully and victim. Brown et al. (2007) explored the nature of the Olweus designed 'Bullying Prevention Program' that operates from the essentialist paradigm. Their analysis suggested that by

labelling and ascribing identities, as well as offering a 'one-size-fits-all view of bullying' (2007, p. 1263), the programme produces a 'tyranny of sameness' that presumes identical motivations, characteristics and forms of bullying that take place within any schools. This perspective 'erodes differences that make a difference in children's lives, not only with respect to gender, but also with respect to social class, race, ethnicity, sexual identity and ability' (Brown et al. 2007, p. 1263). This reflects that this paradigm and the interventions that draw from it are unable to recognise the larger context from which incidents of bullying emerge. As such, related policies and programmes are compromised in their ability to directly confront moments of bullying (Walton 2005b).

In addition to these shortfalls, Ringrose and Renold (2010) reflect on the distinct pathologisation of the bully/victim identities and the ways in which individuals have ways-of-being made accessible or inaccessible, especially in regard to gender. As we have seen, essentialist approaches position sociocultural differences and context as irrelevant or insignificant when attempting to confront bullying. Instead, the *behaviours* of the students are seen as the most valuable or relevant considerations; it is these where the intervention must be situated, regardless of the motivations. This approach suggests that structural, institutional, social, racial, sexual or gendered power differentials are not relevant to bullying programmes or student experiences. The definitional boundaries of bullying are, instead, the most relevant aspect, rather than the underpinnings of the bullying behaviour. Brown et al. suggest that this homogenisation may inflame bad feelings when social persecution occurs:

> ...those in subordinate groups are further marginalised, because justified anger that comes from experiences of oppression or subordination carries the same valence and response in the Olweus model as anger that comes from a position of privilege and dominance over someone.

> (Brown et al. 2007, p. 1264)

This example clarifies a further practical outcome of the Olweus bullying definition. As dominant hierarchical structures of power and identity are ignored or downplayed, certain students experience 'double disadvantage' (Zyngier 2003) as the inequalities are reaffirmed. The students that are already marginalised in social or institutional settings through mechanisms such as racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia or discrimination against disabilities, encounter a system which punishes them for

enacting resistance to their persecution. The essentialist model behaviours that enforce inequalities (sometimes through violence) possess the same impact as those that are thought to be random or without foundation. Significantly, this disempowers the 'victim' experience, making it inconsequential both during the incident itself and in their broader social interactions.

The outcome of 'victim' disempowerment is particularly common when reviewing institutional approaches to girls' experiences of bullying. Through attempting to apply a universal formula to incidents of bullying, essentialist approaches have commonly failed to recognise the distinct experiences of girls in schools (Carrera et al. 2011). Gender-blind approaches have tended to dominate most early research on bullying, with an implicit focus on boys as both the victims and perpetrators of bullying (Ringrose 2008), demonstrating the clear discursive and theoretical constructions of bullying being mostly physical. Ringrose's (2008) study examined the discourses, practices and positioning surrounding girls' bullying in schools and elucidated the ongoing pathologisation of their particular 'type' of interactions. Girls' experiences of bullying were constructed as 'hidden', 'psychological', 'not a problem', 'invisible', 'internalized' and 'neglected' (Ringrose 2008, p. 510). Her suggestion is that there is a poor understanding of the issues facing girls and that this relates to 'problems in the conceptualization of gender and bullying in much of the psychological literature on school bullying' (Ringrose 2008, p. 510). This mirrors other research that suggests that empirical, essentialist and psychologised research approaches to bullying neglect to address the inequalities that girls face in schools and the social and cultural processes that inform these inequalities (Blaise 2005a; Duncan 2004; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005; Renold 2003, 2006; Youdell 2005).

Although girls are the focus of many of more recent studies, boys similarly experience regulatory processes, hierarchies and patriarchies that inform their performance and subjectivity. These new explorations and ideological directions reflect the need for a more diverse, dynamic and socially informed framework of analysis, not only for school 'bullying', but the wider social structures that inform negative or violent interactions. By reviewing the pressures and systems of meaning that intra-act (Barad 2007; Ringrose and Rawlings 2015) with students' subjectivities, it is possible to see not only how they respond with messages about their own identities, but also the ways in which institutional messages and processes impact upon them and either facilitate or disrupt particular ways of being.

Direct or Indirect: Judging Involvement and Seriousness

As well as making the multiple persecutions of 'victims' inconsequential, traditional bullying research and discourse has resisted any focus on an 'indirect' or 'relational' victimisation. Instead, focus is maintained on aggression of a more direct nature, underpinning the understanding of an individual or group exerting power over another. The (inadequate) understanding of 'directness' has a focus that is limited to the actions of those directly involved in incidents of aggression (Carrera et al. 2011) while failing to acknowledge broader impacts of peer aggression and violence. This again asserts that social hierarchies both within and outside of the school are irrelevant to social performances, and that bullying is disconnected from these.

Finally, the conceptualisation of 'bullying' in its essential form requires the judgement of an external responder to delineate whether an incident or series of incidents are in fact bullying at all. Individuals who are either involved or who are viewing the event hold power over the credibility of the incident or the participants. Those that are viewing or interpreting the bullying act will ascribe their own understandings of the bullying definition and the factors that are in play. This is particularly problematic at the institutional level, where the surveyor of the practices is likely to be located. Schools play an integral part of student lives, experiences and subjectivities, yet what is missing from essentialist research and theory on bullying is the role that schools play in the reproduction of structural, political, historical and social inequities (Youdell 2004). Additionally, the assumptions of the external observer are problematic in that their definitions and understandings of what bullying is (or is not) can cause to limit students' understandings and expression of what is really distressing them at school as their thinking about bullying is restricted to a narrow (and often inapplicable) set of criteria (Duncan and Owens 2011). This is of particular concern with the rapidly changing landscape of bullying and the new technologies, terms and strategies that are encountered by students (see, for example, Cassidy et al. 2009; Ringrose and Eriksson Barajas 2011).

Foucault, Critical Theory, Feminism and Poststructural Lenses

The above discussion highlights that new research requires consideration not only of student lives and realities, but also of the nature of the sociocultural messages that schools promote through policy, teacher

performances and formal and informal practices. A knowledge vacuum has been exposed (Ringrose 2008) and new theoretical approaches are emerging adopted across the social science fields. More comprehensive analyses of bullying will come from the use of constructivist and poststructuralist understandings (Carrera et al. 2011) that promote a review of systemic, social and cultural processes that impact upon subjectivities.

SOCIAL–ECOLOGICAL MODELS

One form of this movement has come in the form of social–ecological models of studying school bullying. These frameworks tend to focus on both individual and contextual factors and the interplay between these, while simultaneously attempting to develop interventions (Barboza et al. 2009). They also, however, primarily focus on 'the dynamic interaction between the bully and the victim . . . including the characteristics of each, from the most immediate and primary to the more distal but significant influences' (Barboza et al. 2009, p. 102). The 'characteristics' of the two individuals involved are seen to emerge in various contexts and lead to the development of particular 'relationship attributes such as dependency and/or conflict' (Barboza et al. 2009, p. 103). These ideas are grounded within traditional bullying understandings, especially those that pathologise particular identities as 'bully' or 'victim' and seek to find psychological bases for these roles. The key difference, however, is that 'emphasis is placed on understanding the bully's individual characteristics in relation to the multiple social systems of which he or she is an inseparable part' (Barboza et al. 2009, p. 103). In this way, the social system and cultural constructions of knowledge are identified as being an integral part of the 'bully' identity. The social–ecological perspective of bullying has been undertaken as a cornerstone of anti-bullying practices in schools, despite a slower adoption in academic research (Swearer et al. 2010). This is perhaps due to the continual operation of the dualistic understanding of bullying without disruption, as well as the lack of acknowledgement of larger social or cultural forces that may be at play in identity performance or policing (Carrera et al. 2011). Additionally, the social–ecological approach fails to acknowledge gender as anything other than a biological category, resisting the interwoven social and cultural meanings that are drawn from sex or gender representations. Therefore, despite the slightly broader approach of the social–ecological framework, it is underpinned by the same individualistic ideologies of the essentialist approach to viewing

bullying. For this reason, 'we need to approach the problem of bullying from a different angle, requiring the work of building a solid theoretical foundation' (Walton 2011, p. 134) that acknowledges that the essentialist understandings and definitions of bullying are fundamentally flawed.

To comprehensively disrupt the essentialist foundations, research requires a reorientation. Instead of searching for a problem with an individual, new approaches require a social perspective of bullying that does not position young people as deviant or locate their behaviours at an individual level. We need to generate understanding about why these young people perform moments of social persecution. In other words, bullying involves ordinary people in particular situations, and we need 'to ask not what is wrong with those children who bully, but rather why do those children do what they do?' (Horton 2011, p. 269). This question distances the starting point of bullying from the traditionally perceived aggressive intent of bullying, and instead questions the role of particular social performances within contextual relations of power.

Foucauldian Analysis: Bullying as Discursive Practice

Through resisting discourses that review the role of social and cultural structures and hierarchies, essentialist discourses fail to consider the role of the institution in the facilitation or disruption of wider inequities and inequalities. Brown et al. (2007) assert that the essentialist discourse employment itself is part of the perpetration of inequality as it 'unwittingly reproduces a social hierarchy that places White middle class heterosexual males at the top or at the center' (p. 1266). The institution therefore reproduces structural inequality already ensconced in broader social hierarchies.

Traditional understandings are also problematic as they present power imbalances as antecedents of bullying behaviours when they may actually be the effects of social relations. New approaches need to view social structures as hierarchies and to examine the ways in which power is perceived, achieved and maintained through repetitive acts (Butler 1993), as is the aim of this book. Where power imbalances are represented as being precursors of bullying behaviours, rather than effects of social regulations, they are naturalised through the bullying discourse. As Horton (2011, p. 270) reflects, 'a student's greater confidence, assertiveness, verbal dexterity or social or manipulative skill is most likely contingent on their position within the social relations of which they are a part'. The connection of social power and negative social interactions demonstrates the need to review bullying as

a 'strategical situation' in order to adequately understand the relations of power that are involved (Horton 2011).

The 'strategical situation' posited by Horton is based on Foucault's understanding of power; 'power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society' (Foucault 2008, p. 93). Foucault offers a significant entry point into the discussion in that he did not theorise about school bullying, but his analysis of discourse as a site of relations of power can assist us in reconceptualising the concept of 'bullying' (Walton 2005b). Discourse can be seen as a system of statements that construct an object. This is not restricted to inanimate objects, but can include subjects, experiences and a sense of self (Willig 1999). Importantly, objects, subjectivities and experiences can have a range of different constitutive discourses that are situated in different 'strategical situations' of power. 'Bullying' has the potential to be reviewed as a set of discourses that are 'embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns of general behaviour' (Foucault 1977, p. 200). Rather than a pathological, individually based and interpreted act, bullying incidents can be a symptomatic effect of a broader discursive interaction. An act of verbal, physical, psychological or other violence can reveal a culture of expectation and the boundaries of acceptable social performances and identities. Its role is one within a system of discursive practices that 'refer to the rules by which discourses are formed, rules that govern what can be said and what must remain unsaid, and who can speak with authority and who must listen' (McLaren 2007, p. 209). Where those with authority maintain the dominant discourse, those individuals who fail to fit within it are positioned as being individually responsible for being 'different'. The essentialist bullying understanding perpetuates this framework of power as being 'common sense' as the dominant behaviour is seen as reasonable and acceptable, 'masking the underlying power relationship that is essential for the successful maintenance of power' (Ryan and Morgan 2011, p. 29).

Studies utilising a Foucauldian approach to viewing social structures, strategies and discursive practices in schools have been both theorised and undertaken in recent years (for example: Ferfolja 2005; Horton 2011; Martino 2000; Ryan and Morgan 2011; Walton 2005b). Each of these reject the assumption of traditional understandings of bullying and reposition bullying as being part of social, cultural and institutional discourses of punishment and regulation.

Ryan and Morgan's (2011) study detailed the discursive practices employed by secondary school students to construct the notion of bullying and the positioning that was conducive to these constructions. Their research that involved the participants being interviewed in pairs found that students constructed bullying as both irrelevant and inevitable. The student voice and discursive strategies employed in their study revealed novel ways of looking at the contemporary construct of 'bullying' in their social and cultural environments. This included redefining bullying from being reprehensible to 'apparently reasonable and acceptable' (Ryan and Morgan 2011, p. 26), especially through the 'use of a standard excuse "as a joke"' (p. 27). 'Just joking' as a discursive strategy will be explored further in the following chapter, along with other means for redistributing responsibility for action or reaction. Another discursive foundation that resided within 'bullying as irrelevant', however, was that of unintentional bullying, or 'bullying as an unfortunate accident' (Ryan and Morgan 2011, p. 27). The participants explained that bullying could be 'excused as an unforeseen consequence of an unintentional act' (Ryan and Morgan 2011, p. 28) where the 'recipient is skillful[ly] positioned as responsible for any offence or harm for taking it "the wrong way"' (Ryan and Morgan 2011, p. 28), again redistributing blame towards the 'victim'. This study demonstrates the potential of examining discursive strategies employed in bullying environments. Complex student constructions can validate and decriminalise particular behaviours while simultaneously shifting and (re)deploying power structures.

Foucauldian analyses of the positioning and action orientation of particular discourses therefore offer ways of viewing social realities and processes as well as institutional influences upon these. Another relevant example of this could be the discursive deployment of the term 'bullying' itself by institutions. 'Bullying' can be seen as a contested concept not only in its definition, but also in the utilisation of the word itself in various contexts. In a litigious climate, the legal ownership and performance of schools and governing bodies are under increasing scrutiny. In operation, this concept has ramifications for the implementation and usage of the term 'bullying'. Brown et al. (2007) suggest that 'bullying is sometimes used as euphemism for . . . sexism, racism and homophobia. It is a term that makes adults feel more comfortable' (p. 1262) but also falls short of preventing the encompassed behaviours. The usage of 'bullying' can therefore be seen as functioning to produce a more palatable representation of harassment or violence. The 'bullying' inference also works to dislocate the legal

responsibility of the school onto an individual or group of individuals, diluting 'the discourse of rights by minimizing or obscuring harassment and violence' (Brown et al. 2007, p. 1263). The employment of the word 'bullying' and its attached meanings can therefore be seen to represent an institutional discursive strategy in this context. This is especially the case when considering the individualistic and psychologised frameworks from which the word is traditionally deployed. Where a school endorses a bullying discourse, they allocate the responsibility onto the individuals involved and their particular situations, rather than the wider schooling or cultural environment that potentially enables the behaviours.

These strategies utilised by institutions and individuals can therefore reveal channels of power 'produced from one point to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another' (Foucault 2008, p. 93). Discursive constructs and applications reveal the subtlety of these power operations and the ways that they influence the positioning, practice and subjectivities of those employing them as well as those who receive or observe their employment.

In summary, despite accepted definitions of bullying embedded in the majority of educational research, bullying 'is a construction embedded in discursive practice that arises from a network or system of institutional, historical, social and political relations' (Walton 2005a, p. 61). Studies that wish to review ongoing power inequalities and social, historical, cultural and political strategies of power need to successfully engage with the analysis of these discursive practices and attempt to disrupt dominant discourses of essentialism related to school bullying.

Gender Regulation

Re-imagining the Bullying Discourse: Gender 'Regulation'

Viewing gender as an integral aspect of 'bullying' behaviours, especially related to issues of gendered and social hierarchies, is an important aspect of the poststructuralist approach to research on school bullying. As detailed in the previous chapter, many researchers (for example, Brown et al. 2007; Carrera et al. 2011; Ellwood and Davies 2010; Horton 2011; Meyer 2008a; Ringrose 2008; Ryan and Morgan 2011; Walton 2005b; Walton 2011; Warrington and Younger 2011) have encouraged a shift away from individualist and psychologised ideologies of bullying. Instead, these researchers propose a more socially aware and critical examination of the unique and contextual sociocultural realities of students. From this perspective, we are encouraged to re-imagine bullying as a system of ordered performances, centred on complex inclusions and exclusions related to dominant gendered subjectivities (Benjamin et al. 2003). These are informed and communicated through Foucauldian understandings of language, discourse, power and surveillance and function to create social hierarchies.

DISCOURSE, SUBJECTIVITY, IDENTITY AND POWER: DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The terms 'discourse', 'subjectivity' and 'identity' are at the heart of many poststructural investigations as they accord understanding to notions of knowledge, power, truth, performance and sociocultural realities and practices. Foucauldian understandings have resonated within contemporary research to dominate current understandings of these terms, and these have been extended by theorists such as Judith Butler. These concepts support frameworks of meaning that underpin individual and collective performances and as such; here I detail their meanings.

Discourse

From the 1950s onwards, many psychologists, philosophers and sociologists became interested in viewing language as a social performance, and challenged the understanding that language 'provided a set of unambiguous signs with which to label internal states and with which to describe external reality' (Willig 2008a, p. 92). The alternative perception was that language was productive, constructing social realities as well as achieving social objectives. 'This means that...people's speech is understood as social action, and it is analysed in terms of what it accomplishes within a social context' (Willig 2008a, p. 94).

One of the integral factors within this understanding of language is that of 'discourse'. Foucault's interpretation and application of this term referred to ways of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality. Importantly, discourse does not, however, reside only within language. It can be seen as the overarching communication of knowledge and can include 'social practices, forms of subjectivity and relations of power' (Garrett 2004, p. 141). Each of these communicates particular understandings in the ways that they are produced and interpreted. 'Discourses' can therefore be seen as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972, p. 49). They are communicative and prescriptive actions that *form* meanings, subject positions, practices and subjectivities. The discursive structures that inform the objects are concealed through their naturalisation. This is equally important and problematic, as discourses produce outcomes of power (Carabine 2001). As such, questions are produced about how language functions to position speakers and listeners in regard to specific discourses, and what effects this

positioning may have (Wright 2004). Through the critical exploration of discourse, it becomes possible to review the constructs of realities and deconstruct the particular empowerment of knowledge, 'truth' and subjectivity.

Subjectivity and Identity

'People's conceptions of subjectivities and identities are integral to the production of discourses' (Rasmussen 2006, p. 57) and it is therefore imperative for these terms to be correctly defined and applied in research that seeks to explore them. According to Blaise (2005b, p. 17), subjectivity 'refers to an individual's conscious and unconscious thoughts, sense of self, and understanding of one's relation to the world'. In contrast to essentialist understandings of an inherent or static 'identity', subjectivities are actively and socially constructed through language and discourses. They are therefore malleable and dynamic, and can be employed in different ways for different contextual reasons. Gender, for example, can be seen as a source of multiple subjectivities that can be accessed at different times, in different ways, resulting in the access and application of various positions, powers and experiences. Importantly, the positions that are made available from these processes can be either volunteered or externally produced; subjectivities can be decided upon by the person or applied to individuals from others, depending on the experiences that are undertaken and the contexts and knowledge that surround these. In other words, subjectivities can construct social or psychological realities (Willig 2008b). Particular discourses make these realities available or unavailable. Discursive landscapes and boundaries allow particular realities to be accessed or denied, and these discourses are embedded with specific knowledge and power. This means that intersectionality (specifically including the ways that gender, race, sexuality, class and ethnicity, as well as other spheres of social power combine in the process of identity construction) is an integral aspect to consider within all social research, and particularly in research that seeks to understand complex social behaviours and hierarchies. Individuals are impacted and impinged by these powers and consequently have particular subjectivities made available to them or restricted from them. Certain behaviours become privileged, or socially sanctioned in either negative or positive ways. Individuals are constantly experiencing subjectification in different ways, informing them of different channels of power and agency, enabling them to see which they and others possess and how they are

utilised. The multiplicity of these subject positions from which power is experienced and understood influences individual perceptions and experiences of a wide range of discursive and interactive processes, including 'bullying', sexual and gendered harassment and other forms of power and control.

The concept of identity is in dispute in contemporary research spheres, where poststructural theorists such as Butler (1990) argue that identity is not an inner aspect of ourselves, or an 'essence', but instead is an effect of our performances. In this theoretical setting, identity can therefore be seen as similar to subjectivity in that it has the potential for reinvention or change and that it is inherently tied to social and cultural performances. Identity is relational and dynamically exists in communication with and comparison to others (Crimp 1992). As individuals move throughout their worlds, they have a variety of influences and discourses that are made available to them, and adopt certain positions in response to these. The positions which are taken up and identified with constitute identity (Burr 2003; Rasmussen 2006). Identity can therefore be considered as an interweaving product of discourses, interactions and subject positions that is dynamic and interpretational.

Power

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is oppression.
>
> (Foucault 1980, p. 119)

Foucault's understanding of power situates it as a creative and shaping constitutive force, rather than a destructive or oppressive one. In his above quote, he draws links between power, knowledge and discourse – an interconnected triad. Discourses, the vocabularies of meaning that constitute individual performances effectively facilitate, validate, or restrict possible subjectivities. This is not specifically achieved through violence or what is seen in essentialist bullying paradigms as 'power', but predominantly in everyday settings where particular rituals, discussions or interactions are considered normative. In other words, discursive

practices function to prescribe particular practices, specifically those that attempt to normalise people and bodies (Garrett 2004). This power is relational, and establishes lines of deployment of social and cultural capital (Renold 2005), that is, power is integral in producing our social world and the separation of objects from one another (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002).

Foucault further asserts that it is impossible to divide individuals simply into those who possess power and those who do not. Rather, it is impossible for anyone to be outside of power relations, as each person is 'always necessarily involved in the use of power due to one's relationship with other people' (Liao and Markula 2009, pp. 39–40). This conception highlights the infinite, collective, dynamic and unstable nature of power. It is 'everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault 2008, p. 93). Power is also 'self-producing' (Foucault 2008, p. 93), constantly being communicated through discourse and reconstituted through interactional processes. When reviewing power in comparison to discourse and knowledge, there is a clear connection. Discourses become a way of knowing, and everyone using language is an active creator and circulator of these knowledge components (Liao and Markula 2009). These knowledge components contain inherent power, allowing particular 'truths' to be known and celebrated, while others are marginalised or obliterated. Importantly, certain individuals and groups become influential and powerful by strategically using discourses (Liao and Markula 2009). This strategical usage of discourse demonstrates that their adoption holds certain risks and benefits, and the engagement that individuals and groups invest into their position can be tactical and deliberate.

Foucauldian studies therefore acknowledge the presence of power through investigating its outcomes of knowledge and discourse. The ways that discourses are employed, the individuals and objects that they implicate, and the sources of knowledge that they invoke, reveal broader meanings and structures of power.

DISCIPLINE, SURVEILLANCE AND REGULATION: MECHANISMS OF POWER

One of Foucault's key questions is not 'who' has power and 'what' power is, but instead, *how* power is accessed and exercised (Liao and Markula 2009). While power functions to facilitate or restrict particular identities

and subjectivities, two key mechanisms for these outcomes are discipline and surveillance, each with understandings of regulation.

Disciplinary Power and Surveillance

'Discipline "makes" individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise' (Foucault 1991, p. 170). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes his conception of 'disciplinary power' that is exercised by surveillance rather than force. He suggests that disciplinary power consists of three parts, 'hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination' (Foucault 1991, p. 170). Surveillance can be seen within each of these aspects. Hierarchical observation encourages control through personal and infrastructural surveillance; in other words, through the control of individuals watching others and the nature of the landscape itself. It establishes relational power 'that sustains itself by its own mechanism' (Foucault 1991, p. 177); individuals surveil others and hence maintain their own behaviour by recognising that they are being watched. Those that perceive themselves to be seen (and that see and judge others) regulate their own behaviours to align with accepted meanings [for a more detailed discussion of this, see Foucault's (1991) works on Panopticism].

Second, through 'normalizing judgement', a system of penal enforcement is introduced; 'a kind of judicial privilege with its own laws, its specific offences, its particular forms of judgement' (Foucault 1991, p. 178). Different contextual environments with different informal expectations can establish their own boundaries and forms of discipline to maintain particular standards. The informality of this establishment is essential to the practices that maintain the norms: 'What is specific to the disciplinary penalty is non-observance, that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it. The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable' (Foucault 1991, pp. 178–179). In this way a formal structure of boundaries or restrictions for power structures is unnecessary. Instead, it is nonconformity to informal norms (established through social and cultural practices and deployment of capital) that can provoke a disciplinary response when someone 'does not reach the level required' (Foucault 1991, p. 179). The assumption of a shortfall in performance also dictates the nature of the disciplinary response as outlined by Foucault, who says that it must have 'the function of reducing

gaps [and] must therefore be essentially *corrective*' (emphasis in original) (Foucault 1991, p. 179). Discipline therefore acts to constitute and locate the boundaries of social performances and to direct offenders away from these towards a culturally sanctioned alternative. Upon reaching this alternative, that is the norm or standard of acceptable performance, rewards are offered and gratification is produced as the alternative to discipline and punishment. This system consequently establishes ranks and structures that although are potentially dynamic and flexible, demarcate the failures of those participating, and hierarchises their qualities, skills and aptitudes (Foucault 1991).

Although many of Foucault's thoughts on disciplinary power were related specifically to modes of control that were integrated formally through schooling and prison structures, they also offer a critical perspective of social mechanisms that occur outside of formal settings.

Regulation

When reviewing ideas of power and surveillance, and how these are both inducted and communicated through language, discourse and subjectivity, it becomes possible to envisage a culture of *regulation*. The idea of regulation recognises that power and discipline are not always intended or tactically utilised, but regardless of this, they are always present. Conceptually, 'regulation' offers a perspective of restricted possibilities; individuals and groups are constrained by frameworks that offer only certain potential outcomes. Regulation therefore can be seen as both an active process and an outcome of many different processes.

Regulation begins with language that is produced or reflected by individuals. Particular sets of language come together to form discursive structures, and these are then compounded by behaviours that are informed by language. The ways that individuals and groups construct objects and identities inform the meanings that allow them to exist. Realities are either facilitated or constricted by particular discourses, and this then informs hierarchical positions that individuals reside within, depending on their discursive insertion point. Foucault's later work was concerned with these processes- with 'how knowledge was put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of others' (Hall 2001, p. 75). This concept of regulation centred on the relationship between knowledge and power; where knowledge represents a common-sense view of the world and is therefore intimately

bound up with power, privileging particular ways of acting while marginalising alternatives (Burr 2003).

In summary, regulation is enacted through discourse, to 'produce that which it declares' (Butler 1993, p. 107). The subsequent creation of realities and the equal (and opposite) creation of a constitutive outside results in the regulation of intelligible identities. It resides within similar establishments of disciplinary power, but with the added automatic control of a normalising judgement/Panopticism. Individuals are assessed, ranked, disciplined or rewarded, not only by others but also by themselves. Regulation therefore lies at the heart of all social and cultural constructs and performances.

A FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER

The connection between feminism and poststructuralism has suggested critical investigation of how gender and sexuality are formed and re-formed by our societies and cultures. Poststructural feminist theories reject the foundations of biological determinism/reductionism as well as socialisation theories. These approaches focus on largely simplistic developmental ideals of either 'they're just born that way [or] they're just doing what they see' (Blaise 2005b, p. 11) which essentialise gender and lead to simplistic yet extensive dichotomous ways of being either a boy or a girl. From these perspectives, gender is seen as inherently linked to biological sex – that boys and men should demonstrate 'masculine' traits, and that girls and women should demonstrate 'feminine' traits. This perception has led to significant historical and sociological events, including gender interventions from the 'helping professions' for those who deviated from normative gender roles (Butler 2004; Connell 1987). They fail to recognise that individuals are active (rather than passive) in the construction of their gendered performances and that they are able to resist or disrupt gender messages. They also presume that individuals are unable to perceive how gender norms impact upon how we become gendered beings. The reconfiguration of the intellectual field that allowed a re-conceptualisation of gender came in the 1970s when themes of power, inequality, theory and politics became understood as impacts upon (and within) gender understandings, and 'gender thus became .... a *strategic* theory, centering on how, and how far, the social relations of gender could be transformed' (emphasis in original) (Connell 1987, p. 33). The role of feminism in this process cannot be located in isolation. Feminism cannot

be defined as any single movement, but the need to disrupt inequality and challenge structural inequity represents its foundation, which is the commitment to extending freedom and rights (Weiner 1994).

The other part of this theoretical framework, poststructuralism, aims to critically question systems of thought and organisation (Usher and Edwards 1994). It investigates how concepts are understood and discursively constructed by different groups and how some of these constructions gain power and dominance over others to sometimes become accepted 'truths' (Wright 2004). Judith Butler especially attempts to deconstruct and promote critique of 'truths' in this form as she recognises that 'self-evident "truths" are often vehicles for ideological assumptions that oppress certain groups of people in society, particularly those in the minority or on the margins' (Salih 2002, p. 4). As 'truth' is constructed through power structures, it becomes irrelevant. Poststructuralism instead seeks to explore, understand and re-conceptualise the ways in which knowledge is found, portrayed and communicated. 'Truths', in effect, become the very items that poststructuralism seeks to deconstruct. This can occur through the critique of traditional binaries that are embedded with power, for example, girl/boy, gay/straight, rich/poor, white/black, and the creation of an accompanying space for new, alternative understandings (St. Pierre and Pillow 2000).

The epistemological position of poststructural feminism can therefore result in the interrogation of gender as a system of meaning and power, and the linked exploration of why and how gender inequity exists. Second, it casts a critical gaze upon how power and oppression work within a gendered framework and how resisting gender inequities may be possible, or how these resistances are countered by dominant meanings. Two important poststructuralist concepts that facilitate this interrogation are performativity and heteronormativity.

Performativity and Intelligibility: Butler's Heterosexual Matrix

Gender represents both a process and a site of power articulation rather than a list of practices or bodily configurations (Pascoe 2007). It has been variously considered across a range of research disciplines and theoretical frameworks; however, an understanding of gender as being an interactional process has dominated contemporary studies and papers (see, for example, Archer et al. 2007; Benjamin et al. 2003; Blaise 2005b; Brown et al. 2007; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Pascoe 2007; Renold 2005; Ringrose 2010;

Ringrose and Eriksson Barajas 2011; Ringrose and Renold 2010; Walton 2011). Gender can be broadly seen in these studies as the activity of regulating conduct in recognition of the normative conceptions about what is appropriate for one's sex category (West and Zimmerman 1999). In line with this definition, Judith Butler (1990) argues that gender is a 'stylised act' of the body that informs collective systems of meaning and ways of being. In this way, gender becomes something that can be 'done'; it is performative:

> The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self…significantly if gender is constituted through acts…then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and perform in the mode of belief.
>
> (emphasis in original) (Butler 1990, pp. 140–141)

Through this assertion, Butler posits that gender is not a pre-existing element, nor is it biologically determined. Rather it exists as socially and culturally informed expressions (stylised acts) that are continually produced and reproduced. These actively constitute the fiction of a coherent stable identity and give the illusion of a fixed set of gender norms. These norms are continually cited and repeated, resulting in both the concealment of norms and the enforcement of their rules (Butler 1990). This affirms that sex and gender are not internally produced (as would be suggested by a biological determinist perspective) but instead are the '*effects* rather than the causes of institutions, discourses and practices' (emphasis in original) (Salih 2002, p. 10). Social and cultural productions of sex and gender understandings are highlighted and juxtaposed against the understanding of the reverse.

Positioning gender as performance, and therefore as a discourse (Butler 1994), recognises that it is viewed and responded to. Of critical importance therefore is the nature of that response and the possibility for it to consist of acceptance or rejection. Gender performances are seen as becoming culturally sanctioned and 'intelligible' when they 'in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire' (Butler 1990, p. 17). This relies on intelligible genders resting along normative lines (within a

regime of compulsory heterosexuality), warranting their inclusion in cultural acceptability. In other words, males present contextually masculine heterosexual behaviours and discourse, and females present contextually feminine heterosexual performances. In opposition to these sanctioned and promoted positions, operate

> ...the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to exiting norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the 'expression' or 'effect' of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice.
>
> (Butler 1990, p. 17)

These spectres are behaviours, discourses, objects or anything that break from the repeated normative fiction. As they operate outside of the norm, they are compared and contrasted against the paired opposite. For example, we cannot understand 'gay' without first understanding its binary opposite, 'straight'.

Masculinity and femininity are therefore not fixed ideals that remain unchanged over time, but are unstable and continuously socially and culturally constructed and repeated to become embedded with particular meanings and power. This understanding of gender aligns with the Foucauldian understandings of discourse, power and surveillance. Gender is a discourse that produces particular meanings that constitute realities and 'truths' through language, social practices and subjectivities. Particular avenues of power are employed to establish boundaries and those that move towards or cross those boundaries face disciplinary measures.

In a move to discredit the very structures that maintain power, Butler deconstructs and repositions the binaries of 'male', 'female', 'masculine' and 'feminine' in her discussions of gender intelligibility. She suggests that these terms and their rationalised connections to each other through 'the heterosexualization of desire' produces a 'truth' of sex through regulatory practices, and simultaneously produces an othering of those identities that fail to fall within this 'matrix of intelligibility' (Butler 1990, p. 17). Her concept of the 'heterosexual matrix' elaborates from Foucault's (2008) examination of how heterosexuality became understood as a sexuality that was distinct from homosexuality, yet was simultaneously constituted as a

norm from which homosexuality deviated. Butler's heterosexual matrix illuminates the ways that gender is routinely communicated as being inextricably tied to dominant concepts of heterosexuality:

> I use the term heterosexual matrix...to designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized...a hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility that assumes for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality
>
> (emphasis in original) (Butler 1990, p. 151)

Butler's alignment with compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980) informs the understanding of hierarchical structures that are embedded within binary forms of sex and their presumed alignment with gender. When constructing gender as both performative and hierarchical, the normative and the opposite are constituted compared and contrasted, and the latter is made abject. The various abject positions or possibilities are re-presented as 'the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence' as referenced above. In this way, the matrix of intelligibility 'requires that certain kinds of "identities" cannot "exist", that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire does not "follow" from either sex or desire' (Butler 1990, p. 17). Butler's matrix of intelligibility was extended in *Bodies That Matter* to include the notion an inside and a 'constitutive outside' that is inhabited only by abject identities (Butler 1993). Intelligible forms of sex and of gender that are continuous to form and coherent designate identities that form 'subjects'. At the same time, the 'exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed...requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects", but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject' (Butler 1993, p. 3). From this it is possible to see that gendered regulation requires both successful, normative 'subjects' as well as abject 'spectres'. Each has an integral role in maintaining the heterosexual matrix. Those that fall within its realm portray normative genders and police boundaries through discursive and behavioural means. Those that exist outside of it work as a 'threatening spectre' (Butler 1993, p. 3) 'of failed gender, the existence of which must be continually repudiated through interactional processes' (Pascoe 2007, p. 14).

This alignment is so powerful that if an individual is to deviate from unintelligible genders, where masculinity and femininity do not sit in a 'linear story' (Renold 2005, p. 8) with an individual's sex, heterosexuality is thrown into doubt. This conclusion was clearly demonstrated in the ethnographic research by Pascoe (2007). Her study demonstrated how boys continually and repetitively utilised homophobic language and joking rituals to constitute masculinity and repudiate the 'threatening spectre' of being gay, or in Pascoe's work, of 'the fag' (2007, p. 52). Homophobic language and jokes can therefore be seen as a disciplinary mechanism, or a mechanism of gender regulation that applies itself to regulate, and ensure, linear gendered relations. Those that deviate from these lines function as abject identities that assist regulation from their sites of exclusion. Their 'otherness' is policed and shamed as 'abnormal' (Butler 1993).

The heterosexual matrix is, importantly, by Butler's account, inherently unstable. Both gender and heterosexuality rely upon the 'contrasting presence of an Other for their reference point (as "normal" and "natural") expos[ing] their compulsory *and* fragile nature' (Renold 2005, p. 8). In Renold's research, this was illustrated effectively by the children participants' accounts explicitly linking 'doing gender' with 'doing sexuality'. This conception is integral in much contemporary research regarding social structures and functions and individual and group power, especially in youth and schooling contexts. Rather than seeing gender and sexuality as separate issues, we must understand that their constitutive discourses are closely interwoven and dependent upon one another.

Performance, Popularity and Hierarchy: The Heterosexual Matrix in Schools

Research that investigates the ways in which gender is understood, enacted and regulated in schools has taken many approaches. There have been studies that focus specifically on high school girls' experiences of embodying and resisting normative femininities (Archer et al. 2007; Duncan and Owens 2011; García-Gómez 2011; Read 2011; Renold and Ringrose 2008; Ringrose 2008), on boys' experiences of embodying and resisting normative masculinities (Glynn 1999; Keddie 2007; Martino 2000; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2003; Phoenix et al. 2003; Plummer 2001), and on how boys and girls interact in particular ways to produce intelligible gender understandings (Davies 2003; Larsson et al. 2010; Mills 2012; Pascoe 2007; Ringrose and Renold 2010; Youdell 2005).

Studies have investigated how online performances of gender differ from those that are conducted in non-digital environments (García-Gómez 2011; Ringrose and Eriksson Barajas 2011), how gender is enacted in early childhood (Blaise 2005b) and primary settings (DePalma and Jennett 2010; Renold 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006; Skelton et al. 2009). Some of this research centres on modes of regulation, that is, how abject embodiments of gender (and therefore presumed linear sexuality) are policed and persecuted. Others attempt to theologise about the nature of the structures that support the constitution of the 'other' abject identity as well as the subjects that resist this 'threatening spectre'. It could be said that the latter supports the work of the former; that envisaging sociological, gendered hierarchies in schools elucidates the practical repercussions of these structures. This can be seen as the possibility of re-imagining bullying and violence as a process and an outcome of gender regulation.

Gender Performance and Regulation in Youth Peer Groups: Becoming Popular

Gender regulation as a concept has been theorised as both externally applied and self-induced. Davies suggests that bullying and violence, as part of their re-definition from the individual and pathological, need to be re-cast 'as an excessive and misguided defence of a fixed and dominant normative moral order' (2011, p. 278). In other words, bullying research needs to recognise the ways that identities are policed and informed by dominant discourses, behaviours and subjectivities. Regulation can therefore be seen as something powerful enough to restrict or even alter individual movements and possibilities of identity. Identities are seen as so influenced by regulatory practices of gender that their very existence is called into question by suggesting that identity could, in fact, be 'a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience' (Butler 1990, p. 16). Further, gender itself is not the only avenue that experiences regulation, but other aspects of differentiation are capable of restriction as well. What follows is the concept that all identities are regulated to become intelligible along lines of collective, compulsory social constitution.

In her crucial contribution in educational sociology, Valerie Walkerdine (1990) argued that girls and women are positioned through a myriad of

discourses including femininity, irrationality and passivity. This functions to underpin the self-regulation of both student and teacher subjects and significantly implicated schooling processes of subjectification.

Regulation of this type has been shown clearly in the research of Warrington and Younger (2011) that related to peer group inclusion and exclusion amongst adolescent girls and boys. By framing their account in relation to what is performatively acceptable, and the outcomes that this acceptability promotes (membership of a group, personal validation, sense of belonging and well-being), they produced an understanding of what it is to become a 'subject'. Conversely, those who were established as having unintelligible genders or other cultural practices faced 'the risk of ostracisation, of being labelled as other and different, and being rejected by the prevailing culture . . . to resist the mainstream, is a hazardous activity, with high risks of social exclusion' (Warrington and Younger 2011, p. 154). Although inclusion and exclusion are constructed as having relatively simple and observable outcomes, the ways in which they were determined were 'complex and elaborated processes, constantly under review, policed and renegotiated by students, both in school contexts and beyond' (Warrington and Younger 2011, p. 154). One of their key findings relates to social capital; the hierarchy of popularity, or as Warrington and Younger ask, 'who's not "cool"?' (Warrington and Younger 2011, p. 155). Their findings indicate that those who were unpopular or uncool were those that 'stood out', were different from everyone else, or who failed to fit in.

'Social capital' is a term that has been utilised in Bourdieusian frames to define the social networks and sources of support available to individuals as a fixed resource (Habibis and Walter 2009). Indeed, while Bourdieu qualifies social capital as being relevant to 'who you know' and how the wealthy transmit their social position to their offspring, I argue here that social capital instead represents the value of particular discursive iterations in social transactions. Individuals and groups can invest in certain performances and practices that result in an upward (or downward) movement in social hierarchies. Although these hierarchies are dynamic, this reading of social capital recognises that individuals' status can change through various performances. Social capital therefore operates as a type of currency in moment-to-moment transfers between individuals and groups. Those who possess more have increased social standing, and individuals are concerned with their ability to increase their wealth (and standing) through successfully participating in the social marketplace. While Bourdieu's understanding of social capital is far more structured and

aligned with economic wealth, this poststructuralist understanding of contends that social processes are constant producers and distributors of social wealth.

Returning to Warrington and Younger's study, inclusion (and the connected measure of social capital) was built upon social belonging and conformity to normative, intelligible, ways of being. Aspects such as appearance (including disability, physical attractiveness, body type and shape and dress), personality or behavioural factors and socio-economic status each contained norms and understandings about what was acceptable and what was abject. The alignment with each of these factors was not consistent across the schools involved in their study; instead each school represented different collective perceptions and communications about what warranted inclusion or abjection. This showed the different acceptances and rejections that are continuously negotiated in different communities and environments, and that schools and communities of young people are by no means homogenous in their constructions of social and cultural intelligibility. Research in this area therefore needs to focus on site-specific, qualitative accounts of social capital sources; that is, how individuals encounter, perceive, access and portray social power, (re)affirming its dominance.

Duncan and Owens (2011) also undertook site-specific research that investigated social hierarchies and avenues of power. Their study was framed by the view that in most research about bullying there was a missing conception of girls' sociocultural positions, neglecting an investigation of 'the complexities of the gendered context of their lives' (Duncan and Owens 2011, p. 307). They stressed the importance of research to investigate site-specific, participant informed definitions of popularity, leading to more meaningful studies. Through this process, the adolescent girls in their study constructed being 'attractive to boys' as being linked to popularity as well as homosexuality being linked with being unpopular, suggesting 'a dominant discourse of compulsory heterosexuality: a heteronormativity' (Duncan and Owens 2011, p. 312). This heteronormativity was recognised in their research as an 'organising principle in the construction of popularity' (p. 312); a hierarchical function that operated to include some and exclude others, to create both the subject and the abject. These findings mirror the formative work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), who demonstrated the way that 'heterosexual us/homosexual them' binarism relies on the 'othering' of the latter and reinforces the name-caller's dominant discursive position as heterosexual. As students attempt to gain dominance in social hierarchies, they invest in structures of

gender and sexuality that present possibilities for social capital gain. Heteronormative behaviours function to reduce the status of others and to simultaneously 'cast off' the spectre of homosexuality.

Pascoe's (2007) ethnographic research of an American high school similarly detailed that heteronormative practices were embedded within school rituals, instilling them into condoned social (and institutional) practice. Simultaneously, however, there were complex classed, cultural and social divisions that inform gendered subjectivities in her research. Despite this complexity, she asserts that one of the main ways of policing gender boundaries is the use of the insult of 'fag'. This epithet was utilised in colloquial 'just joking' discourses as a way for boys to discipline themselves, and Pascoe asserts that it represents a clear link between masculinity and homophobia that is specific to boys rather than girls. The use of the word 'fag' (and to a lesser extent, 'gay') in her research was central to the formation of boys' gendered identities. The importance of the usage of this insult is that it is a key mechanism for the regulation of male masculinity; '... becoming a fag has as much to do with failing at the masculine tasks of competence, heterosexual prowess, and strength or in any way revealing weakness or femininity as it does with a sexual identity' (Pascoe 2007, p. 54). Aspects that were important for its employment were that the 'fag identity' is fluid; it could be applied to any boy at any time, thus making it imperative for all boys to continuously repudiate it from themselves and shift it to others. This understanding addresses that being a 'fag' is an abject identity, a 'threatening spectre' that operates to affirm the dangers of deviating from intelligible masculinity.

This does not mean to say that homophobia does not operate within girl-only contexts and social structures as well as environments where boys are present. Although some studies have revealed that homophobia between teenage girls, especially utilising masculinised and violent forms of discourse is prominent in contemporary interactions (García-Gómez 2011) others focus on the less 'direct' ways that girls attempt to access desirable heterosexual reputations (Duncan and Owens 2011). In the results in the following chapters, I demonstrate that homophobia between the girls was less prominent, consistent and damaging/regulatory than that between the boys. However, the heterosexual reputations of females remained matters of considerable conjecture for all participants.

Each of these examples demonstrates evidence of compulsory heterosexuality that is present in social structures and hierarchies in young people. These understandings, when enacted in collective spheres,

encourage the presentation and promotion of binary, intelligible gen-
der representations in order to qualify as socially and culturally accep-
table. Effectively, these understandings restrict identity possibilities and
divergences through strict guidelines and boundaries that result in
inclusions into or exclusions from intelligibility. Individuals may resort
to '"passing" as heterosexual...to survive a hostile culture' (Herr
1997, p. 58), further reducing the visibility of non-heterosexual iden-
tities and consequently allowing a heterosexist culture to proceed
unchallenged. This notion was also emphasised by Sedgwick (1990),
who demonstrated that homophobia was responsible for altering the
behaviours of not only those who were homosexual, but equally those
who operate within a 'homosexual panic' (p. 19) that induces other-
wise inexplicable (and often violent) actions. Indeed, Sedgwick's work
makes it clear that heterosexism and homophobia impacts all indivi-
duals through regulation and policing, limiting performative and sub-
jective options and choices.

Although each of the above studies was conducted in high school
settings, their foundations were likely established in earlier educational
environments. Key findings of research that interrogates gendered
structures in younger children have demonstrated that heteronorma-
tivity and binary gendered intelligibilities are also prevalent in their
environments. This is particularly the case in Mindy Blaise's qualita-
tive investigation of children within a kindergarten classroom in the
United States. She found that children uncovered and 'considered the
normal and "right" way to be either a girl or a boy' (Blaise 2005b,
p. 60) and subsequently performed these identities. This was observed
through multiple interactions and behavioural performances of boys
and girls in the class. Their performances linked to successful or
unsuccessful identities, and these were either socially rewarded or
punished by the class depending on their successful alignment with
the heterosexual matrix.

Blaise's research particularly focused upon the ways in which language
is a powerful tool that is employed by both adults and children, and that it
functions to affirm and regulate particular gendered and cultural possibi-
lities. Her methodological approach of critical discourse analysis reflected
this understanding, as she investigated the social contexts of children
through their language and its relations to structures of power, including
the heterosexual matrix. This approach allowed an in depth identification
and exploration of 'the ways people use language and action to constitute

their own and others' subjectivities...processes [that] are related to the regulation of the gendered social order' (Blaise 2005b, p. 54).

Performance and Hierarchy

Gender as performance is an integral part of each of these studies as it acknowledges that individual bodies, behaviours and displays (expressions/ 'stylised acts') are continually produced and reproduced to 'constitute the fiction of a coherent stable identity and give the illusion of a fixed set of gender norms' (Renold 2005, p. 4). Emma Renold's qualitative research related to gender and sexual relations between children in the primary school, and detailed the ways in which girls actively pursued 'hyper-femininities' that revolved around heterosexualised performances relating to their bodies, fashion, cosmetics, and (heterosexual) desirability. These discourses empowered, constrained, and punished girls in multiple, complex and dynamic ways. Through group interview analysis, Renold showed the ways in which their femininities were constantly surveilled and regulated. While they did enjoy investing in feminine performances, the inflexibility and pressure around these led to anxieties around gendered performances. Achieving a stable and successful femininity seemed difficult or impossible for many of the girls who were continually negotiating and compromising on what was acceptable or unacceptable.

Similarly, Renold found that boys' ability to perform masculinity successfully was difficult, elusive and even impossible, largely due to their aspirations to 'embrace and embody "older" masculinities' (Renold 2005, p. 67) that were culturally exalted. Her research recognised their complex relationships with football/sport, being tough and participating in/naturalising violence and the continual repudiation of femininity and academic performances. Each of these factors can be seen as a stylisation of the body as well as a discursive performance. Their replication of particular behaviours, performance of violence and repudiation of identities functioned to inform their own identities as well as the collective understanding of intelligible, successful masculinities. One of the most prominent features of Renold's findings, however, was the 'ways in which all of the boys in the study engaged in some form of anti-girl talk/behaviour' (2005, p. 92) when intelligible masculinities became threatened.

This form of gender regulation, the subordination of all those who demonstrate 'feminine' attributes (either male or female), demonstrates the power of the abject (feminine) identity in the constitution of intelligible

masculinity. The repudiation of femininity and feminine attributes in all of their forms is a successful strategy for males to access social and cultural power. In Renold's research, this repudiation was not only apparent in social structures, it was also endorsed by the institution itself both formally and informally. Schools can therefore contribute to the maintenance of gendered structures and participate in gender regulation.

Part of this gendered regulation process also emerges through practices of sexual harassment in schools, with recent research being undertaken in the Australian context by Kerry Robinson. She argues that 'sexual harassment is an integral part of schooling cultures ... [it] is integral to the constitution and regulation of identities' (Mills 2012, pp. 71–72). Robinson's research demonstrates the ways that sexual and gendered harassment in schools is simultaneously widespread, pathologised, ignored and made invisible through various discursive practices. Importantly, she recognises its power to 'regulate and police the constitution of identities, social and institutional practices and relationships, and to maintain hierarchies of power' (Mills 2012, p. 73). These three aspects represent significant points of entry into school-based research on gender regulation. They recognise that individual lives are impacted upon and shaped by discursive structures of everyday language and practices, and that these productions both open up and close down opportunities for various subject positions. They also recognise that both social and institutional practices are an integral concern in this production. The individual's negotiation and perception of social movements alongside access to discursive mechanisms can result in particular reactions to sex- or gender-based harassment. Equally, the school's policies and practices demonstrate sociocultural priorities and alignments that present further avenues of discursive access. Finally, each of these can operate to establish and maintain hierarchies of power, seen in structures of popularity, power, and deviance. This research investigates each of these aspects in depth in order to establish their interconnectedness and mutual influence.

Focusing on the Secondary School and 'Adolescence'

Studies that focus on secondary school settings logically assume the participation of adolescent participants. Although 'adolescence' is a constructed term that is not consistently agreed upon as being relevant or definitive, the broad concept of change in identity and meaning to a person remains consistent across a range of literature. Specifically, adolescence involves physical, interpersonal, institutional and cognitive changes, many of which

draw upon shared beliefs about how a young person should behave (Durkin 1998). During adolescence individuals undertake intense work on exploring, consolidating and establishing their identity. Secondary schools are therefore sites where young people are under pressure to uncover and perform their identities in socially and institutionally sanctioned ways that are within their own cultural and financial means.

These pressures are significant especially in relation to the increasingly binary nature of gender portrayals that are promoted in adolescent culture. These expectations can be seen as less forgiving of difference, with a requirement of the 'abject' identities that must be continually repudiated (Pascoe 2007). Students in Pascoe's research that did not fit within acceptable frameworks of gendered, sexual or cultural expectations experienced continual and often violent abjection. This abjection established the perpetrators as fitting within the frameworks and therefore positioned them into safety and acceptance. For this reason it is imperative for gender to be viewed with respect to relational gender processes, 'emphasizing how gender happens in groups' (Pascoe 2007, p. 17).

Qualitative research allows synopsis of how particular discursive and behavioural strategies are employed by individuals and groups to affirm and communicate social and cultural norms, especially those related to intelligible genders. What is additionally relevant and equally important is the role that schools can play in this process; that is, the processes and performances at an institutional level in schools that facilitate or disrupt the affirmation of compulsory heterosexuality.

SCHOOL PROCESSES: INSTITUTIONAL AFFIRMATION OF COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY

Schools and other social institutions serve two functions: they privilege certain groups and identities in society while marginalizing others, and they legitimize this social order by couching it in the language of 'normalcy' and 'common sense'.

(Kumashiro 2002, p. 45)

Sociological examinations of education are often interested in the links between the structures and practices of schools, identities of students and social inequalities (Youdell 2004). The school is implicated in the lives of students and the ways in which social and cultural messages are

produced. This implication includes communicating messages related to gender. Rather than simply reflecting the dominant sexual ideology of broader society, schools actively produce gender and sexual divisions (Mac an Ghaill 1994) through their material environments, policies, intra-actions and practices. This phenomenon has been labelled in various research productions as institutional heteronormativity (DePalma and Atkinson 2010; DePalma and Jennett 2010; Ferfolja 2005, 2007; Røthing 2008); that is, the ways in which schools produce and re-affirm heterosexuality as either the norm or the only possibility through institutional processes. Epstein and Johnson suggest that the ideological focus should alternatively be 'to make "heterosexuality" the problematic term' (1994, p. 197). As heterosexuality us usually silent or omitted it becomes presumed and expected, creating a phenomenon that they term 'heterosexism'. Consequently, this construction results in the marginalisation and regulation of non-heterosexual identities, but again the question must recur to *how* this power is applied. Tania Ferfolja's research illustrated that these forces included both external and school-based policies and their implementation (including 'anti-bullying' policies), professional development that silenced lesbian and gay issues, the exclusion of lesbian and gay perspectives in the curriculum, the type, quantity and portrayal of particular anti-homophobic messages and the saturation of anti-gay abusive language in the school. Each of these interacted in complex ways to present an environment that regulated unintelligible sexualities that were constructed upon the '"heterosexual us homosexual them" binary' (Ferfolja 2007, p. 160). Ferfolja's research also illustrated that the strategies to render non-heterosexuality as invisible intersected with personal, political and professional agendas. The silences around diverse sexual and gender identities were integral in these discourses, and as such recognising silences in discourse is imperative, as silence is a discursive strategy that holds meaning in itself.

DePalma and Atkinson also examine the nature of institutional heteronormativity in schools. Their concern is that silences, inferences and assumptions in schools and in policy manifest into a 'tendency to focus on individual incidents of homophobic bullying rather than the cultural and institutional factors supporting them' (DePalma and Atkinson 2010, p. 1669). They suggest, significantly, that it is imperative for educational and political movements to re-frame ideas of homophobia and transphobia to those of heteronormativity and sexism. In other words, schools cannot

meaningfully address bullying related to sexism or homophobia if they are simultaneously supporting it through their various machinations.

While much of this research focuses upon homophobia, this is not the only object that is created by heterosexist environments. Attributions of 'promiscuity' (including the pejoratives of 'slut', 'slag', 'whore' and so on) are a constant and feared threat for girls in these contexts (Chambers et al. 2004) and hold significant affective force when they are employed. Heterosexism therefore has broader gendered norms and values that are endorsed and policed, especially in environments where both boys and girls strive to achieve particular gendered identities. This again suggests that the experiences of girls in co-educational environments is complex and requires more in depth investigation to establish the particular (and sometimes empirically less visible) pressures that are imposed on and by them.

Heterosexism, Heteronormativity and Gender Within 'Anti-bullying' Policies

To understand how schools can seem to confront homophobic bullying while they simultaneously support homophobia, it is important to examine the reliance upon and communication of typologies. In the previous chapter, I outlined that these are predominantly 'bully' and 'victim'. Although these labels may not explicitly outline a gendered identity, research and theory has demonstrated the embedded gendered understandings that reside in particular identities and specifically the role that they play in informing and restricting particular subjectivities.

Ringrose and Renold's (2010) research detailed the ways that the labels of 'bully' and 'victim' were implicated in both performing and policing intelligible masculinities and femininities. By reviewing the binary logic behind these signifiers, and attributing these with responsive outcomes of either protection (victim) or vilification (bully), the labels become carriers for various 'classed, raced and sexualised truth claims' (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 574). Those who were labelled with these signifiers were impacted by wider public meanings and these meanings linked in complex ways to enacting and disciplining recognisable gendered subjectivities. Ringrose and Renold therefore suggest that:

> . . . performing normative gender subject positions invoke exclusionary and injurious practices (for instance, being a tough, physically violent boy, or a

mean girl) that are taken for granted...such normative practices are obscured in the conceptual frameworks and discourses around bullying drawn on to make sense of this behaviour, what we call 'bully discourses'.

(Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 575)

This concept invokes the understanding that bullying behaviour is a complex negotiation between individuals and gendered subjectivities. While normative gender discourses permeate everyday identities and inform frameworks of being, individuals attempt to reside within these frames through performing intelligible gender roles. Where these are 'taken for granted', the institution assumes the nature of the performances as being inherent and biologically produced. 'Boy' and 'girl' bullying behaviours become naturalised and expected as part of the accepted heterosexual matrix. Moving outside of these expectations again impacts upon exclusionary practices as boys and girls can become positioned as 'gender deviants'. In Ringrose and Renold's research, this was clearly the case where 'normative gendered behaviour is often demanded of children (that is boys should "stand up" for themselves and girls should "be friends")' (2010, p. 575). This demonstrates the real and ongoing effect of beliefs about intelligible genders that are held within and promoted by teachers and schools. These beliefs will impact upon the implementation of policy, whether informal or formal, especially because there are limited resources and tools for addressing common forms of violence and aggression in schools. Teachers draw upon their own understandings of the dominant bully discourses, largely from essentialist understandings, that invoke and re-affirm gendered positioning.

In reflection of this process, Meyer's research details that part of the phenomenon of non-intervention related to gendered and homophobic harassment and violence is due to the implementation of blanket, generic bullying policies that do not address the school climate and culture (Meyer 2008a). Strategies that address bullying in a general sense fail to disrupt social and institutional frameworks that support gendered and homophobic lines of persecution. DePalma and Jennett affirm that 'reducing homophobic abuse is more likely to occur through systematic and proactive social change than through simply preventing or reducing particular acts of violence' (DePalma and Jennett 2010, p. 16).

Research such as these suggests that bullying policies that address outcomes (seen as incidents), rather than systemic foundations of power, are inconsequential in the prevention of gendered and sexual harassment.

What is missing from many bullying policies is therefore an investigation into the conditions that cause incidents that are perhaps communicated in the incidents themselves. Meyer outlines the definitive phenomenon of *gendered harassment*, describing 'any behaviour that acts to assert the boundaries of traditional gender norms: heterosexual masculinity and femininity' (Meyer 2008a, p. 34), including '(hetero) sexual harassment, homophobic harassment, and harassment for gender non-conformity' (Meyer 2008b, p. 556). This understanding references the concept of gender regulation in that gender boundaries are policed, but in a more specific and interactional light; it is enacted between individuals in either intentional or unintentional ways. It also provides a start point to review social performances as complex processes with embedded power structures, allowing a more comprehensive framework for looking at hierarchies and avenues of power accessed by students. Finally it allows an investigation of how and why specific modes of persecution are employed by students, that is, why boys may choose to perform physically violent acts, and girls may resist this in wider cultures of intelligible genders, rather than insinuating biological start points and movements for these phenomena.

The concept of gendered harassment suggests that perhaps the most illuminating portrayal of heteronormativity will be achieved through the illustration of the experiences of gender or sexually diverse students. Schools that are constituted by heteronormative discourses are potentially hostile climates for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer (LGBTIQ) students, containing homophobic remarks and persecution relating to sexual or gender identity or expression (Kosciw et al. 2009). The voices of LGBTIQ youth are represented in the research of Sweet and DesRoches (2008). Their research positions heteronormativity as 'cloaked bullying', resulting in 'the average student of diverse sexuality hear[ing] eight homophobic insults per day with one third from faculty and staff' (Sweet and DesRoches 2008, p. 173). This phenomenon, they argue, is achieved not only through the silencing of the LGBTIQ community, but also through the institutional dismissal and rejection of homophobic bullying as a problem in schools. They also suggest rejection of the Olweus bullying model due to its reductive simplicity and failure to address any issues of difference between students, particularly sexual and gender diversity. Instead, they suggest a model of citizenship education to holistically encourage acceptance of diversity and to critically examine the foundations of discrimination.

Although the practical implications of these studies remain in contention, one clear finding of each of these research productions is that institutional heteronormativity is a phenomenon that is present in schools that results in various levels of control from and upon particular individuals. The relationship between this phenomenon and the theoretical and practical outcomes for staff and students is complex and can be explored in relation to the formal and informal messages found within anti-bullying policies.

Teacher (Non) Interventions in Gendered and Homophobic Harassment

As mentioned above, one of the key aspects of institutional heteronormativity is the silences and assumptions of normalcy that surround heterosexism and homophobia. One of the signifiers of these barriers is the intervention (or lack of intervention) by teachers when they witness or are confronted by gendered and homophobic harassment. Previous accounts of teachers in research have illuminated that it is not always easy for teachers to handle incidents such as these, and that real or perceived barriers prevent them from disrupting them. In these cases, negative comments can be ignored or 'let go', communicating to students that such behaviour is acceptable (Lahelma 2002).

Meyer's (2008b) research into the phenomenon of gendered harassment detailed specific barriers or motivators for teacher intervention. One of her major findings was that compared with formal management systems, school culture was more influential on student and teacher actions and interactions. This reflects research from the UK, which detailed that perceived disapproval from other members of the school community was a key barrier to tackling homophobic bullying, alongside staff inexperience (Douglas et al. 1999). Where teachers are uncertain of their particular role, they draw from understandings that are embedded in school cultures or social systems. Meyer's research recommended further qualitative investigations into teachers' processes regarding interventions into gendered harassment to enhance understanding of their barriers and motivators.

Research into the factors behind teacher interventions (or lack thereof) was also conducted by Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, and Lichty (2009). Although they re-name Meyer's concept of gendered harassment as gender-based bullying, the concept and definitive elements are the same; they include 'the range of behaviors through

which traditional gender roles and sexual identities and behaviors are policed and reinforced' (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2009, p. 520). Importantly, their research suggests that the importance of confronting gender-based bullying is evidenced by both the prevalence ('80% of adolescents in the United States will experience some type of gender-based bullying before graduating from high school' (2009, p. 519)) but also the extent of damage and trauma caused by its employment. By illustrating these two aspects, the authors point to the relevance of studies that engage with school cultures and the heteronormativity that is critical to its production. Their study aligned with Meyer's findings that there is a 'multidimensionality of staff understandings of and responses to gender-based bullying' (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2009, p. 521). This included motivations to intervene in some aspects (notably male sexual harassment of 'quiet girls') but considerable uncertainty in others (such as bullying within heterosexual dating relationships and gay and lesbian students who were targeted by other students). This finding demonstrates the phenomenon of hierarchical intervention strategies, where teachers delineate more serious or alarming aspects that require immediate intervention, as opposed to incidents that can be justified or ignored by teachers.

This justification by individuals in moments of potential interventions manifests in research within teacher accounts of when they can, should or do not need to disrupt interactions. Sometimes these justifications are represented in teacher confusion about the identification of gendered harassment (specifically homophobic bullying) (Warwick et al. 2001). Other research has found that teachers struggle to discern between gendered harassment and playful teasing or flirting (Lahelma 2002) and will therefore resist disruption of student interactions when this boundary is unclear.

'Just Joking'

Lahelma's (2002) research detailed a clear blurring of this boundary between what can be deemed acceptable and unacceptable interactions, and the complex involvement of a 'joking' discourse. 'Joking' is a factor that in her and others' research represents strategies of power and marginalisation (that can also be gendered) in its employment. The 'joking' discourse can be seen as a strategy utilised by individuals in social interactions to diffuse a notion of serious intent from potentially damaging comments and instead assert a jovial or friendly interaction. It can be used as a strategy

of disclamation to dislocate responsibility for words or actions that could be interpreted as provocative or malicious. This is an interactional element that represents difficulty for teachers to determine or to act upon as well as having ambiguity in academic readings of bullying. Olweus, for example, may define 'joking' as 'teasing'; presented as 'of a playful and relatively friendly nature, which is often recurrent but which in most cases cannot be considered bullying' (Olweus 1997, p. 496). Where Olweus generally promoted definitional boundaries of bullying, this aspect of 'teasing' escapes these and instead represents an area of contention.

'Joking' is a crucial intersection between intentionality and power inequality in bullying research. The problematic aspect is 'determining where the joke ends and the abuse begins, thus recognising not only the potential blurring between the two but also the degree to which joking around is traditionally accepted in classroom despite that it often produces significant stress' (Carrera et al. 2011, p. 486). By reviewing the discursive location of the 'joking' phenomenon, Ryan and Morgan successfully located practices of sexual harassment being legitimised through its deployment, as well as the positioning of the offender 'as a joker, and therefore the behaviour can be viewed as quite innocuous' (2011, p. 27). In another example of 'joking', Ringrose and Renold (2010) found normalised discourses of the 'gaming of violence' produced and endorsed and dominant realities that prevented rejection by other students who found violent practices to be problematic. This produced 'systemic physical violence ... through the blurring of boundaries between games, play-fighting and violence, with dominant masculinities tolerated and legitimised (often through humour)' (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 580).

Lahelma's investigation of the informal interactions between boys and girls in retrospective accounts of high school proffered the complexities of 'the fine line between playing which is 'just fun' and behaviour that is experienced as harassing' (Lahelma 2002, p. 296). Interestingly, the impact of 'teasing' or playful activity works along gendered lines as well; boys were particularly humiliated when teased by girls, as this confronted and questioned their masculinity. However, simultaneously 'doing' masculinity required the ability to engage with joking interactions. The target of the teasing or the 'joke' as well as the way in which this target responds is part of a gendered discourse that informs dominant masculinities. The joke becomes a risky deployment for the receptor; their responses are carefully surveilled and reflect upon their very identity. This is emphasised

by Lahelma in her observations of how jokes function differently for males and females:

> Girls are vulnerable because they can be insulted at any moment by sexist comments, and 'any moment' could be a situation that has started as play-acting and joking and can be turned into harassment. To react powerfully and negatively against what is 'just joking' is to show oneself to be humorless…Some of the young boys' vulnerabilities…leave them open to being called 'homo', and also of not being seen as being able to learn 'to take' bullying from their peers, especially from girls.

> (Lahelma 2002, p. 302)

Although this statement makes large claims that perhaps generalise into sexed categories too easily, it does effectively recognise the different gendered pressures that operate within the 'just joking' discourse. Girls face intense gendered harassment because of the depth and power of sexism and the wealth of discriminatory comments that rest within it. When 'just joking' is applied, their opportunity to react with strength diminishes or dissipates, as this reaction would not safely reside within an intelligible femininity that accepts humour. Boys are similarly encouraged to reside within a culture of 'bantering' (Hand and Sanchez 2000, p. 718) that encourages self-deprecation and insults traded between friends. To react negatively to the 'joke' would situate them outside of intelligible masculinity. Each of these situations could also promote a lack of willingness to report harmful incidents to teachers if there is a possibility of this communication to be known by peers. To be able 'to take' the joke is an important part of social capital.

In terms of interventions or disrupting potentially damaging social interactions, the employment of 'just joking' presents a real difficulty for teachers who may not feel able to pursue a line of inquiry or discipline into its circumstances due to the negation of harmful intent. The lack of disruption enhances its ability to be deployed by individuals without consequence, enhancing its power and possibility.

Blaming the Victim

Neoliberal understandings of personal 'choice' and the understanding of the body as a project have underpinned discourses of change as a method for inclusion and success. These discourses are present in essentialist accounts of research into school bullying that situate 'potential victims'

as being 'at risk'. This locates the problem with the individual rather than the normalising social structures that surround them, placing the onus of solving the problem squarely on the victim in bullying scenarios (Brown et al. 2007). Teachers and institutions that adopt this understanding rely on the concept of individual change for inclusion or success and embed these understandings within anti-bullying policies. Indicators of this discourse include resilience training or victim education schemes to assist them to change their behaviours. This positions their identities or behaviours as problematic and provocative and, conversely, positions the bullying behaviours as normative or responsive.

A pertinent example of this phenomenon was a recent UK study into bullying responses by teachers when students were targeted due to their perceived or actual sexuality. The report stated that there was 'anecdotal evidence on the day of students being told to act less gay or to wear their hair differently as teachers felt they were making themselves a target for bullies' (BBC News 2011, para. 15). This illustrates the impact that teachers have on the process of assimilation and the reduction of diversity. The 'victim-blame' discourse suggests that 'victims might eliminate or at least reduce the problem by dressing or behaving differently' (DePalma and Atkinson 2010, p. 1670). Its prominence of use has been detailed in populations of teenage participants that employ it to dislocate responsibility for their actions (Thornberg and Knutsen 2011) and suggested as a suitable problem solver for 'victims' in research (Lovegrove and Rumsey 2005). Formal findings regarding the deployment of victim-blaming discourses by teachers have been fewer; however, the results in the following chapters contribute to this knowledge.

'That's So Gay': The Extent of Homophobic Language

The final conveyor of institutional heteronormativity that this book will examine is that of contemporary language use by students and the interpretations that teachers draw from its employment. Use of epithets such as 'gay', 'homo' and 'fag' in popular culture has been documented in recent years, and studies have found that they are powerful and widespread tools for policing masculinity (Chambers et al. 2004; Lahelma 2002; Pascoe 2007). Some understandings have positioned their usage as homophobia rather than the policing of gendered identities; the words or phrases can often be the most easily recognisable form of homophobia in schools, while school staff and students are less able to recognise the myriad other ways that

homophobia permeates the school environment (Witthaus 2006, p. 24). Despite this fact, 'there is a common belief amongst teachers that *that's so gay* is harmless' (emphasis in original) (Witthaus 2006, p. 25). The saturation of use in common language, the conception of children as innocent and thus not meaning their language and not needing to be enlightened (DePalma and Atkinson 2010), and the perception that homophobia is a 'natural' part of adolescence each contribute to a bypassing of teacher interventions, consequently communicating that they are acceptable (Lahelma 2002).

The idea that some deployments of homophobic language are targeted and others are incidental enhances this understanding of a hierarchy of seriousness. This subsequently increases the understanding that teachers should intervene when negative or harmful intent is demonstrated, and that the lack of this intent (or the presence of remorse) should negate student responsibility (Ringrose 2006). However, this resists a deeper understanding of the role of heteronormativity and gender regulation. The simple situation of 'gay' and similar words as homophobic language actually obscures the extent and gendered nature of sexualised pejoratives (Pascoe 2007). The use of each of these gendered insults must be seen within a context of gender regulation, where power is embedded within particular gender identities and individuals are continually policed to become particular subjects. Crucially, both LGBTIQ *and* heterosexual youth encounter targeted and damaging homophobic epithets (Poteat and Rivers 2010). The continual abjection of the 'gay' identity (or object, behaviour, act and so on) produces a hetero-sexist hierarchy that impacts upon *all* students. By the simple replacement of negative sentiments with 'gay' or it's colloquial synonyms, language moves to construct realities where sexualities other than heterosexual are positioned in the constitutive outside. Although this has been utilised as a justification for the lack of sexual synonymy behind the use of 'gay' as a negative, its repeated and undeniable location as a gendered and sexualised term, particularly related to masculinities (Horton 2011; Pascoe 2007) disputes its portrayal as harmless.

These concepts and understandings of the 'that's so gay' phenomenon require further examination at a practical level to reveal the discourses that both teachers and students employ when discussing language. They represent processes of socially produced gender regulation as well as institutional responses that are embedded within heteronormativity. By reviewing participant utilisation (and motivation) behind the language as well as responses to this use, it is possible to review a contemporary, common and highly visible form of gender regulation.

METHODOLOGY

In this and the preceding chapter, I have illustrated that schools offer valuable sites of studies into understandings of bullying, social structures and processes and of gender regulation. The literature suggests the need to study how constructs of bullying, gender and social understandings hold implications for the positioning, practice and subjectivities of individuals within schools. The study that forms the basis of this book therefore sought to investigate how gendered and social realities are conceptualised and constructed in contemporary high schools by students, teachers and broader contexts.

In order to effectively examine this concept, the research aimed to review the realities of participants as portrayed (and created) by their own accounts. An important factor in this process was being able to see the social and discursive processes enacted by and made available to participants. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) is a methodology that is ideal for this aim.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

FDA deconstructs and reveals discursive implications where they may, at other times, remain concealed. The inherent values that result in particular (inequitable) positionings are a key focus of this analytical method, as it is these values that construct the social and institutional realities for participants. By interrogating these constructions and attempting to frame them in a Foucauldian discursive perspective, I aim to build awareness and facilitate disruption of school cultures that remain heterosexist. Feminist poststructuralism is concerned with changing the way things are and challenging inequities. As such, the research detailed here seeks to embody Foucault's understanding of criticising familiar, established notions. It:

> . . . does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based. . . . [It shows] that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy . . .
>
> (Foucault 2000, pp. 456–457)

In acknowledging this foundation of poststructuralism, it must be noted that 'knowledge' produced by this research project is partial and incomplete.

It is impossible to encapsulate the social and institutional realities of any one individual, let alone a number of participants who reside differently in their own worlds. Their stories contribute to one reading of a situation that is seen through a particular epistemological lens.

This study researched two schools to facilitate a deep understanding of their particular social and institutional processes, particularly regarding understandings and actions around gender and sexuality. I wish to acknowledge, therefore, that there is no suggestion that the findings of this study are representative of other sites or locations. The data that follows this chapter illustrates the worlds and experiences of these participants as an exploration of the discourses that they engage with and replicate in particular strategical locations. These may be reflected in wider societal discursive applications and in that way the results may contribute knowledge to how these discourses are utilised (and can be disrupted) in other settings, but that remains the limit of intended generalisation.

A final implication of the feminist poststructural approach is the understanding that it is not overly prescriptive. Its location as a research approach that examines and contests concrete 'truths' also acknowledges that these truths are maintained and perpetrated by those who exist within them. This perpetuates the understanding that experts should not impose change; change should happen collaboratively (Crowhurst 2001). Individuals who reside within oppressive systems are integral in working towards change or disruption. This study, therefore, finds value in the conversations and revelations of participants, and suggests that these are possibly the 'spark' to generate change.

FDA therefore begins with an understanding of discourse as *all practices*, informed and enabled by social construction. Individual realities are constituted by the meanings that are embedded within social practices and these are simultaneously informed by discursive strategies. The discourses enable, disable, facilitate or constrain what can be said, by whom, in which moment and in what space/s (Willig 2008b). This emphasises the poststructuralist nature of FDA. Rather than acknowledging that a particular discourse is 'hegemonic' at all times, discourses and connected subjectivities can be engaged with and deployed at any time for various tactical purposes and outcomes. The concept of power is therefore a critical part of looking at data through a Foucauldian lens. Indeed, FDA is significantly concerned not only with the self-positioning power of discourse, but also with its relational purposes, that power is enacted through discourse to

position others. FDA represents a point of enquiry into these connections and processes through asking 'questions about the relationship between discourse and how people think or feel (subjectivity), what they may do (practices) and the material conditions within which such experiences may take place' (Willig 2008b, p. 113). In alignment with the questions being asked by this study, FDA acknowledges that discourses work in cooperation with institutional practices. While discourses legitimise and fortify existing social and institutional structures, these structures reciprocally affirm and validate the discourses (Willig 2008b).

Data 'Collaboration' and the Role of the Researcher

As '*all* forms of knowledge are constructed through discourse and discursive practices' (emphasis added) (Willig 2008b, p. 126), I acknowledge I did adopt a particular research movement and direction, positioning me as a research author, rather than discoverer (Willig 2008b) and compounded by my admitted movement from a poststructural feminist epistemology. Additionally, those who read this text will produce their own readings and interpretations.

As this research project was constituted and dependant on participant voice, I perceived that data was less 'collection' and more 'collaboration' between the participants and myself. To enable deep dialogue and critical discussions, I chose a qualitative focus group and interview approach that targeted two schools. The small 'sample size' allowed an in depth case study-like outcome that assisted in the exploration of complex experiences and perspectives. The use of two schools allowed a basic comparison of similar discourse usage across space and showed that these discourses are not necessarily isolated incidents.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In wishing to avoid institutionally sanctioned sources of discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation and rather investigating representations of these that were not driven by religious foundations, I believed that public (governmental) high schools offered more of a 'clean slate'. At the time of the research (and this remains the case at the time of publishing), the public high schools in New South Wales did not have clear, cohesive or practically implemented policies on discrimination against those of diverse gender identities or sexual orientations. The

'homophobia in schools' policy, for example, is in the form of a one page 'memorandum to principals of central and secondary schools' and is in response to changes in the anti-discrimination act (Boston 1997). This 'policy' was one indication that teachers were required to determine their interventions and implement school specific policies rather than relying on those imposed or encouraged by the government. In choosing public schools I also wished to follow Foucault's exploration of public institutions that naturalise particular discourses and simultaneously conceal their alternatives. This understanding additionally echoes Butler's perspective regarding the social and cultural productions of understandings about sex and gender; that the dominant understandings are products of institutions, discourses and practices rather than the causes of them (Salih 2002).

The 'type' of school in this study could also have been based in an urban or a rural context. Previous quantitative studies have reported that same sex attracted or gender nonconforming students in rural areas may feel more unsafe than those in urban areas (Hillier et al. 2005; Hillier et al. 2010). These studies indicated that same sex attracted youth in rural areas felt the same level of safety at school as their urban counterparts, but felt less safe in social or digital settings, possibly due to 'perceptions of extra surveillance in rural areas which, combined with more community conservatism, may make it harder to be anonymous and easier for people to 'find out', and the consequences worse' (Hillier et al. 2005, p. 79). Potentially this environment could influence young people's performances to align them more closely with particular intelligible ways of being. Again it is important to note here that I actively resist in assuming that these conditions will be mirrored in other rural schools but the discourses here are, like other schools, intrinsically linked to their contextual environment and therefore have links to the geographic community with which they belong. I have resisted broad statements about rural life and have therefore framed these schools as 'contemporary' rather than 'rural' to withhold any potential judgement of rurality. Some of the themes and discourses that were voiced by the participants do hold significance for the geographic settings, and these will be discussed in the following analysis and discussion chapters.

Finally, choosing schools that are co-educational represents my concerns over validating particular discourses that are only produced in relation to either boys or girls or their particular (single sex) schooling environments. Although representations of masculinity and femininity have been explored in single sex environments (Charles 2007; Duncan 2004; Duncan and Owens 2011; García-Gómez 2011; Read

2011), exploring their construction in this way has the potential to sustain a dichotomous binary construction of gender which is detached from other intersectionalities or social determinants (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005). By reviewing gender as relational, and this relational construct as being built around an institution of compulsory heterosexuality, it can be said that reviews of gender construction in co-educational environments are distinct in their portrayals of how both boys and girls form and produce knowledge, discourse and power in relation to gender. Carrying out research with both male and female student participants facilitates an analysis of the ways in which social structures and performances came attached with sex specific requirements and tensions. To explore these from only one side while neglecting the other would potentially ignore the depth of their gendered realities. It additionally allowed teachers to reflect on their relationships and attitudes towards both boys and girls and for me to observe the ways in which they constructed the differences between them. These constructions proved to be highly relevant in the study and related to teachers' actions and (non) interventions related to bullying.

Overall, this process led to the selection of two rural, co-educational public high schools in New South Wales, Australia. Two schools, Grove High and Wilson High (anonymised names of schools and participants have been used throughout the book) were chosen utilising these criteria. The schools were in regional areas that were non-coastal and were largely surrounded by agricultural lands, drawing some students from the surrounding rural communities.

Participation Structure

As student and teacher cultures and identities are produced in relation to one another (Epstein and Johnson 1998) it was important to include discourses from principals, teachers and students in this study. At each school, four focus groups were conducted; two head teacher groups; one male; and one female senior student group. Semi structured interviews were also intended to take place at each school with the principals. At Wilson High the interview with the principal was not possible to conduct after a number of negotiations (see following section) so a semi structured interview was undertaken with the two deputy principals in its place.

Focus Group and Interviews: Approaches and Strategies

Focus groups provide an opportunity to view the way in which a selected group discursively constructs their social and cultural realities. This content is illustrated through multiple accounts, deliberations, disagreements, challenges, negotiations, assurances, provocations and agreements. This is especially the case when the group are known to each other, as they can challenge each other through knowledge that is unknown and inaccessible to the researcher (Frith 2000). Participants become able to challenge what they believe may be discrepancies between personal accounts and actual behaviour, as well as promoting further debate and discourse (Bloor et al. 2002).

Focus groups therefore present an opportunity to view the nature of socially constructed knowledge in the settings that this regularly occurs. It has been suggested that focus groups are the most effective way to allow participants to explicitly articulate normative assumptions that are usually unspoken (Bloor et al. 2002). Within a Foucauldian analysis, this is a particularly valuable outcome, as Foucault expressly conceived social institutions as operating in ways that appear natural, concealing particular discourses which function to constrain discursive objects and subjectivities.

With these considerations in mind, the student focus groups in this study were designed to consist of students who were well known to each other and, although they may not be in the same social group, have a pre-existing rapport. This eventuated in grouping students who played sport together. Forming the group in this manner enabled students from different social groups to be represented and therefore to insert multiple perspectives into the dialogue. It also allowed the students themselves to see reason behind their assemblage and dispel any notions of targeting either felt by them or suggested by others.

Four groups of five students from years 10–12 and from a mix of sporting groups were coordinated by the research contact at the school. All of the students knew each other and seemed comfortable during the course of focus groups. The construction of the groups was significant in that the students identified themselves from and against other groups, and this highlighted their particular place amongst social webs of meaning and power. There may have been significantly different discourses with different groups. This was especially pertinent in terms of the male focus groups. Their membership of the 'sporty group' situated them within a distinct component of heteronormative masculinity (Larsson et al. 2010).

They both embodied and enacted physical prowess through the mastery of culturally accepted and community promoted sporting pursuits. This could be said to restrict their ability to reflect on the impacts that those who may fall outside of heteronormative masculinity could experience when being abused in relation to their gender performance. Their location within this environment is neither positive nor negative but provides particular contextual information for their discursive performances. Their performances contain gendered and social inferences that continually function to position themselves and others in social hierarchies; making their discursive displays exceptionally valuable within an FDA study.

The second point that needs to be considered regarding student (both male and female) focus groups is that students participated in sport as an outside of school activity and consequently had significant investments made from their parents in this venture. This, according to students and teachers in both of participating schools, was not the case for a vast number of (other) students, and illustrated a particular difference in terms of class/socioeconomic status. The discourses that they produced held distinct aspects of hierarchical positioning that will be reflected on in later chapters; however, it is important to acknowledge the impact of class on the discursive process, that is the regime of truth that the participants are operating within.

Head teacher focus groups were similarly designed to gain maximum insight into the directives and realities of the teaching group. The teachers again required rapport and a working relationship with one another to encourage open dialogue. The reduction of power differences between them was also important to ensure a balanced representation of many voices. For this reason, focus groups were designed to consist of the heads of departments within the school (that is 'head teachers').

Overall, the aim of both the student and teacher focus groups was to review the group performances and constructs that arose. The analysis protocol sought to explore how their particular discursive presentations allow and limit particular subjectivities. These performances may not have been consistent with the same group on a different day or in a different situation; there could be temporal, spatial, gendered or cultural differences that influenced their performances. The strength of FDA emerges when it is used on a single piece of text to review particular displays, rather than a 'true reality'. Regardless of whether these performances were 'authentic' or not, they remain powerful discursive portrayals worthy of analysis. The focus group performances of the students were analysed according to the

discursive processes and meanings that surfaced during the course of these single group sessions. The data is therefore a powerful portrayal of dialogic acts and their power to influence positioning, practice and subjectivity.

For these reasons, I employed a series of questions for each, but allowed the group to meander from these questions to points that they perceived to be important. The interview schedules for the students sequentially worked through themes of school motivation (for example, 'what is the best thing about coming to school?'), bullying and harassment (for example, 'how do you define bullying and harassment?'), popularity and coolness (for example, 'what do kids at this school think is important to do well with at school?'). These questions were not thematic in transcripts and questions were mixed between themes, but each focus group was presented with them in the same sequences. I also asked them about the ways in which teachers approached bullying (for example, 'do teachers know about bullying and harassment?') and finally, specific questions about homophobic and gendered bullying (for example, 'have you encountered this or seen it in any way?').

Within teacher focus groups, the questions followed similar formats but altered in context to teacher settings. The first session (of two) began with questions around teacher philosophies, pedagogical aspirations, career paths and values (for example, 'what is the best thing about teaching?'), then moved to understandings of bullying and harassment (for example, 'how do you define bullying and harassment?'). The second head teacher focus group occurred two weeks after the first and was necessary as the teacher focus groups covered more material than those of the students. The themes in these groups included gendered and homophobic bullying or harassment (for example, 'have you witnessed or heard about gendered or homophobic bullying or harassment happening at this school?') and the school approaches and support to bullying (for example, 'what process would you go through if you believed a student was being bullied or harassed?').

The flexible nature of the interview schedules allowed diversity in participant responses and for their discursive appropriations to emerge without constraint. The consistent structure of these questions being employed repetitively across focus groups evidenced my particular impact on the discursive preposition of the groups. My research interests were highlighted in their deployment and they affected the direction of the groups in an explicit way. However, due to the malleable nature of the focus groups and the dynamic performances of each group, conversations and

discursive objects that were unanticipated and enlightening to this study came to the fore. This process indicated the real strength of focus group data collection. Participants would disclose particular incidents or understandings, and through either further questioning on these from me or from the other participants, unanticipated constructs emerged.

Semi-structured Interviews

In addition to the four focus groups conducted at each school, one semi-structured interview was scheduled with each principal. The schedule and format of this interview held the same structure as the head teacher focus groups. The themes were the same but relevant to the position of principal rather than that of teacher or student.

Interviews were undertaken with the principal of Grove High School and with the two deputy principals of Wilson High School. Initially both principals agreed to participate in this part of the research; however, the Wilson principal failed to participate in agreed interview times on three occasions and then resisted attempts to reschedule these appointments. When it became clear that the principal did not wish to participate I asked the deputy principals to take part instead. They participated in a joint interview and worked off each other's answers in a similar format to a focus group. Although this was a frustrating outcome at the time, in retrospect the dialogue offered by the deputies was equally as valuable and potentially offered the same outcomes as that of the principal. Their description of their job as more hands on in terms of directing responses to bullying also offered a unique insight into the day to day management of these incidents.

In both focus groups and interviews participant consent was received for audio recording. Students also obtained parental consent for their participation.

Researcher Positioning

Just as Pascoe (2007) details her specifically crafted gendered and social performance in her ethnographic research into adolescents at school, it is important to note my position in relation to the participants in this study and the ways in which this may have influenced the data collection process and outcome. The necessity of this acknowledgement is in regard to the detailed and explicit data that participants produced, inducing my reflection on the ways in which they had perceived me as a person with whom disclosure was encouraged and safe for them. Indeed, it seemed as if the participants felt an affinity with me that produced a natural and

uninterrupted conversation style, with each participant contributing insights that were not necessarily asked for but provided more detail about their discursive practices and priorities. Although I cannot be certain that the following deductions are accurate, there were some aspects of my performance that may have been assumed by the groups as interactional motivators.

In terms of the student groups my appearance as a young, Australian, white and middle class person were likely aspects that succeeded in positioning myself as someone who was familiar and held similar attributes to the students. There were many aspects of our culture that were common, for example, our personal usage of social networking and understanding of Facebook that enabled a shared vernacular. Additionally, we operated on similar lines of humour and vocabulary (most of the time) and held interests in physical activity and sport, which although were not formally reflected on during the groups may have been evident to the students in their initial evaluation of me. Although I am unaware of which of these impacted upon their attitudes, the students seemed to treat me as one of their group, sometimes even resisting an acknowledgement of me as an external participant as they discussed their social and institutional settings. I felt privileged at assuming the position of a researcher who was included in these unrestrained performances and discursive accounts. However, if I had demonstrated 'difference' or perhaps had not 'fit in' to this group, these interactions may not have occurred so successfully. This tenuous acceptance was further evidenced by the participants' social realities (related to arbitrations of hierarchical standings) that are detailed in chapter six. Many of the students took time to review and evaluate particular individuals and where they 'fit in'. In reflection, I represented someone who was a kind of 'grown up' (but not too grown up) version of them. It was likely that they saw me as someone who they could communicate with easily and someone who was non-threatening.

Another crucial aspect of the methodology is that it was not possible for me to participate in the research process independently from the discursive productions of gender that were communicated by the students. In anticipating their gendered values I myself took part in a kind of self-'regulation' where I ensured that my dress and appearance would be a kind of feminine-neutral. I wore what could be described as 'smart' clothing, fitted dress trousers and collared shirts as well as flat dress shoes. I found myself actively reflecting on these 'safe' choices, which, when combined with my long hair, earrings and wedding rings would function to position

me as 'fitting in' with their gendered expectations. Perhaps these impacted upon focus group proceedings, as I anticipated them to, and perhaps they did not. I did feel that in the light of the student productions, they would have expected this from me; however, these productions may have only prescribed norms for their immediate social setting, and as an 'outsider' I may have not been held to account for transgressions. Regardless, this demonstrated that I was not immune to the process of knowledge production; in fact I contributed to it through aligning my own performance with the gendered norms and values that I anticipated from the students. It also demonstrated the impossibility of creating a research environment that negates power imbalances; however, perhaps those power imbalances are the very aspects that this research focuses on and seeks to examine. This aspect contributes in some ways to the limitations of focus groups – that the facilitator has an impact on impressions, and therefore on proceedings and participant responses.

The teacher group interactional motivators were equally as intriguing to me yet probably held some differences. The groups understood that I was doing a research project in the field of education, and therefore was likely trained as a teacher. This may have initially provided the teachers with a sense of affinity or camaraderie, especially in their production of an environment where it was often an 'inside-us versus outside-them' teachers versus community understanding. Additionally I think that my youth and appearance of youth functioned to position me as a non-dangerous researcher in their minds. In some ways, I think they believed that I was someone who was there to empathise with them about their difficult teaching conditions acting at times as a sounding board.

Although these reflections may not be completely accurate they do reference my conception of how and why the specific interactions took place during this research project. Overall, it demonstrated to me that the researcher's performance is a significant part of data production, especially in focus group settings.

FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Although the points of interest and exploration for FDA have been relatively consistent within a number of studies, that is language, discourse, positioning and subjectivity, formal approaches resist a definitive and restrictive process. This has resulted in some criticisms of discourse

analysis as obscure and 'unscientific'. However, this can be countered by those that use discourse analysis 'to be as open as possible about the research process and the ways that texts are selected and analysed' (Jacobs 2010, p. 361).

The approach that has been referred to and undertaken in this thesis is that outlined by Willig (2008b). She suggests guidelines for a six-stage procedure of data analysis. It should be noted that Willig acknowledges in addressing this procedure that it does not 'constitute a full analysis in the Foucauldian sense' (2008b, p. 115) as genealogy and governmentality is not strictly addressed. There are, however, no widely accepted rules which detail what constitutes a genealogical analysis (Carabine 2001, p. 268), and the data was viewed from a genealogical perspective in reference to the triad of discourse/power/knowledge as described earlier. Similarly, there is no definitive approach to FDA – it is less prescriptive than other forms of discourse analysis (Jacobs 2010). Instead, the method used by researchers varies and is dependent on the type of data, research questions and discursive contexts that are being investigated.

The following is a summary of Carla Willig's (2008b) procedure of FDA undertaken in this study. Her approach combines elements of both archaeological (what discourses define objects) and genealogical (how discourses link with relational power) (Liao and Markula 2009) Foucauldian methodological approaches. This procedure makes connections between the texts being analysed and other wider discourses presented in literature or social/cultural landscapes (Jacobs 2010). Although some examples have been provided of findings, detailed discussions of these aspects and their meanings can be found in the following chapters.

Stage 1: Discursive Constructions

'The first stage of analysis is concerned with the ways in which discursive objects are constructed' (Willig 2008b, p. 115). These discursive objects are those that are of consequence to the research theme or questions; they are the specific topics to which the participants refer. The objects that emerged included 'bullying', 'intervention and response to bullying', 'gender-based bullying', the epithets of 'slut' and 'gay' and in student groups, 'boys' and 'girls' among other constructions. Each of these constructions constituted participant realities and their gendered, social and cultural positions in the school. They represented dominance in their frequency of occurrence in participant accounts and therefore held

power in participant realities. Due to the semi-structured nature of focus groups and interviews, many of these constructions were self-generated by participants and referred to a number of times. This re-instated their existence in the discursive realities of the participants.

An important factor in this process was also looking at the constructions of each group or participant separately. Despite being from only two schools in similar areas of New South Wales, it was acknowledged that each group of individuals would enter the process with different fundamental constructions. Discursive constructions to examine were not predetermined but rather were revealed during the data collection process and consequently examined in that particular context. Common constructions between groups showed shared experiences indicating wider discursive formations, but more importantly the implications of using these discourses. This was particularly the case with representations of gendered harassment between teacher groups and between student groups.

Data was included for analysis where it assisted in the construction of gendered, social or institutional realities that held consequences for particular individuals. Additionally, where discursive values were repeated from one construction to another, the construction with the content that was more illustrative and discursively powerful was utilised. The next stage was to re-view each transcript in turn and identify the clear discourses that were produced by participants, when constructing the objects.

Stage 2: Discourses

'What appears to be one and the same discursive object can be constructed in very different ways' (Willig 2008b, p. 115). As discourses frame objects and consequently produce various ways of viewing them, they produce particular versions of events or objects (Burr 2003). This section of analysis relates to revealing how people, objects or any other element is portrayed through various discourses. In this study, different groups may refer to bullying at the school in multiple, contradictory and complex ways. The discursive object is the same – 'bullying'; the different discourses employed, however, frame this object in different ways. Discourses of 'bullying' from students included the 'joking' discourse and the 'fitting in' discourse. 'Joking' framed the issue in that most of

the incidents were intended to be in jest and therefore were not damaging. 'Fitting in' suggested that many individuals that were targets of bullying behaviour were those that departed from normative identities and hence were victims of their own performances. Other discourses in this area will be discussed in the following chapters; however, the disparities between these represent a clear example of how particular groups employ discursive frames that relate to their specific realities, or achieve certain subjective goals.

An important consideration of both stages one and two is that of counter-discourses (those discourses that challenge discursive representations either temporarily or permanently) (Carabine 2001). How the counter-discourse is presented, received and responded to produces insight not only in itself, but also in regard to the dominant or more prevalent discourse and its culture of maintenance and promotion. The conflagration of multiple discourses in contemporary FDA studies points to the understanding of 'a more conflictual picture in which different discourses exist side by side or struggle for the right to define truth' (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p. 13). This has been the case in this study, where multiple discourses constantly emerge within the same spaces, competing for dominance. Second, FDA seeks to also acknowledge any 'silences in the text, that is, value statements that are omitted from the text but nevertheless can be imputed from a reading of the text as a whole' (Jacobs 2010, p. 366). As silences are integral foundations of the maintenance of heteronormativity – especially at an institutional level – they are an important consideration of this study. Silences around gendered harassment in the teacher focus groups especially will be considered in coming chapters.

Stage 3: Action Orientation

This stage of analysis largely relates to the function of the discourse utilised to frame the 'object', essentially its purpose and outcome. For example, a discourse of 'just joking' is utilised by participants (teachers and students) to refer to gendered harassment. The function is to negate hostility and dislocate responsibility. This responsibility may be in the use of gendered harassment by an individual (for example, 'it's just a joke, we're just joking about it so no one should get hurt') or the failure to disrupt gendered harassment by a teacher (for example, 'It's hard to tell if they're just joking and having a laugh').

1It can be seen here that participants have something to gain by employing the 'joking' discourse. Actions become less accountable with the potential to shift blame away from themselves (and potentially onto others). These functions and discursive organisations are the action orientation of the discourse. This stage often demonstrates significant implications for the following stage, positioning.

Stage 4: Positioning

The preceding stages (and those that follow) represent a pathway for considering participant accounts and their implications on positioning, practice, subjectivity and identity. The first three stages are largely concerned with how a discursive object is represented through language through discourse and the associated contextual functions of action orientation. Stages four through six are concerned with the implications of the action orientation of these discourses.

Stage four; 'positioning', is concerned with identifying a subject position within a discourse; 'a location for persons within the structure of rights and duties for those who use that repertoire' (Davies and Harré 1999, p. 35, in Willig 2008a, p. 116). Positioning can be seen as a distinct element of social relations and of regulation. As discourses are utilised, individuals are positioned by whether they take up or refuse these discourses. These positions rely on the action orientation perpetuated by particular discourses. In other words, discourses actively construct subjects through making certain positions available to speakers, as well as positions that others can be placed within. Different structures of power that are embedded within discourse are also relevant in this concept. Positions that are taken up (or placed upon others) have meanings and power embedded within them and can therefore influence positions on social (or other) hierarchies.

Continuing the example of 'joking', individuals who engage with this discourse effectively position themselves as the 'joker' asserting their behaviour as innocuous. The person perceived as not 'taking' or understanding the joke will then be positioned as someone lacking a sense of humour. This positioning occurs through the employment of the discourse, working to separate individuals and potentially ascribe blame to individuals for a behaviour that was not initiated by them. Positioning therefore also has implications for individual and collective practice.

Stage 5: Practice

This stage requires examination of the ways in which discursive constructions and their embedded subject positions open up or close down opportunities for action. As discourses construct realities and the subjects within them, this means that practically they limit what can be said and done. 'Certain practices become legitimate forms of behaviour from within particular discourses. Such practices in turn reproduce the discourses that legitimate them' (Willig 2008b, p. 117). Practice is established by discourse and then re-inscribes discourses as realities.

When the 'just joking' discourse is employed, it validates practices of gendered harassment as being socially endorsed. The 'joker's' identity is positioned as socially competent; those that attempt to disrupt the joke are positioned as spoiling it. These positions effectively demonstrate intelligible performances of humour and the attending social hierarchies that are entered into. Joking becomes a practice instilled with social capital and equally opposite, disrupting or refusing the joke becomes a practice that is bound up with negative social outcomes.

Stage 6: Subjectivity

The final stage of this type of FDA explores the transitions and relationships between discourse and subjectivity. As 'the subject' is seen by Foucault as being created through discourse, it is integral to draw connections between these stages. 'Discourses make available certain ways-of-seeing the world and certain ways-of-being in the world' (Willig 2008b, p. 117). This simple way of viewing subjectivity represents both psychological and social realities, and this stage acknowledges that positioning affects each of these realities. It is important to reflect that this stage focuses on the outcomes of taking up various subject participants, specifically with what can be felt, thought or experienced from these positions. Willig acknowledges that this stage of analysis 'is, of necessity, the most speculative' (Willig 2008b, p. 122) as it is impossible to garner or assess a relationship between language and various mental states. Burr (2003) additionally recognises that a major problem for FDA is the extent to which subjectivity can be conceived upon the basis of discourse. Subjectivity, by its definition as 'an individual's conscious and unconscious thoughts, sense of self, and understanding of one's relation to the world' (Blaise 2005b, p. 17), and through its dynamic and malleable nature is open to conjecture and challenge. Despite this,

Willig asserts that the former five stages assist in producing some of the constructions' implications for subjectivity (and for practice, which is also reasonably speculative).

In terms of the 'joking' discourse applied to bullying, the possible implications for subjectivity depend on the positioning as either the joker or respondent. The joker will potentially feel socially empowered by employing gendered harassment as a joke. The respondent may feel angered, trapped and frustrated at the lack of social possibility or encouragement for disruption of the harassment. Conversely, they may feel apathetic with the view that harassing or degrading 'jokes' are an instilled part of the contextual environment. In either case the discourse succeeds in making the practice difficult to disrupt through the embedded power and knowledge contained within.

These stages of analysis allowed a clear and flexible procedure for data analysis. The procedural fluidity between each stage enabled the clear and considered building of social and psychological realities as experienced by the participants. These stages were therefore used in the following sections to reveal constituted norms and values of particular participants and their collective groups.

Head Teacher and Principal Realities

CHAPTER STRUCTURE AND DISCURSIVE INCLUSIONS

The following two chapters integrate references to relevant literature with results and discussion of the study. This structure situates the productions of the participants within wider social, political, historical or cultural frameworks. Information about which group is speaking can be found underneath each quote.

When analysis had been completed, it became clear that discourses were produced relatively consistently within the participant groups of the same level; teacher discourses from Grove and Wilson held distinct similarities, as did student discourses across the schools. Additionally, the principal and deputy principal discussions invoked discourses that were shared with teacher focus groups. For these reasons, the details of this analysis have been separated into this chapter, relating to 'head teacher and principal realities', with the following chapter detailing student realities. At times during this chapter, all participants are equally referred to as 'teachers'. Although this term does not explicitly reference the principals, it has been utilised as an umbrella term to describe all of the adult participants. Where specific discourses appear in particular settings, these have been highlighted and discussed with particular reference to the individual school or participant level.

Specifically, this chapter covers five distinct yet interrelated discursive constructions; 'bullying', 'intervention and response to bullying', 'gender-based bullying', 'slut' and 'homophobic bullying'. The final three of these constructions have all been grouped under the heading 'Gender-Based Bullying' as they reflect themes that were interweaving and connected through teacher discourses; head teachers and principals often linked forms and outcomes of gender-based and homophobic social practices. Each of these discursive constructions held a number of discourses, some shared across objective boundaries (for example, the discourse of 'hierarchy of seriousness' was shared across 'intervention and response to bullying', 'gender-based bullying' and 'slut') demonstrating their pervasiveness and multidimensionality.

The next chapter similarly reviews student discourses and constructions of their realities – both shared across schools and experienced individually within each. This structure has been produced to show the illustrations of shared discourses across physical boundaries.

Bullying

'Bullying' was a term that was known by all teacher participants. They utilised various discourses that demarcated particular roles of individuals involved in incidents and the ways that acts had embedded values. Teachers and principals produced dialogues about what bullying was, and what it was not, why and how it happened, who was targeted (by whom) and who was not. These constructions established normative understandings of bullying and a constitutive outside where particular acts fell outside of the norm. Each of the constructions and discursive acts held repercussions for understandings of individuals and their social performances.

Importantly, their constructions fell within a framework that, again like traditional bullying literature and public discourse, focused on 'fixing' the problem of bullying. This framework inherently produces identities and fixes them with assumptions of rights and responsibilities dependant on their perceived role. Although in essentialist bullying paradigms the blame would perhaps all fall upon the bully, this was far more complex in the teacher and principal discourses in this study. The participants produced exceptions, considerations and reflections that both affirmed and complicated roles and responsibilities in bullying.

Discursive Construction: 'Bullying'

The first consideration of teachers in this construction was that of defining bullying. The participants were asked to compare and contrast their understandings of the terms 'bullying' and 'harassment' in order to explore the differential construction methods that they employed.

Kate:	See I think harassment and think adult, court, that's what people are charged for. Whereas I think bullying …
Mary:	School room

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group)

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

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group)

Richard:	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. Harassment is probably just a bit more of a continual sort of thing, but you know, bullying can be continual as well … so it's that sort of imbalance of power umm that doesn't have a justification

(Grove HS: Principal interview)

David:	See I think that harassment becomes bullying, so I think that bullying is the constant … the constant harassment would be bullying […] Harassment can be a one off incident, you can harass someone. I don't necessarily see that as bullying. The bullying will actually become when it's something that is constant, when that person continues to do that. That's when it's bullying.

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

The above examples show the discursive constructions of various teachers across both of the schools in their attempts to make and communicate meanings of bullying. Their constructions ranged from ambivalence to certainty and drew from essentialist ideas as well as more emotive language. David, for example, portrayed harassment as a 'one off incident', and in doing so depicts harassment as something

that is less intentional, more difficult to prevent and easily resolved. He conversely positions bullying as an aspect that is more thought out and ongoing. While bullying was depicted as a 'behaviour', harassment was defined as an incident – something that happens. Bullying was therefore portrayed as something that has allocated responsibility and intentions behind it.

Dylan:	That's what I'm thinking . . . but bullying is long-term, persistent, repetitive
Mary:	More serious

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Steffi:	. . . my idea is that harassment is verbal more, and bullying takes many forms. It can be anything from cyber or just . . . taking someone's hat, or you know, just anything. Whereas harassment is usually that nye nye nye nye, that sort of
Jeremy:	Constant

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

In her contribution, Steffi suggests that harassment is restricted to verbal instances whereas bullying is broader and can include a number of behaviours – 'anything'. She also implies that the motivations behind harassment are more juvenile and harmless than in her conception of bullying.

These accounts demonstrated the factors that the teachers took into consideration when defining incidents as bullying or as not bullying. Legal ramifications, length of time, repetitiveness, levels of power, intent and mode of bullying each represented sources of meaning for the teachers over whether an issue could be qualified as bullying.

Teachers also constructed ideas about the identities of bullying, specifically extending constitutions of binary bully/victim identities (Ringrose and Renold 2010). The teachers at Grove High explicitly discussed their perception of shared characteristics in 'bullies':

Kate:	Insecure and unhappy with their own sense of self?
Dylan:	I was going to say low self-esteem and lack of respect.
Mary:	Mmm
Jeremy:	They're certainly not necessarily like a bigger kid
Dylan:	Well no, not always, I mean I'm thinking of our year 11 boys more than any other group, they haven't matured and they

haven't … you know, and if you think of five or six or seven or eight boys that are all in that group, they all have a lack of respect for anyone or anything.

Steffi: Mmmm

Dylan: But at a lower level … several of them come from broken homes, several of them don't demonstrate that much self esteem

Kate: Mmm

Steffi: Mmm

Kate: Intelligence or lack thereof

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This section of transcript produces a particular bully identity; one who is unable to think critically or value things, has low self-esteem and a disadvantaged background. In departing from common representations of bullies as 'big' or physical, they instead locate behaviours as being related to intrinsic characteristics that have been developed from their contextual backgrounds. The understanding of 'they haven't matured' demonstrates that bullying performances generally were linked with youth and they would change with time. The deputies also suggested that particular influences on and characteristics of students interacted in specific contexts to result in aggression:

Tony: Obviously if they've had issues at home, and so, that's maybe they've been bullied at home by the parents, their home life may not be very good … I'm picturing more males, definitely being the bully, don't have the social skills either …

David: Physical male bulliers … certainly share a common characteristic would be that that would be advocated at home, that solving problems … Is to use the aggression … that's a generalisation but a pretty valid one I think.

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

In these excerpts the bully identity was psychologised and rationales were produced to account for particular behaviours and roles. This pathos extended to produce a bully/victim binary (Ringrose and Renold 2010) when teachers produced constructions of 'victims':

Vic: What about those who are victims of bullying incidents? What kind of traits do they have?

Jeremy: Sort of quieter kids I guess.

Mary:	Low self-esteem
Steffi:	They have low self-esteem as well
Dylan:	They're not . . . they're not the norm . . . well not even, it depends on the type of bullying, whether it's tall poppy syndrome and they get cut down, or you get the quiet kid that's picked on. They don't fit the norm.
Steffi:	Mmm
Dylan:	In our town they're not jocks, they're not into footy, they're not in the main group, they're not skanks, they don't smoke, you know, they're the quieter kid or the easy victim or the one that doesn't have any friends
Steffi:	Yeah, or even a kid with a disability
Peter:	Or a bit odd in some . . . out of the norm
Kate:	Not the norm, yeah
Peter:	So disability, or . . .
Steffi:	Yeah
Mary:	They stand out in some way, don't they? There's something that makes them a target.

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

In this dialogue the teachers demonstrate the idea of 'fitting in', or more precisely 'fit[ting] the norm'. Dylan lists a range of social groups that can provide students with social ownership and safety. The other teachers also affirm that those who don't fit in are the 'quieter kid', the 'easy victim', the kid who 'doesn't have any friends' or the 'tall poppy', 'a bit odd' or 'even a kid with a disability'. These constructions illuminate the constitutive outside that victims tend to occupy. Differences 'make them a target', positioning those who operate within socially normative boundaries as being potentially dangerous while the differences in those outside as provoke this danger or reaction. This was reaffirmed through the double casting of some victims being the 'antagonists' themselves:

Tony:	. . . often unfortunately in the past some of the victims have turned into the ones who are the bully
David:	The kid who doesn't fit in, as you said, the kid who doesn't fit in to the group, who's on the outer, you know, they'll often be that person who doesn't just get bullied once, they'll get bullied a few times, and they're the ones, as we're saying, the resilience skills and all that sort of stuff, the development of social skills is where you try and head with helping those kids out.

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

Dylan:	On the flip side, some of them are antagonistic themselves. They don't have normal social behaviours.
Steffi:	True
Dylan:	You know, you think about…B.K.
Steffi:	B.K., yeah, he…
Jeremy:	(*laughs*) yes, they can often provoke him
Dylan:	Because they need attention whether it's good or bad
Steffi:	Yes, that's right…they instigate it, and then they get bullied on and then they run to you, saying 'nyaaaa!'
Kate:	Yeah…like R.S.
Jeremy:	Is that rat shit?
Steffi:	(*laughs*)

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Here the teachers complicate the victim identity but also ascribe blame, not only for not 'fitting in' in the first place, but also for increasing vulnerability through lacking social skills or being antagonists. Through this dialogue, 'victims' are reaffirmed as being abnormal through their lack of 'normal social behaviours' and require 'helping' with 'the development of social skills'. The victim identity becomes fraught with negative connotations about difference and self-responsibility. The teachers at Grove additionally (re)deploy a derogatory name for a student; 'rat shit' between themselves, laughing at its employment.

The teachers therefore established understandings about what bullying was and the identities that were involved. These factors were valuable in the initial definition of bullying, but they additionally were invoked as strategies to differentiate between 'types' of bullying that went on within the schools, specifically ideas around bullying between boys, between girls, and between girls and boys. The teachers at each school constructed these specific interactions in ways that simplified complex aggressive acts into 'common sense' understandings of how males and females 'naturally' interacted.

Bullying Between Boys: 'A whole pack of roosters romping about the room'
As discussed in Chapter 2, bullying between boys has been the focus of many contemporary studies into bullying (Ringrose 2008). This has been suggested as relating to the popular discourse of bullying as being mostly physical (Hoover and Juul 1993) as well as the concept of 'power' and 'violence' being related to size and physical dominance.

When constructing 'bullying' the participants in this study drew from this concept of physicality and essentialist understandings of power (as related to strength or status). Although there were constructions of bullying as changing forms (for example, becoming more virtual/online), bullying between boys in all focus groups and interviews was reflected as largely taking place in the context of physical violence or force.

Mary:	What do boys do?
Dylan:	Boys, physical violence, force
Steffi:	Yes

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Richard:	...the boys, boys is physical. There's still a lot of you know, oh punch-ups sort of going on and we're dealing with that sort of stuff now.

(Grove HS: Principal interview)

Tony:	I reckon we see more of the boys...the physical one? That's seen by someone? Pushing, shoving, more open in the classroom bullying

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

John:	Fighting quite a lot
Katrina:	Ego
Celine:	It's more physical I think

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

In each of these representations from teachers the conceptions of the mode of bullying between boys were simplistic and uncontested. Physical fights between boys were discursively constructed as normative and expected:

Jeremy:	The girls will, you know, they'll argue and whatever in front of you or just in the middle of the playground. The boys will, you know, they'll duck off down and have a fight or whatever
Kate:	And the girls hold onto it, it goes for years
Jeremy:	Yeah, that's what the cop was talking about this morning (*laughs*)
Steffi:	Yeah, yeah they do

Kate: Yeah, the boys might have a punch up for a week and then it's . . . moves on.

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Celine: Like . . . sometimes with the boys because it is a physical one, it's an immediate thing whereas this one [females] is something that is long-term so you have to go long-term with it as well.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Through contrasting boy and girl bullying, the teachers constructed boys as able to autonomously and successfully resolve conflicts in a particular space through physical confrontations. These resolutions were said to be swift and do not contain ongoing malice or negative intent into the future. They were also constructed as not taking up teachers' time with reporting prior to the event itself; they managed it themselves:

David: . . . generally the boys, as you said, we don't really hear much about the boys until the fight happens, because the boys are far more reluctant to tipping along
Tony: Yeah

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

The teacher participants proposed that incidents between males that did require teacher intervention were fewer and are more quickly resolved than those between females. In this way, the teachers received more return for their time investments when intervening in 'immediate' male than 'long-term' female incidents. Males were depicted as being easier to read, easier to deal with, and their motivations behind bullying incidents were seen as far more clear and simple (and more understandable).

John: . . . the boys are all bravado about it and . . . sometimes it's easier to deal with the boys.
Paul: More up front
Liz: Yeah
Paul: Yeah I find that. I agree
John: Yeah, because they'll finally kind of say 'yes I did it', it takes a while, but they'll admit it

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

The motivations behind the physical violence also tended to be similar between groups and often revolved around conceptions of 'ego' and masculinity:

> *Tony*:   . . . the actual fight is when the victim actually says 'enough is enough' and they fight back, and that's the only way they know to fight back is to actually hit out. They don't have the skills to be able to talk their way out of it, or even the confidence to walk away . . . they need to save face so they'll throw a punch.
>
> *David*:   Yeah, saving face is a big thing
>
> *Tony*:   Yeah . . . um, I had one, a fight, a couple of weeks ago and there were four kids, and it stemmed from bullying that ended up in the four of them having a fight. And I think, talking to them at the end, when it was resolved, was just the saving face, you know, 'I can't not fight cos then I'll look weak and soft, so I'll get bullied even more, so that's why I put him in a head lock and started whacking him'

> (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

In this transcript, we can see that Tony's description of how he perceives and manages situations of aggression holds binary bully and victim identity conceptions but additionally alludes to notions of masculinity. Initially Tony suggests that victims lack social skills and confidence, meaning they are unable to 'walk away', yet there is a greater force operating that requires some boys to engage in physical aggression. 'Saving face' represents the real need of boys at Wilson to violently respond to physical aggression in order to maintain social (and gender) capital. 'Weak' and 'soft' are terms often associated with performances of homophobic regulation of particular masculinities (Plummer 1999), and operate as a constitutive outside that the students wish to avoid. Through engaging in the physicality of fighting (which is clearly linked to male performances of 'bullying') these students repudiate these attributes and utilise violence to perform their masculinity. Tony illustrates the direct link that students make between looking 'weak' and 'soft' and getting 'bullied even more'. They are seen to connect weakness (specifically non-masculinity) with being a victim.

Along with allusions to 'ego' and 'masculinity', girls and their relationships with boys were also produced as a factor behind aggression between boys. These were specifically constructed around themes of ownership of

girls and other boys encroaching on this ownership. Boys were also seen to engage in put-downs of other boys related to academic ability, and more likely their masculinity, physicality and appearance. However, masculinity and physicality were the most dominant constructs that teachers referred to as motivators for aggression, general interactions and physically violent incidents between boys.

Vic:	What do they like putting each other down about?
	[…]
Katrina:	Physicality
Vic:	When you say physicality what do you mean?
Katrina:	Oh, probably just calling someone a wimp or I dunno…
John:	Yeah, I'd agree with that
Paul:	Yeah
Katrina:	Or pussy! Whatever the word is at the time.
Liz:	Also again the way that they dress, and whatever else, that whole 'emo' thing,
John:	Yeah
Liz:	Um, also you know, boys are pretty bad if a guy, you know with that gender stereotypes and whatever else, they tend to bag them out a fair bit, they look gay and whatever else.
	[…]
Vic:	Like insulting their masculinity?
Liz:	Mhmm
John:	Yeah, it's like a whole pack of roosters romping around the room
Paul:	Yeah (*laughs*)

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This conversation positioned sources of conflict as relating to gendered performances of masculinity. The analogy, 'it's like a whole pack of roosters romping about the room' references a hierarchy or 'pecking order' of masculinity determined by social and gender performances. At both Wilson and Grove, the boys were constructed as seeking to demonstrate their masculinity through specific performances. At Grove, this was seen to establish an order or hierarchy of masculinity:

Dylan:	It's just about intimidation and…
Kate:	Yeah, this bigger person initiation stuff
Peter:	Is it just bullying or interactions?

Vic:	Yeah, bullying and harassment, what goes on between them
Dylan:	Intimidation and pecking order
Kate:	Strength and skill, like with all this boxing stuff
Cain:	Yeah, strength and skill that's a good way of putting it
Steffi:	Yeah that's a good one
Jeremy:	Yeah, strength and skill...some of them are forced into
Vic:	What's going on with the boxing stuff?
Kate:	Oh, just there's a bit of a boxing ring and that and they
Jeremy:	Force
Kate:	They do it...want to show one another up
Peter:	Cock fighting
Kate:	Yeah
Peter:	There's an audience and set up fights...video...

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

The Grove High teachers asserted that many of the boy performances were related to 'intimidation and pecking order'. Their behaviours were seen to revolve around demonstrations of masculinity, largely framed through violent physicality. Some of this takes a more structured (and institutionally supported) form, for example, their utilisation of the school boxing ring. The material presence of the boxing ring and its male-only use legitimises, naturalises and institutionalises this physical violence. The reference to 'cock fighting' (a remarkably similar construct to that of the rooster analogy from Wilson) metaphorically reflects this. Both corporeal and video surveillance increases the stakes even further, with participant displays of masculinity subject to judgement from others and perceptions of this viewing leading to self-surveillance (panopticism).

Kate:	That's a big thing, if they know there's a fight, like everyone else is involved cause the phones are...a big problem. Everyone knows at lunchtime or after school there's gonna be this...and then there's plenty there with their phones ready to video it. Not only more there to egg it on but footage as well, which then goes onto Facebook and YouTube and...

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Kate's dialogue presents ICT as a problematic element of physical aggression. Facebook and YouTube are produced as sites that extend

the reach of bullying performances; increasing audiences both physically and digitally. In some ways this reflects Chapman and Buchanan's research that understands 'cyberbullying as form of youth aggression that takes place within a sociocultural context that can stimulate, promote, reinforce and rationalise aggression and bullying events' (2012, p. 61). However, where Chapman and Buchanan focus on the 'sociocultural context' that enables these behaviours, Kate and many of the other teacher participants discursively promoted the ways that technology functions to ignite bullying acts. Its existence was attributed to a higher frequency of incidents as well as an increased digital audience for it to be communicated to. In this way, technology was implicated in the changing nature of bullying, how it is performed by individuals and appreciated by the wider community.

Finally, by focusing on 'strength and skill', the violence was framed by teachers in a way that demonstrated that the 'winners' are those that have the most strength and skill. The boxing and other fighting sets up a hierarchy of strength and skill, a 'pecking order' that highlights levels of ability.

At Wilson, there was another incident that was produced by the participants that illustrated the conceived gendered boundaries of bullying. As male–male physical bullying was constructed as normative, when boys were involved in social persecution that was not physical, teachers were 'shocked' and 'surprised'.

> *Sarah*: I was really shocked when…the boys were equally involved in bitching about it as the girls, I was really surprised by that one. So where it used to be boys and boys used to be physical, it is becoming more acceptable for the boys to get on Facebook and bitch about other people.
> *Celine*: And it's because that hurt her more that they were continuing to spread stuff.
> *Sarah*: Yeah, that surprised me, that has changed in the last five years
> *Celine*: Yeah, normally the boys would have gone like 'whatever'
>
> (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This section of the focus group is specifically related to males targeting females with abuse online or verbally; a behaviour that has been traditionally conceptualised as a medium that involves female relational aggression of an indirect nature, as this aligns with the accepted norms of female

behaviour (Chapman and Buchanan 2012). This deviation from the norm leads to Sarah being 'shocked' and 'surprised', because 'normally the boys' wouldn't have taken any notice. The phrase 'it's becoming more acceptable for the boys to get on Facebook and bitch about other people' lends meaning to the understanding that there are accepted and unaccepted bullying performances.

Bullying between Girls: 'The girls are more sneaky about it'

Moments of aggression or 'bullying' between girls was the form that was most discussed by the head teacher and principal groups. Teachers at both schools agreed that bullying between females took up the most amount of their time and was of the highest frequency in the schools. The understanding of female-to-female bullying as being high frequency, 'low level' and 'constant' was consistent across the schools. The teachers also consistently asserted that girl conflicts were based on social hierarchies; that the girls were attempting to 'get that one up on someone' because of 'jealousy' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1) often by putting someone else down.

At Wilson High,[1] the predominant forms of bullying between girls were constructed as 'bitchiness', 'exclusion' and 'rumour mongering'. Bitchiness was specifically connected with the understanding of social hierarchy and bringing other girls 'down a peg or two', largely through ongoing negative commentary on appearance. Aspects of appearance that were qualified as important and worthy of bitchiness are related to hair ('her hair looks terrible . . . why did she dye it that colour?'), clothing ('How dare she . . . what she wore to the social!') and body shape ('how skinny she is'). The promoted ways of being were therefore linked to socioeconomic status and conspicuous consumption ('Our school's really . . . Puts a lot of pressure on appearance I reckon. They've got a lot of money to spend on their appearance'), especially when reviewing the identity of 'scrubs'. I asked the teachers what this term meant to the students and in what context it was utilised against them:

> *Liz*:   It's when they don't fit into the . . . um . . . norm, like of what's in [. . .]
>
> *Katrina*: . . . because they didn't have . . . the resources . . . yeah, and it tended to be a certain demographic that they were putting

down as well. Of girls. A racial demographic that seemed to fit in
that category, according to them.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

A more detailed discussion of 'scrubs' and the implications of this con-
struction can be found within the discursive construction of 'girls' in the
following chapter, but the teachers acknowledged that social class was
constituted in ways by the consumption and display of specific goods,
leading to a specific (and localised) discursive construction of 'scrubs'. Boy
problems/issues/fighting over boys was constructed as a final motivator
for girls' conflicts as well as the interlinked constructs of sexual reputations
and the 'slut/whore' abject identity – a label to be avoided due to negative
social implications.

Vic:	When you say boy problems what do you mean?
Dejinna:	Boyfriend
Liz:	Fighting over boys
Sarah:	You're talking to my boyfriend
Celine:	You cheated on your boyfriend
John:	You're taking him away from me . . . you gave him a look
Sarah:	How dare you look at him
John:	Yeah, how dare you look at him in that way
Sarah:	Why are you friends with him or why did you put that comment about him on Facebook?

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

At Grove, similar conceptions of girl motivations were produced. The
teachers confirmed that the girls often framed 'looks' and 'boys . . . boys
always come into it' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1) as the main
sources of conflict. These motivations for bullying located the central
concern of girls as appearance (both the conspicuous consumption of
clothes, hair and so on, and more inherent productions of body image)
and relationships with boys. Successful knowledge and performance of
these aspects fulfilled roles in the heterosexual matrix and produced social
capital. This was complicated and difficult work and prioritised hetero-
sexual desires and performances while silencing others. The teachers
continually referenced an environment where non-heterosexuality was
not a possibility, and continual gendered expectations and performances

illustrated that heterosexuality was normative (and compulsory) within intelligible girl interactions.

The teachers at Grove also produced representations of non-physical confrontations such as 'death stares' and 'exclusions'. This was, again, constructed in relation to social hierarchies within friendship groups. The predominant mode of female bullying was said to be through Facebook, which was constructed as an especially vehement concern of teachers at Grove:

Cain:	Bloody Facebook
Kate:	Oh Facebook
	(*group groans*)
Mary:	That's part of cyber, yeah
Jeremy:	(*laughs*) Facebook is the most...
Kate:	What happens outside of school at parties and that then... escalates
Jeremy:	No good... for Telstra to have it free on their phones is just...
Steffi:	Oh it's awful... I really think we should
Kate:	Abolish technology

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

These constructions represent the teachers' conceptions of damage, risk and destruction caused by social media, alongside the burdens of responsibility placed on the teachers to manage these risks. This reflects contemporary research that suggests that the increased use of and access to digital communication has resulted in a rise in rates of 'cyber bullying' (Bhat 2008), bullying which is defined in essentialist terms but utilises ICT. These two separate ideological approaches open up the possibility of two possible practices; either stricter controls over technology and more stringent punishments, or alternatively an approach centred on dialogue with students, the development of school curricula on online interactions and positive adult modelling (Cassidy et al. 2012).

Facebook, exclusions, bitchiness and rumour mongering were therefore the main constructs of 'modes' of bullying between girls. The girls at both schools were therefore cast as taking part in the more indirect forms of bullying; that is not 'face to face' as the boys were.

Sarah:	Groups. Rumour mongering.
Liz:	What about text messaging?

Dejinna:	Yeah, that's a big one. Facebook, and text messaging.
Vic:	And when they're using text and Facebook is it the kind of, what we're talking about, about appearance or boy problems or that kind of thing?
Sarah:	It's a lot of this, she said she said stuff too . . . It's that rumour mongering boy problem bitchy carry on.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Here the teachers' specific application of Facebook to girls' forms of bullying functions to 're-essentialise notions of girls as relationally aggressive and pathological in problematic ways' (Ringrose 2013, p. 114). Girls are expected to perform their aggression indirectly (that is not face-to-face), demonstrating that Facebook is equally understood as a 'feminised' mode of communication, with concerns focusing on girls' usage. Sarah's final summary qualifies the girl-to-girl conflicts as constant, frustrating and lacking in significance. This was reaffirmed through the construction of the 'changing nature' of bullying:

John:	I must admit I was blown away by Katrina's year group when those really good girls . . .
Katrina:	Yes!
Dejinna:	Yes, I remember that
Celine:	Yes
John:	picked on that . . . I was just 'they're angels!'
Katrina:	Actually I think girls are more difficult than boys . . . Boys I think you have more common traits perhaps . . .
John:	Yeah . . . So I think
Sarah:	The cowardice of hiding behind the ICT thing is helping bring out some of these . . . that may not have been physical bullies in the past.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Here the teachers produce the understanding that bullying has changed; that girls who wouldn't normally engage with (physical) bullying are now able to access novel ways of social conflict; that is through ICT and Facebook. They assert that this landscape has arisen by referring to the ways that the 'really good girls' (the 'angels') have 'picked on' another girl. The imagery of this construction is a powerful example of how girl violence and aggression is repeatedly constituted as disturbing and

surprising in comparison with the violence and aggression of males. 'Bullying' is coded as masculine; it is embedded with physically violent values, and the boy bullies are seen as having 'more common traits', potentially an allusion to notions of physicality, strength and size. This positions boy bullying as normative as opposed to girl bullying that is deviant and unexpected. The new technologies have enabled bullying to occur in different ways, and this bullying has a sense of 'cowardice' embedded within it. In these ways the female bullying is again positioned as cowardly, indirect and unpredictable. This is further affirmed by the Wilson teachers' constitutions of girls as being unlikely bullies, and the teachers constantly being caught off guard when they become aware of the incidents that have taken place:

Katrina:	There's some girls that you think butter wouldn't melt in their mouth
John:	Mmm
Katrina:	And then you find out they're doing all this stuff. . . . But I think with the boys, I dunno but I've noticed that there are traits, especially with those intimidating boys.
John:	Yeah
Katrina:	And they'll have it over all the other boys. They'll be a leader. [. . .]
Liz:	I think that girls are more sneaky about it?
John:	Yeah
Dejinna:	Sly, yeah
Liz:	And then you're shocked and horrified about it when you find out and talk to them about it. Where the boys are all bravado about it and . . .
Paul:	More up front
Liz:	Yeah

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Here teachers positioned the girls as 'sneaky' and 'sly' with an outward disguise of innocence. The boys are concurrently positioned with exceptionally more positive language around their violence and aggression; the 'intimidating boys' are referred to in terms such as 'leader' and 'bravado' and 'up front', constructions that have very different characterisations. When the girls do engage in any kind of aggression the teachers are 'shocked and horrified'. There is a precursor that girls are inherently passive

(and therefore not aggressive in any circumstances). While boys were expected to engage in conflict, girls were consistently expected to 'just be friends' (Ringrose 2008, p. 516). What is problematic here is that the girls, in practice, are more likely to receive greater punishments for the same behaviours, purely because their positioning within the heterosexual matrix as feminine supposedly forbids any aggressive behaviour.

When there was discussion of more direct (serious) modes of aggression between girls there were similar deflections. Physical confrontations, the main representation of direct bullying were constructed as 'increasing' between girls at Grove, but the teachers' productions held specific 'girl' ways of physical fighting:

Kate:	I think they're getting more physical
Peter:	They're increasing
Jeremy:	Certainly increasing
Mary:	Hair pulling
Kate:	Pushing, smacking, kicking
Mary:	Scratching

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

'Hair pulling', 'smacking' and 'scratching' were produced as the particular ways that girls performed physical violence, showing the need of the participants to differentiate between girl and boy physical conflicts. The motivation for physical violence was also represented differently:

| *Kate*: | I think the boys do a lot of the egging on of the girls becoming physical, but it's definitely stimulated by the verbal name calling |

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Girl physical violence in this excerpt is again represented as differing from the normative order of the school through the understanding that it is 'egged on by boys'. The boys are presented as those who have ownership and authority over the physical violence; they then transfer this onto the girls or pressure a change in their performances. This construct again locates physical violence away from normal or expected girl performances; it's expected that the girls will not fight, but the interaction with the boys enables this outcome.

Bullying between Girls and Boys: 'Name calling rubbish'

Male–female aggression was the area that teachers promoted as the least obvious, frequent and destructive of the types. They suggested that it was not as prevalent as same-sex bullying ('You don't tend to see as much as the other two, I don't think' – Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1) and continually reduced significance through language constructions and through changing subjects to aggression that they felt was more prominent. At both Wilson and Grove, the understanding was that all male–female bullying was founded upon past or present heterosexual relationships:

Jeremy:	Well similar to the other ones as well what happens between the boys and girls
Steffi:	But this is relationships
Kate:	Relationships
Jeremy:	It's mainly relationships though
	. . .
Kate:	Tormenting
Mary:	It's all related to the sexual stuff, tormenting

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This was also the prevalent discursive construction of incidents at Wilson:

Liz:	If they've been in a relationship and there's been a break up
Dejinna:	Yeah, that's true
Liz:	And one of them moves on maybe early, there's a bit of a backlash and a bit of pain maybe
Katrina:	I think in the junior years it's very . . . like the tension, like they really like each other but the boys will probably pick on a couple of girls that they probably have a crush on . . . they'll pick on them quite nastily, you know?
Sarah:	Yeah . . . their inability to express feelings . . .

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

The constructions of it occurring in 'the junior years' as well as through the students' 'inability to express feelings' discursively coded this type of aggression as a largely short term and based on a lack of relational or social maturity. This could reference the understandings of female/feminine

involvement; that any bullying that involves girls is juvenile, immature, non-serious and indirect. It also assumes that all bullying between male and female relationships is related to heterosexual relationships, affirming that heterosexuality is the accepted norm and resides in teacher expectations and the subsequent institutional response. The teachers also emphasise that the bullying largely consists of 'name calling', which in the context of their dominant discourse of seriousness functions to reduce the significance and priority of the events.

When the teachers discussed this form of bullying as evolving into senior years (and away from the established junior, immature levels of development that typified these interactions), the word 'banter' replaced 'bullying', locating it as an accepted and celebrated part of the culture that has its base within heteronormative flirting (Pascoe 2007). Students are repositioned as 'joking' despite still holding grudges against each other.

> John: I think this [boy/girl bullying] becomes more bantering as they get older. They still hold that little grudge but they say . . . say, something quite rude and derogatory but they go 'only joking'
>
> (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This reaffirms the non-serious nature of the interactions in that it does not (exactly) carry into the senior context and remains normative and linear to the development of social relationships between the students.

At Grove their construction of boy–girl bullying presented a different conception of the mode and seriousness though they still relied on the foundation of heterosexual relationships as the main motivation. Their constitutions, however, relied on older boys holding power over younger girls:

> Mary: Older boys
> Kate: Older boys younger girls
> Jeremy: Yep
> Mary: They kind of abuse their power and . . .
> Kate: And the girls think they're liked and appreciated by the boys but the boys treat them like . . .
> Mary: And it's a good idea to give ten people oral sex
> Jeremy: You gave it to someone, how bout me, you know?
> Kate: And just the way they're treated.

Steffi: See I don't see any of these things in special ed.
Mary: That doesn't happen in maths class either

(*laughter*)
(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This passage shows the ways that the teachers conceptualise the male–female power relationships at Grove High. Importantly Steffi and Mary work to distance themselves from the incident using humour (by laughing) and locating their subject areas away from the potentially risky area of power abuse in a sexual context. Kate also identifies the ways in which the girls 'think they're liked and appreciated by the boys', re-affirming the group's discourse around heterosexual female desires towards boys. She recognises that the treatment from the boys was unacceptable, however, there is a lack of discussion about responses or interventions; these are deflected by Steffi and Mary using the concepts of (in)visibility and (non)responsibility.

Physical violence was also constructed as an outcome of this type of bullying at Grove:

Jeremy: Year ten boy and a year 8 girl, look what I was talking about [earlier]
Vic: And he threw the wooden box and kicked her
Jeremy: Kicked her, threw it at her because it was all developing... you know, it was past history, you know
Mary: It's like a total lack of respect for that girl and to that point that you can just treat her like a dog almost, it's just
Kate: Mmm
Steffi: Mmm, it's awful
Vic: Did the boy think that there was some sort of rationale behind the attack?
Jeremy: No he just did it, he didn't see that there was anything wrong with it.
Kate: No, nothing wrong with it
Jeremy: He said 'dunno, don't care'
Steffi: No, there's no remorse at all...

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This incident highlighted the distinct difference in the ways that the teachers constructed boy/girl bullying at Grove to that of Wilson. Each

of the teachers engaged in the discourse at a similar level, denouncing the attack as being 'awful' and demonstrating 'a total lack of respect for that girl'. There was a definite sense of unity in the discourse and perhaps this was produced through the mode of bullying; that is, the incident was physical and resulted in physical harm to the girl.

Discourses: 'Bullying'

Essentialism

Despite participant deliberation, the more common themes that emerged from teacher and principal groups were based within essentialist understandings. They sometimes inferred essentialist definitions of bullying that reflected Olweus' (1997) interpretations of bullying as an individual or group behaviour. The person or group with 'power' or a 'position of power' was depicted as exerting this power over another in a 'long-term, persistent, repetitive' way. When these kinds of constructions were offered, they proved to have worth in the group discussion process, perhaps as they had definitional familiarity. The participants generally agreed upon these and the conversations were soon after closed with little dispute after their deployment. There were clear reproductions of the language of Olweus' accepted definitions and these seemed to be accepted by the group when deployed; especially particular words such as 'power' (imbalance and exertion), 'long-term' and 'repetitive'.

Action Orientation

The employment of the essentialist discourse functioned to define 'bullying' within particular boundaries, allowing teachers to conceptualise what bullying was, and simultaneously what it was not. By employing specific criteria, this discourse encouraged a cohesive understanding about what constituted a 'bullying' interaction that required intervention. This discourse enabled teachers and principals to define, recognise and arbitrate incidents of bullying.

Positioning

Through the invocation of the essentialist discourse of bullying, a 'constitutive outside' was established where occurrences that reside outside strict definitions are dismissed. What the teachers and principals focused on were specific, visible, definite instances that they could immediately qualify. Those that did not fit within the concept of 'persistent', 'constant',

'repetitive' or within a conceptual understanding of power imbalance failed to be positioned as 'bullying' and therefore to hold discursive (and practical) power. A practical example of the effects of this discourse was the ways in which the head teachers and principals at Wilson High framed 'kick a slut in the head day' (Chapter 6).

The acceptance of the essentialist discourse by the teacher and principal groups additionally positioned them as defenders of students against the 'worst' and most 'serious' incidents. Their role entailed understanding what bullying was and having the power to decisively discern between acceptable and unacceptable social practices. In this way, they were positioned as those responsible for reviewing and curtailing the social performances of students.

Practice

The essentialist discourses impacts upon schools' practice both in instances that are determined to be 'bullying', and those that are not. 'Bullying' performances that are perceived as meeting essentialist criteria can be seized upon by teachers, with policy measures implemented in a cohesive and transparent way. Teachers can feel confident in their performances when they do encounter these positions due to the shared meanings and recognition of bullying as damaging. The definitions provide strong guidelines for when to intervene and when not to intervene, which is practically important when they experience and view a diverse range of interactions in their everyday practices, and when their resources for addressing aggression are particularly limited.

The simultaneous marginalisation of incidents that occur outside of these boundaries is a more problematic practical outcome. Those that fail to meet the criteria, for example, 'one off' incidents or those where power levels are imperceptible, may be reduced or eliminated from the teachers priorities for intervention. The process of establishing these indicators is also problematic; teachers become responsible for identifying particular details (for example, the positions of power, the nature of the bullying, how long it's been happening, how upset the students are) to establish whether it is a bullying incident or not. This is reflected in their expressions of the teachers from Wilson who completed a sentence as one of their focus group responses:

Vic: I feel confident responding to bullying when...
Sarah: I know all the facts
John: Yeah

Vic:	How do you find out all the facts?
Sarah:	Witness statements, talking to parents,
Paul:	Get the kids to write a statement, send one kid over there, one kid over there
John:	Or sometimes you can get
Paul:	Other kids in the class, and you get the witnesses as well
Sarah:	And the teachers involved
Katrina:	And the past . . . um, past events, documentation
John:	And it can take ages . . . and especially when everybody in the class writes a different version
Paul:	Yes!

(*laughter*)

John:	And it's like, Inspector Poirot on a Sunday night

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

This excerpt from Wilson shows the procedural responsibilities that the teachers construct as part of their bullying management practices. The construction indicates the burdens for teachers with intense social, vocational and emotional repercussions if their decisional outcomes are 'incorrect', hence why they are positioned as a type of criminal investigator. By establishing that practical confidence is achieved through knowing 'all the facts', teachers are required to ascertain as much information as possible before intervening. These facts allocate individual responsibility to those involved and require clear definitions of the events that have occurred. Therefore, although the essentialist discourse potentially provides 'clear-cut' definitions of bullying, teachers have to work exceptionally hard to determine whether incidents and agents fall within these. This contradicts the premise that essentialist bullying approaches reduce the workload of school staff.

Subjectivity

While engaging with the discourse of essentialism in regard to bullying, the teachers may feel supported by the understanding that the group collectively supports interventions in particular social performances. These guidelines also potentially allow them to remove themselves from particular situations that they may feel confronted by. Their definitional process, in other words, is capable of constricting 'bullying' to particular events that are perceived as manageable, while they have the option of limiting their involvement in more complex cases that may be 'one off', or

lacking a 'power differential'. The teachers conversely may feel that these restrictions impinge their ability to enact interventions on situations that are harmful to students, yet do not fit within essentialist definitions. As this discourse also requires them to know 'all the facts', they may feel increased responsibility and stress, especially when combined with the 'moral panic' of the popular discourse around bullying.

The Bully/Victim Binary

Although the discourse of essentialism could technically be seen to encompass an understanding of binary bully and victim identities, this theme emerged as a specific discourse both inside and outside of essentialist representations. Teachers at both Grove and Wilson constructed particular bully and victim identities and these held implications for understanding, responding and managing bullying events. They invested specifically in understandings of 'the kid most likely', an identity both constituted and made recognisable through a broad range of professional practices, expert discourses, policy initiatives, moral panics and popular images (Saltmarsh 2012). In other words, they pathologised the identities and performative expectations of 'victims' and 'bullies'.

This discourse references the findings of Ringrose and Renold who assert that 'Power, in these types of definitions of bullying, is conceived as an individual psychological and intentional acting out of aggression from bully to the victim, setting up a bully/victim binary' (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 576). Each of the individuals are assigned particular values, characteristics and behaviours in accordance with these dichotomous labels, and hence are both pathologised and individualised in comparison to 'normal', 'neutral' or 'unafflicted' children (Ringrose and Renold 2010). Teachers that utilised the discourse therefore utilised comparative discursive practices to highlight what they interpreted as deviant social practices or identities and subsequently assigned value judgements to these, playing a powerful role in the schooling of young people.

Action Orientation

The discursive constitutions of 'bullies' was largely founded within social–ecological discourses that functioned to remove responsibility from the individual student and relocate this to wider environmental, social, or cultural circumstances. The emphasis of teachers was 'placed on understanding the bully's individual characteristics in relation to the multiple social systems

of which he or she is an inseparable part' (Barboza et al. 2009, p. 103). This could be seen as a narrative sequence of a perpetrator that functioned to normalise violence and lessen or relieve the aggressor's responsibility.

Simultaneously, the construction of the 'victim' by teachers at both Wilson and Grove High Schools interleaved with a liberal individualist discourse that located responsibility for safety and coping with the individual student. Their understanding of 'fitting in' (representing safety and social support for the student) promoted the conception that if students altered their performances then they would not be susceptible to bullying behaviours. This dehumanised the targets of violence, positioning them as deserving of the aggression.

These two constructs worked in conjunction to allocate responsibility for change largely to the 'victim', while the 'bully' was discursively relieved of such responsibility. This was accentuated by the understanding that their differences 'make them a target'; functioning to represent that their personal performances are the ignition of aggression. By invoking this understanding, the teachers effectively demonstrated that aggression was a response to others' social ineptitudes.

Positioning

The bully/victim binary discourse functions to position individuals into particular categories of social interactions. These are not simplistic and their intricate deployment works in subtle ways to produce meanings that burden either victims or bullies with particular identities. As victims were positioned as individuals who effectively 'make themselves a target', they were simultaneously positioned as being responsible for their own circumstances and requiring change:

> *David*: [a priority is] helping those victims to develop those resilience skills, which is probably the hardest thing, is probably how do you actually help the victim, who becomes the victim all the time, how do you develop those resilience skills to ignore, to do all those different things.
>
> *Tony*: Yeah the victim all the time's an issue too. It's a fine line about well, why is this kid always coming to report being bullied?
>
> (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

The 'issue' of the 'victim all the time' demonstrates that the interventional priority is with the receptor of the violence, rather than the

aggressor. 'Bullies' were simultaneously positioned as individuals who are unable to be held accountable for their actions as they enacted their aggression. As teachers referenced the normative social groupings and illustrated the constitutive 'inside' and 'outside', they represented that victims fell outside while bullies (who held social capital) were instead within the boundaries. Their role was produced as one of a policing power for the 'victims' who transgressed acceptable behaviours. Bullies additionally were positioned as victims themselves of their own personal circumstance; poor education, difficult home lives, low self-esteem and difficulty with positive social relationships. In this way they were constructed as not being accountable for their own performances; they could not replicate positive interactions if they have never been a part of them themselves.

Teachers in this process were disempowered as the discourse located the positions and functions of the individuals as inevitable and normative. Teachers may be left feeling 'helpless' as students seek and fail to 'fit in', but the discourse itself positions their interventions as being largely meaningless as identities and positions are already defined and fortified.

Practice

The practical outcomes of this discourse could be seen in the production and application of victim change or education measures that were implemented at both Wilson and Grove. With their understandings of victims being accountable for their differences, and bullies conversely holding little or no responsibility for their (re)actions, the teachers advocated for victim education; teaching 'victims' how to interact more effectively.

> *Tony*:   A lot of counselling for the victim, to try and teach them how to stand up for themselves,
> *David*:   Resilience skills …
>
> (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

This fortified the understanding of the victim as the individual requiring change; that 'victims might eliminate or at least reduce the problem by dressing or behaving differently' (DePalma and Atkinson 2010, p. 1670), whereas the 'bully' was constructed as being unable to change due to contextual locations. This discourse of victim responsibility resulted in

teachers implementing programmes that attempted to alter the psychological and social performances of 'potential victims':

> *Sarah*: But also in things like the learning centre is giving these opportunities to all our boys that were potential victims of bullying, I know that did some great jobs for last year with building resilience in the boys with our survival program; we've run the gorgeous girls programme to give those kids that are at risk of being bullied the self-confidence to deal with it, so it's not just us trying to skim across the surface and deal with the aftermath of bullying

> (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Teachers in this process are required to ascertain the students who are 'potential victims' and then target those individuals with the programme. Again, this highlights the difference (and perceived failures) in both psychological and social performances of victims and functions to put 'the onus of solving the problem onto the victim' (Brown et al. 2007, p. 1257). Their failures to successfully navigate social spheres in which normative identities are celebrated results in the need for them to attend programmes committed to change. These understandings perpetuate a 'common sense' framework of power as dominant bullying behaviours are presented as reasonable, acceptable or normative, concealing the causal power relationship that establishes and maintains power relations. The fact that there are gender dependent streams in these programmes for males and females additionally reinstates that normative behaviours are gendered; boys are part of a 'survival' programme, whereas girls are framed as ideally (feeling or becoming) 'gorgeous'. These instilled norms highlight the ideal product from the programme, where individuals ascribe to binary, gendered norms, reject the identities that caused their difference and ascribe to social hierarchies.

Subjectivity

Bully and victim identities have extensive subjective implications. Where students were labelled with either, they face judgements not on their behaviours, but on their ways of being, their personal lives, former experiences and their performative representations. As teachers draw meaning from contextual evidence, adjudicate events and allocate blame based on their subjective understandings of the positions of the social actors, they construct normality and equally, abnormality. This process results in

devolution of teacher interventional responsibility as teachers reside within a discursive supposition of inevitability. Significantly, 'the bully/victim binary offers few material or practical resources . . . to articulate or address the social content of meanings of their conflict. It also has a very problematic discursive effect of engendering heightened defensiveness, anger and anxiety' (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 587). The subjectivities of teachers within this discourse close down opportunities for interpretations of conflict and instead apply ubiquitous understandings that resist adaptation or complication.

Normative Cruelties

This discourse was constituted by the ways that the teachers constructed realities of bullying performances, which included gendered understandings of how females and males interacted. They disclosed expectations of what males and females were (and should be) in both covert and overt ways. The collective creation of these normative gendered identities linked with responses to bullying events and the ways that teachers approached particular situations. Both ideological approaches and practical intervention strategies were influenced by their expectations of intelligible identities and 'normative cruelties'; those expected negative social performances of either females or males that are 'taken for granted' (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 575).

Intelligible femininities and masculinities were visible at all levels of 'bullying'; the precursor or reason for the incident, the mode in which the incident is carried out (for example, verbal, physical and ICT), the result or (non)resolution of the incident (for example, whether it is reported, whether the parties leave the interaction satisfied, whether there are repeat incidents, whether other stakeholders are introduced) and the ways in which teachers approach the parties involved or perceive the incident itself. Where incidents fell outside of the intelligible performances '(for instance, being a tough, physically violent boy, or a mean girl)' (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 575) the participants demonstrated 'surprise', 'shock' and 'horror', reinforcing gendered boundaries. Teachers' reflections on these events achieved a form of gendered regulation through actively constructing what constitutes normative, intelligible ways of being and simultaneously abjecting divergence from these identities. Indeed, they create discursive conditions of possibility, which limit the capacities with which subjects can forge their identity.

Action Orientation

It could be argued that the above constructions of the three groups (male–male, female–female and male–female) were products of the sexes of the students themselves. Indeed, in a way, this is the function of the discourse that the teachers provide. The construction of each of these understandings is largely presented as observations from the teachers; things that they see and respond to in their day to day work. As an action orientation, however, these constructions do hold values and functions in their deployments. Normative aggression between boys was consistently identified as simple, related to masculinity, physical and effectively resolved (through physical violence). The lack of specific, in depth narrative reflections or recollections of incidences of physical fighting in this focus group reveals the dominant understanding that physical altercations between males are normal. There was also no reflection that the culture of masculinity could be damaging or that it could be confronted (or disrupted). As such, the motivator of physical aggression between males is accepted as an inherent and static part of the boys' social landscape. These silences resist an understanding of gender and violence that elucidates who might direct violence, and why, as well as who might become the targets of this violence. The framing of physical (boy) altercations in themes of strength and size, bravado and power function to place fighting, or more specifically, winning fights, as a source of social capital and that requires skill and 'power'. These constructions suggest that the predominantly considered most 'damaging' form of bullying – physical violence between boys – is not an issue that requires disruption. Physical violence is presented as being natural, normative and short term with positive social outcomes for those who are involved. This positions the school and the teachers as being responsible managers of physical conflict and normative adolescent relationships.

Conversely, the constructions of female interactions were framed through understandings of high prevalence, long-term timelines and administration workloads, their constant application and their lack of serious harm. At the same time, they were constituted as normative and harmless in girl contexts, illustrated by the construction of the transience of girl friendships.

The teachers also constructed understandings of normality and harmlessness when they engaged in reflections of bullying between boys and girls. Their constitution at Wilson of 'name calling rubbish' functioned to explicitly reduce the understandings of harm and consequence.

The interactions between boys and girls were positioned as being a product of age, immaturity and the inability to communicate. At Grove, the description of a physically violent incident presented a marker of seriousness and produced a communal repudiation. Even in this context, however, the teachers worked to distance themselves, shifting these 'issues' away from their realm of responsibility.

In these ways, the discourse attenuated accountability for intervention either through the premise of harmlessness and normalcy in particular social behaviours or through the rejection of the behaviours as being part of the teachers' responsibility. Specifically, the discourse of normative cruelties functioned to de-emphasise the role of gender, 'often portraying violent attitudes, speech and conduct . . . as the "natural" cause of the gendered perpetrator/victim binary associated with violence' (Robinson et al. 2012a, p. 185).

Positioning

The discourse of normative cruelties assigned boys and girls with specific social performances that presumed their normative gendered roles in future altercations. For example, boys were required to learn how to 'stand up' for themselves and cope with moments of violence (for example, participating in the school boxing ring), while girls were expected to 'be friends'. Feminine ways of bullying were positioned as being dishonourable, contributing to a broader discourse that disenfranchised various forms of femininity.

Boys were simultaneously lauded in their ability to handle social disagreements when they follow through with violence (as opposed to withdrawing) as this prevented ongoing conflicts or grudges. In this way, male physical violence was highlighted as a naturalised response to conflict that has positive outcomes. Girls were again conversely located as being irresponsible social managers, evidenced by their transient friendships and ongoing (indirect) battles that are fuelled by 'jealousy' over social hierarchies.

Practice

By positioning the students' performances as normative, student behaviours are constructed as inherent, related to their gender, their age and sociocultural influences. As such, certain aggressions are allowed to continue unimpeded, and a binary valuing of girls and boys bound up with

understandings of their gender-influenced social management strategies is able to flourish. Where the teachers assigned gendered values to seriousness and expected performances, and thus to their intervention and response protocols, boy identities and performances became more valuable and more successful than those of girls. Responding to bullying in these ways is inequitable and reinforces broader societal hierarchies.

The students themselves can insert into this framework, drawing power from particular performances and avoiding others. It becomes possible to conceptualise why many incidents of bullying are reflected upon as being physical in nature; it is likely that the boys will respond with a physical, masculine aggression if it is constructed as the most powerful, and most accepted act in the discursive context. Equally girls avoid these constructs as they move within constructed boundaries of 'doing girl' and avoid the disciplining gaze of teachers when they deviate from their heteronormative femininity through exhibiting any form of aggression. These performances are inscribed as compulsory ways of 'doing boy' or 'doing girl' (Butler 1990), and may result in girls who move outside of their expectations being 'treated much more harshly and . . . excluded more easily than boys' (Ringrose 2013, p. 37).

This discourse also resists change. As the cruelties themselves become expected of the agents and of the social landscape, teachers can employ this discourse to produce understandings that the school is not a factor in either production or change. Possibilities for change are disabled through the discursive constructions of boys' and girls' bullying as being an innate product of their sex and developmental stage.

Subjectivity
The discursive constructs produced and maintained by normative cruelties potentially result in the subjective experience of teachers experiencing a sense of inevitability. The psychosocial, developmental positioning of aggression eliminates any incentive for change or action. Teachers may experience frustration with having to deal with repeat 'dibber dobbers' as part of the process for 'non-serious' incidents, especially within their larger context where they are short of time and burdened with other responsibilities. Their subjective experience may therefore consist of allocating meanings of 'normalcy' to many social interactions that in other (non-school) situations they may consider unacceptable.

INTERVENTION AND RESPONSE TO BULLYING

'Intervention and response to bullying' was the second discursive construction to emerge from the data. Although teachers had already proffered extensive discourses around the construct of 'bullying', it became clear that defining 'bullying' and its agents was only one aspect of its constitution. Once it had been defined as an incident that required disruption, teachers were required to adjudicate an appropriate response. This presented the theme of 'intervention and response' in which teachers reflected on their personal and institutional responsibilities and processes when deciding on courses of action to take after negative social interactions or bullying events had taken place.

Discursive Construction: Intervention and Response to Bullying

The construction of intervention and response presented a number of linked themes. These related to student reporting and the process and outcome of teacher responses. The *instigation* of student reports contained conflicting constructs. Teachers either constructed that students were 'good' or 'getting better' at reporting incidents or that they resisted reporting incidents. This reporting was constructed as integral to their responses as teachers maintained that bullying was the most difficult to recognise or respond to when:

Jeremy:	You can't see it
Steffi:	When it's out of school too, where it's cyber
Mary:	When the kids don't tell you
Steffi:	When the kids don't tell you and it's hidden, yeah
Peter:	When it's verbal … with no witness statements. Like a fight, there's usually going to be a witness to react to inform part of the evidence of bullying

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

In contrast, they expressed self-belief with their interventions when they perceived them to be directly visible. Their confidence was increased in their recognitions of bullying when it was:

Liz:	Physical … stuff that you can see
John:	Mmm

Liz: It's a lot harder to hear, sometimes there might be conversations that might be like, little stuff that you miss in the classroom all the time. But the easiest way to see it is if someone's pushing another person.

John: Yeah, I'd agree with that

Dejinna: Yes, that's true

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

Richard: …physical stuff is probably easier to see and respond to…and to a degree it's sort of a cleaner sort of bullying as well, because it's you know, yeah have a punch up, separate the combatants and it's all over and done with? Cos if they're not in the same area at the same time, you know, they can't be boxing or whatever. […] whereas you're snide comments and you're…you know, faceless Facebook type stuff, you know, that's insidious. It's sort of like well 'did I hear that?' or you know, 'is that slack comment written on someone's wall really bullying someone else?' that sort of stuff.

(Grove HS: Principal interview)

Visibility was therefore a determining element of the intervention and response process. Teachers required information about incidents to ensure an appropriate response, and this information was most successfully achieved through student reporting as they also presented background information; 'it's only when someone fills you in on some background that you realise it was an insult', 'they will fill you in as well, the other kids' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2).

The *process* of intervention and response was constructed through concepts of delineation, differentiation and prioritisation (that is which incidents required direct and immediate intervention and which did not), work and administrative output, the process itself (that is the procedural steps to follow), and the ability to achieve a 'successful' response (including barriers and motivators for response). Firstly, teachers made decisions relating to the incident at hand. These consistently related to how 'serious' an event was. Both schools promoted that they had distinct responses to bullying and this worked to communicate that bullying was a priority and was taken seriously. This was also iterated through inferences towards the binary identities of 'bully' and 'victim'. These positions, once confirmed by teachers, were often fixed for periods of time and linked with concepts of 'serial victims' or 'serial bullies' that could impact upon teacher practices in the present and future.

Sarah: I think we just judge it on a case by case basis, who the victim is, who the bully is, and what the incident was, and make our decisions from there. And it's some of our serial victims that we've talked about before, we may not act as quickly but . . . other than providing support, through to those really serious incidents where we just act immediately

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

The teachers did not produce evidence of formal policies that had this understanding of seriousness explicitly identified but they did invoke a sense of a collective understanding of this 'scale'. Although this was referred to mostly implicitly and without direct reference, David and Tony from Wilson High discussed it explicitly:

Tony: You know obviously we have a scale in our head about how serious it is, whether it's something we deal with right now that we drop everything and we deal with it, or whether it's something we refer on . . .
         [. . .]
David: it definitely is a scale . . . I think, you know, if we had ten minutes to write down that particular scale, I'm sure we'd probably be able to come up with one that was fairly similar

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

In all teacher accounts, this 'scale' situated physical incidents at the top. In other words, links between serious or non-serious events tied directly into the mode of bullying, whether physical or non-physical.

Vic: So, this one [physical incident] it seems like you've all kind of acknowledged that you'd take a more direct and serious approach. What makes this one more severe than the other one?
Mary: It's physical
Jeremy: Physical
Kate: Physical
Steffi: Physical injuries
Vic: So that seems to be more . . . you kind of agree that it's more serious than
Kate: Oh . . .
Dylan: Physical safety and physical violence at school . . .
Mary: Yeah

Dylan: is considered to be, you know our immediate priority
Steffi: Yeah, rather than verbal
Kate: However, in my opinion, long-term verbal can definitely do more damage
Jeremy: Oh yeah, for sure
Steffi: Yeah, that can be just as bad
Mary: Yeah, but that's a longer process
Jeremy: Yeah

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

David: If it's a more serious one, you know which may involve more physical stuff or if there's departmental policies we need to follow there in terms of suspension to violence and all those sort of things

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

Katrina: I suppose most serious would be when there's violence threatened
Grace: When there's violence because of it, yeah

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

An important consideration in the participant responses was the secure connection between understandings of physical events and that of the concept of 'violence'. The two were discursively connected; without physicality there was no violence, and without violence there was no physicality. These understandings rejected that violence can be experienced in 'multiple linguistic, visual, psychic, affective and embodied forms' (Robinson et al. 2012b, p. 1), and the silence of these other forms of violence was a significant discursive construct. Physical violence was located as the responsive priority both through discourse and through policy. It also, generally, was the main way that they referred to bullying; that is bullying was constructed as largely a physical concern. This is despite some teachers voicing that instances of verbal abuse could be 'devastating' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2) and 'definitely do more damage' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1) to students. Their discourses therefore held particular values that while they (as institutional agents) were more responsive to physical attacks than verbal attacks, they also recognised that these responses were not necessarily motivated by concern over student experiences. Instead their motivations were related to the response process; discerning which incidents were easier or harder to solve.

Another physical qualification of the level of 'seriousness' was the quantity of those involved:

> *David*: The number of kids who may actually be involved in it, so if it's two kids, then it's going to be down the lower end of the scale, you know, if there's more kids actually involved then we would probably see a greater need to sort of get involved with that particular incident because it's going to be affecting a lot more of the school population
>
> (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

This qualification of seriousness refers to essentialist understandings of bully and victim (either singular or multiple) with specific dualistic identities involved in all cases (Olweus 1997; Ringrose and Renold 2010). It also assumes that experiences of bullying are felt only and equally by these individuals, enabling a simplistic formula of intervention.

Another concern relating to 'process' was that of hindrances or motivators for responding to bullying; that is, things that assisted or impinged teachers' abilities to respond. Some of these were again related to visibility and reporting.

Time was also raised as a factor that constrained teachers' ability to effectively respond to bullying, especially as investigating bullying was not their sole responsibility or role. The teachers at Grove asserted that you needed to find all the facts, which became 'very time consuming' and affected 'the recognition of it as being bullying'. Understandings of external factors also complicated the 'recognition' of bullying: Facebook, the community, sociocultural values and messages from popular culture. These conversations made it clear that the values and expectations of the community shaped the incidents and responses that occurred in the school. Barriers included the conception and communications about bullying outside of school, and the ways that these often conflicted with the values that the school attempted to produce.

> *David*: …we're educating them to say no you don't use violence, however, there's a community perception that you can. So it's quite confusing for the kids, so in terms of a barrier that's actually quite a significant one, and until the whole community addresses it as a whole community, then schools are going to struggle to be able to deal with the whole issue of bullying.
>
> (Grove HS: Deputy principal interview)

The final conception for teachers in the intervention and response process was that of the *outcome,* which was implicitly constructed through the other concepts as being the vital aspect of the intervention and response process. This was represented through the linkages in outcome with the instigation process as produced by the teachers at Grove. They reflected that students were likely to come forward with concerns about bullying if:

Kate:	They know that they are going to be supported . . . Or they know something's going to be done
Jeremy:	If they know something's going to be done, pretty much
Steffi:	If they know something's going to happen, yeah
Kate:	Or, if it's not going to cause repercussions
Jeremy:	Yeah
Kate:	Like, the other side, by them telling us is it going to create the bully to get them more or something like that. They really worry about that, with giving names and things.

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1)

The outcome was therefore conceptualised as ideally supporting students and responding in some way. The teachers at Wilson were generally confident that their interventions, which were based on rapport and ongoing relationships with the students, would promote acceptable resolutions:

John:	. . . I think the kids at this school, once they've been told, the majority of them don't let you down. When they're told in a good way, that's what I think . . . Don't get me wrong, there will always be the ten percent that will do their own thing, but the majority of the kids will come along for the ride.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Tony:	Most of the stuff is done on purpose, but when they are told that it's inappropriate and they're pointed out to it, and they realise what they've done is wrong, most of the time that does go away. . . . often you find out that they've crossed the line, they know they've crossed the line, and most times will not come up again.

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

Here the teachers conveyed that processes and interventions could be successful and could alter and inform student behaviours.

Discourses: Intervention and Response to Bullying

External Influences
The discourse of 'external influences' focused on sociocultural, familial or community events or values and the ways that these shaped student perspectives and performances. This discourse posited that the school was like an island, surrounded by influences that continually encroached the space and time in which the school was operating.

> *Tony*: There's not much we can do outside our four walls! Between 9 and 3:30, so what we can do at school is fairly isolated.
>
> (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

Student social performances and attitudes were indicated as being from the 'outside'. Social media (specifically Facebook), television shows, the internet, the local community, parental attitudes and popular culture more generally were all named as influences that affected student performances. The school was situated as a separate entity to these external influences and teachers constructed the pressure of their role/s to respond to and resist negative social performances that are perceived as originating 'outside'. The teacher participants also reflected that parents and the community were countering their positive actions and 'lessons' for students.

Action Orientation
These constructs functioned to present the school and the teachers as a positive element of student lives while concurrently presenting the external world and influences as a negative influence. Teachers employed this discourse to represent the role of the teacher as limited in countering more powerful sociocultural influences on the students. These factors were emphasised as influencing student behaviours and teachers employed the discourse to illustrate the breadth and depth of the factors and their inability to confront or combat them in the classroom.

Positioning

Overall, this discourse limits teachers' vocational boundaries and their influence to being within 'our four walls'. This reaffirms that there are two specific environments – 'inside' and 'outside'. The outside is represented as negatively influencing student behaviours and interactions, the inside as a space that tries to respond to and manage these influences through policy and curriculum. The teachers' actions are therefore continually responsive and largely seen to be irrelevant in the face of the broader and inevitable influence of the outside measures. Simultaneously, the discourse positioned the students as dangerous and out of control, yet requiring protection. This paradoxically positioned teachers as both regulators and protectors of the young people, who require protection from the outside world, and the outside world requires protection from the young people.

Practice

This discourse is founded upon the understanding that external forces are potentially damaging and influence the students in practical ways, with the school being held to account for the actions that students take. Practically this discourse could function in two ways. The teachers may seek to examine the external environments and encourage the deconstruction and critical questioning of these in the school in order to promote evaluation and reflection of performances rather than the constructed replication of hegemonic knowledge. This practice maintains the differentiation between the 'outside' and the 'inside' as well as the understanding of protection and safe space within the school.

The other alternative would be to effectively resist the external influences through defining school practices as being relevant and comprehensive while the students are at school and rescinding control when students leave. This still separates the internal and external environments and also clearly defines the boundaries of the teachers' expectations. The actions and interactions of the students outside of the school are repositioned as not being related to school life and teachers are able to reside in environments where their responsibility and reach is distinctly tied to an isolated environment with controlled variables.

The second scenario seemed to be the dominant practical conclusion of the teacher participants who continually located external factors as

problematic influences on performances at school. Sociocultural factors such as home or family life, popular culture and community expectations were distinctly constructed as impinging on student abilities to positively contribute to the school and society. By separating the school and external contexts, the discourse functioned to construct consistent, safe and productive environments that were free from these influences. This further constructed boundaries between the two worlds and accentuated their differences.

Subjectivity

The subjectivity enabled by the discourse of 'external influences' was again embedded with a sense of inevitability. This discourse encourages reflection on the range and depth of messages that teachers perceive as impacting on student performances in negative ways. Teachers may feel that these performances are inevitable given the wider context of sociocultural messages from family based understandings, to peer communities on Facebook, and beyond. They may conclude that the only way to support the students and the classroom environment is to ensure that these influences are restricted from the school and hence make movements or embody desires to 'abolish technology' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 1), the definitive sharing mechanism of cultural messages, within the school environment. Positioning technology as a simplistic binary 'offline' and 'online' fails to capture the complex practices of online media as they become interlaced with everyday life (Livingstone 2008). Although the teachers did acknowledge at times that Facebook functioned across these boundaries, they equally invested in ideologies that resisted these and were hopeful of revoking these connections. Their subjectivities therefore remained (in this discourse) aware and hopeful of differentiating between 'online' and 'offline', or more broadly, 'external' and 'internal' and focusing on the benefits of 'internal'/'offline'. This was particularly problematic in the face of contemporary research that has found that adolescents consider new forms of communication technology (particularly texting and Facebook) both more convenient and less risky in terms of disclosing too much information (Farber et al. 2012). The 'gap' between teacher efforts to block these forms of communication, and increasing student reliance upon them, potentially also results in moments of misunderstanding, conflict and poorer social or psychological outcomes.

Hierarchy of Seriousness

'Serious' was a recurring word and theme utilised by teachers and principals over the course of the research. Their discussions about seriousness included questions regarding responsibility for interventions as well as their perceptions about which incidents required priority interventions and why. What resulted was a 'hierarchy of seriousness' that delineated values relating to modes of violence and the sex/gender of the individuals involved as well as links between these elements. This hierarchy encompassed three interleaving understandings: the essentialist definitions of bullying (including the bully/victim binary); the gendered understandings of 'normative cruelties'; and the priorities of teacher interventions that were produced when subjective understandings of these were combined. This hierarchy supplemented the normative cruelties discourse and fortified a hierarchical understanding of experience and value in the schools.

Often, the binary foundations of serious versus non-serious incidents were mirrored in other binaries. These included physical/ non-physical modes of bullying (with embedded violent/non-violent understandings), formal/informal responses and gendered boy/girl values. Linear connections between these binaries existed through discourse. Importantly, links between serious and non-serious events tied directly to the mode of bullying, whether physical or non-physical. Incidents were thus qualified through visibility and factual information about collateral damage. Those that were physically violent were qualified as 'serious' or 'more serious' than those that were not, regardless of other factors such as perceived damage to the student.

Action Orientation

This discourse was employed when teachers differentiated aggression in terms of severity. It demonstrated that the schools had plans and guidelines in place to appropriately manage the bullying incidents according to the deemed seriousness. At Wilson, the school was represented as having a clear response that simultaneously managed incidents and deterred students from engaging in negative behaviours, a deterrence that was constructed as effective when it was utilised. It also worked to demonstrate simplicity and effectiveness in the management of bullying scenarios, especially for new teachers. Immediate responses were posed as 'easy' and 'clear cut' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1), reducing teacher stress and workload and enhancing student outcomes. Teachers were not

required to invest too much of their time and energy into becoming 'Inspector Poirot' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1) and didn't have to worry about crossing professional lines to look into student lives. Overall, the 'clear-cut' responses to bullying are posed to present messages of strength, seriousness, clarity, responsibility and school priority. Importantly, these constructions were largely related to 'serious' incidents that are consistently framed in notions of physical violence rather than more 'symbolic' forms. This facilitates a discursive perpetuation of physical violence as being the most 'important' or 'serious' mode of violence, diminishing the visibility of symbolic violence, fortifying its presence through silence, omission and assumption (Ferfolja 2007).

The construction of increased seriousness through increased numbers of individuals involved additionally assumes that the whole impact of persecution will be felt in binary ways by those directly involved. Simultaneously, it resists the assumption that social regulation applies to all of those in an environment that is filled with aspects of surveillance, regardless of whether they assume the role of a 'bully' or 'victim'. This aspect of seriousness therefore functions to create an idea of bullying as being strictly defined and limited to 'incidents'. It reduces the understanding of ongoing social relationships, hierarchies and performative expectations and their embedded forces of social regulation.

The final and perhaps most inferential part of this action orientation relates to the embedded values within the dichotomous 'serious/non-serious', 'formal/informal', 'violent/non-violent', 'physical/non-physical' binaries. These four constructions, used by teachers to delineate seriousness, are linked to each other and have gendered intelligibilities linked to them, for example, *serious* incidents require *formal* interventions because they are *violent* and *physical*, and these concerns are predominant in *boy* incidents. These connections prioritise and naturalise various social performances and extend into ways of 'doing' boy or girl. The function of these constructions is to link particular performances with particular levels of seriousness and indicate that the school is successfully responding to these. The employment of the 'serious/formal/physical/violent' discourse illustrates the school commitment to the reduction or elimination of physical violence (the form of violence that is virtually only acknowledged as between boys) through 'serious consequences for the students involved' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1). Consequently, this discourse also functions to reduce or negate the 'seriousness' of the predominant female bullying;

that is the 'non-serious/informal/non-physical/non-violent' bullying. Girls' experiences of bullying, although they may feel and be seriously damaging to them, are constructed through responsive actions as less real or less of a problem than those of boys. 'Informal' conciliation processes that included the victim (for example, peer mediation groups) were recommended for incidents of girl–girl (non-physical) aggression. These cemented the understanding females should intrinsically be able to 'just be friends' and 'get along no matter what the context or cost' (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 587).

Positioning

When invoking the discourse of 'hierarchy of seriousness', teachers were positioned as responsible managers of bullying. In each of the schools they proffered extensive and successful anti-bullying policies that were seen as considered and applicable to the particular situation, positioning the teachers as reflective and responsive.

In terms of the second part of this discourse that relates to intelligible gendered forms, violence and responses, positioning is a gendered process that affirms meaning to the sex of students regardless of other information. Boys' bullying was dominantly positioned as serious and girls' bullying was equally positioned as the opposite. This conflated gendered psychosocial characteristics; the girls were positioned as being less normatively conflictive, as is seen when 'good girls' or 'angels' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1) turn bad and the teachers are subsequently 'shocked and horrified' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1). Boys conversely embody their potential seriousness and ability to hurt through masculine practices of being 'all bravado about it and/more up front' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1). In reference to these expectations and the implications of moving outside of them, intelligible femininities require hiding and being 'covert' about bullying practices as the girl bully identity is positioned as deviant and the girl victim identity is more acceptable. The teacher positioning of 'serious/violent/physical/formal' links with constructions of normative boys and their assigned masculinities; re-establishing a constitutive outside of feminine practices. Positions of intelligible masculinities and femininities are created through language and the collective discourse of 'serious'.

Finally, the positioning of physical violence at the top of the hierarchy communicates that physical violence is the most powerful and

influential of the behaviours. It situates physical attacks as the most damaging bullying performance possible with the most severe (and institutionally acknowledged) consequences. Those who engage with it therefore adopt the potential to situate themselves within a particular performance of danger and risk; and the potential to utilise this for strategic purposes. This link holds implications for uptakes of particular performances, especially along gendered lines.

Practice
In terms of the embedded meanings within arbitrations of 'serious/ formal/violent/physical', practices become gendered and particular identities become facilitated, restricted or outlawed as part of intelligible identities. Boys are made to feel comfortable in the bully role and at some stages teachers celebrate their performances despite the attributions of violence.

Practically the discourse of seriousness locates significant bullying problems as visible negative interactions between students while silencing other forms of bullying or violence. These prioritised incidents have clearly defined roles of 'bully' and 'victim' and assessment and penalties are delivered accordingly. These measures are seen to be effective, but the unintentional outcome of this approach is that identities become regulated through normative institutional processes.

Subjectivity
The 'hierarchy of seriousness' constructs subjectivities that draw from entrenched understandings of gender, physicality and institutional responses. Through the discursive linkage of these aspects, the embedded perceptions of normative identities restrict student ways of being and taint teacher expectations, processes and outcomes. As diverse ways of conceptualising 'bullying' and other social interactions are reduced through this discursive frame, teachers may feel an increasing simplicity in dealing with bullying and being able to effectively analyse and respond to incidents. However, this discourse also relies on applying meanings to disputes that the individuals may perceive as non-representative of events. This may leave teachers with a sense of difficulty in communicating effectively with students and resolving interpersonal disputes, or a student dismissal of teachers as being disinterested, distant or bureaucratic.

Gender-Based Bullying

Many of my questions in the second teacher focus groups were around gender-based or homophobic bullying. Often these 'forms' or motivations for bullying were grouped in the questions I asked, however, the teachers, consciously or inadvertently, constructed homophobic and gender-based bullying in separate ways. Although these, like the concepts, had shared and interweaving values and constructs, they did hold differences, and these discursive differences confirmed that the detached constructs were significant in themselves.

Another item that I have differentiated is the discursive constructions of 'slut'. This epithet was a powerful regulator of gender within the student social environment, and this power will be explored in the following chapter detailing 'student realities'. Apart from this power, however, the ways in which teachers constructed its deployment was illustrative of its prominence at Wilson and Grove (and arguably in wider popular culture).

Another similar conceptual offshoot was the deployment of 'gay'. This construction held similar values in its constitution and the teachers utilised similar discourses to illustrate its (in)significance. 'Gay' therefore may have equally had enough discursive content to warrant its own construction and section detailing its discursive implications. As a point of difference, however, its constitution remained firmly embedded in understandings of homophobia. For this reason, I combined the constructions of homophobic bullying and 'gay' and have illustrated the differences between these conceptions where relevant. This section will therefore explore three distinct yet interleaving discursive constructions: 'gender-based bullying', 'homophobic bullying' and 'slut' as portrayed by the teacher participants.

Discursive Construction: Gender-Based Bullying

The construction of gender-based bullying was only explicitly undertaken by the teachers in the focus group at Wilson High. Although the teachers at Grove High were asked the same questions and encouraged in similar ways to speak specifically about gender-based bullying, their constructions remained firmly about either 'slut' (a linguistic marker of gender-based bullying) or about homophobic bullying. This reflected their conceptual or discursive limits; the constitution of gender-based bullying was difficult

or irrelevant for the teachers and could only be meaningfully conceptualised through the understanding of 'slut' or 'gay'.

Gender-based bullying was spoken about in abstract and concrete ways. This included boys' and girls' gendered expectations and how these were communicated through insults and epithets. For girls, this was constructed as commonly happening in relation to their sexual reputations: 'I think they do that all the time . . . /in a derogatory reference to their promiscuity . . . / yeah, promiscuity but not to homosexuality' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2). Gender-based bullying for boys was constructed as relating to their masculinity and physicality, where the derogatory reference was instead related to (same sex) sexual orientation (see following discursive construction: 'homophobic bullying').

Gender-based bullying was constructed as being the motivator of the most prevalent insults circulating at the school. It was portrayed as originating *from* girls, as well as being primarily directed *at* girls. Celine highlighted a disparity of gender-based persecution between boys and girls:

> *Celine*:   . . . there was a big one that involved a lot of students last year, that involved a girl at a party was kissed by another boy . . . totally . . . she didn't ask for it to happen, it just happened, she was caught off guard. And . . . nearly everyone in her year group was attacking her, and the boy that went up and kissed her was like, cool, so that's . . . . not fair. That the girl was treated one way and the boy was treated another way . . . and there was some severe bullying that came out of that . . . threats and what not being made . . . to her physical safety.
>
>   (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This teacher group also implicated boys in some aspects of gender-based bullying, where they drew meanings from female appearance and attractiveness to insult girls:

> *Frieda*:   I've heard boys insult girls on appearance
> *Sarah*:   Oh definitely
> *Dejinna*:   Yeah
> *Frieda*:   But I don't think I've heard it the other way around
> *Vic*:   What kind of things about appearance?
> *John*:   You dog

Frieda:	Yeah, they call them dogs. 'You ugly dog'
Sarah:	'You fat something'
Frieda:	Yeah. But I don't think I've heard the girls say that about a boy.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This dialogue showed that girls were the recipients of gender-based bullying in all cases. The girls had certain aspects of their femininity (appearance, attractiveness and sexual performances) utilised against them by other girls and in some cases by boys. Although teachers were able to construct this particular reality in focus groups and identify these aspects, they also recognised that within classes they didn't specifically 'look for' gender-based instances. Although the accepted understanding was that gender-based bullying was unacceptable in the classroom ('[we] certainly don't accept it in our classrooms' – Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2), the teachers agreed that:

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

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This assertion that all bullying incidents are 'treated the same way' indicates a single level of 'seriousness' and a linear response process. This is initially complex in that the teachers from both schools had already constructed a landscape of bullying where incidents are classified related to the sex of the individuals involved, and where they fell on a hierarchy of seriousness. This construction promoted, however, that the source, motivation or avenue of power that was utilised was irrelevant; that each 'type of bullying' should be understood as equal and treated 'the same way'. Some gender-based bullying was portrayed as 'sly though, and you don't often realise it's happening'. Teachers again constructed that they require 'background . . . [to] realise it was an insult'. They also asserted that it is 'hard' to manage gender-based (and homophobic) bullying because of 'so many influences' like 'the media', 'Facebook' and 'TV shows' (Wilson HS: Head teacher

focus group 2). Intervention additionally proved difficult in some cases because of 'joking':

> John: . . . they use that good old excuse, 'that was a joke sir' and all that, and 'she knows I'm joking', and all that, and sometimes we might let that go
>
> (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Teachers were required to determine 'where the joke ends and the abuse begins' (Carrera et al. 2011, p. 486), while struggling to discern between gendered harassment and interactions that were 'just fun' (Lahelma 2002). This is especially difficult when they are attempting to meet the curricular and workload demands of their positions, and John asserts that because of these demands, they may not intervene when moments of gender-based persecution occur. By ignoring negative comments or aggression, teachers communicate that these behaviours are acceptable.

The construction of a 'line' between harassment and joking was further legitimised by the perceived extent and saturation of gender-based bullying in the school. The teachers at Wilson collectively confirmed that the most prevalent insults at the school were gender-based, and that these were between girls. Despite this acknowledgement, the priority of intervention was reduced by constructs of seriousness and importance; 'I don't want to say petty, but it is minor'. This was 'because it's [slut] an easy word to throw around' and 'they're not big issues that really would reflect on the kids safety'. They were also constructed as 'minor' through the inferences about the transience of female friendships; that 'It'll be for two days and then on Thursday they'll be best friends' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2). These constructions produced a hierarchy of interventional priorities. Frequency did not dictate priority and they instead referred to understandings of impact and a hierarchy of seriousness where physical violence indicated the interventional priority. The teachers acknowledged that their perception of seriousness was reflected in their formal (institutionally entrenched) responses or preventative measures against gender-based bullying:

> Sarah: I think in some ways we make it [gender-based bullying] less serious because we've got an anti-racism contact officer, and we've got these sorts of things, but the general day to day well the deputies just deal with it, so perhaps we're perpetuating that

idea that the racial based is worse than just calling the girl that was your best friend yesterday, a slut today.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Sarah's comment acknowledges that institutional measures (in the form of bullying liaison officers) produce understandings regarding seriousness or school values. It does, however, still maintain embedded conceptions of seriousness, comparing 'racial based' to 'just calling the girl that was your best friend yesterday, a slut today'. The linguistic representations of these reassert that the behaviours are not, and should not be treated equally.

An understanding promoted by the teachers at both Wilson and Grove High was around the impact that Facebook had on the perpetration and management of bullying incidents at the school. Facebook, singled out as a universal and damaging platform, was constructed not only as a medium for gender-based bullying, but also as an instigator, igniting and fuelling incidents. Facebook was constructed as presenting difficulty in intervention due to low visibility, as being constant with 'no escape' due to students utilising phones and laptops to use it at any time, and as providing a stage for the participants with a potentially unlimited audience.

The breadth of concern and feeling among teachers regarding ICT and Facebook reflected Livingstone's claims that 'often, adult onlookers have been puzzled by youthful peer practices' (2008, p. 394). Facebook was constructed as being a factor that continually hindered the ability for teachers to identify, examine and respond to instances of antisocial behaviour or bullying incidents. Teachers were concerned with the continuous and never ending contact with peers, and how Facebook transgressed time and space.

Although the ways that new media technologies are shaping relations among young people is an emerging area of research, initial findings show that social media represents a novel social environment with particular rules, norms and positive and negative sanctions. Various aspects of Facebook (specifically) can be considered as presenting difference from face to face or traditional exchanges. The research by Kwan and Skoric (2013) details three of these differences, the first being a wider audience, making communication more effective and content sharing far more extensive. This includes aspects of humiliation that have the potential to move outside of individual's social circles, meaning that interactions may be witnessed by unknown individuals and groups once enacted. The second is that of 'longevity of messages'; that

uploaded clips, comments or posts can remain online indefinitely, being continually accessed and re-accessed, and even 're-posted' in different forums. This may mean that initial instigators of harassment lose 'some, if not all, of the ownership and distribution control of the content once it is posted online'(Kwan and Skoric 2013, p. 18). This can result in a diffusion of responsibility and a mass engagement in the sharing of abuse. Finally, the anonymity in online performances of harassment or abuse means that particular self-disclosures and self-portrayals can change. This can emerge in the form of adolescents adopting various alternative personas and enacting online behaviours that they may not normally engage in. Other research has demonstrated the reduced supervision of social networking sites (Sticca and Perren 2013) and increased ability for youth to demonstrate their autonomy (Chapman and Buchanan 2012). Each of these specific environmental features demonstrates this medium represents a significant social forum that holds features of discipline and punishment, social norms, sanctions and surveillance. Its ability to shape adolescent conceptions of 'fitting in', of popularity and of abject identities represents significant inputs, often judged through likes, comments and various judgments of individuals through their online performances (Weber et al. 2013).

Paradoxically, however, Facebook fell outside of the teachers' dominant conceptions of seriousness as it could not be directly physically violent. The visibility of Facebook is portrayed as 'not as open', preventing any possibility of examination and intervention unless students report with detailed evidence like a 'screen print'. The teachers also represented that the mode holds more benefits for the individuals involved in that it is 'easier' and that they can 'stay anonymous' (which is probably a relational term comparing online interactions to corporeal interactions as Facebook does not inherently allow anonymity) or 'do these things without any apparent consequence'. These factors put it 'up the top' of the list of things that prevent intervention in gender-based bullying for the teachers, who even propose intervention methods like 'banning phones' at school and fantasise that a solution may be to 'abolish technology'. In the context of adolescents utilising social networking to express their identity in public ways that span across time and place (Moreno et al. 2012), rather than abolishing these modes of communication, Ringrose asserts that they are 'a crucial educational issue' (2013, p. 114). This highlights the potential for the teachers at Grove and Wilson to reframe their perspectives about the need for educational engagement in this area.

Discourses: Gender-Based Bullying

Hierarchy of Seriousness

This discourse reflected themes that were present in 'intervention and response to bullying'. Seriousness was disqualified from gender-based bullying through constructions of non-physicality, its constant, prevalent and widespread usage and the turbulent nature of female friendships. By qualifying gender-based aggression as 'minor' and not 'reflect[ing] on the kids safety', the teachers limited the understandings of damage and impact on the students. This allowed 'the subtler and more common incidents of gender-based bullying to go unchecked' (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2009, p. 521).

This discourse was also invoked in reference to the students utilising 'just joking' as a strategy to rescind their responsibility for comments. Student claims of joking intentions diffused the vitriol or intent behind insults providing an 'out', and that was seen to produce difficulties for intervention for teachers. This had implications for the teachers' understandings of gender-based bullying; that is that on some occasions they 'might let that go', affirming that it is an acceptable discourse with no direct consequences. Other mechanisms of bullying (for example, racial harassment) may not have been qualified as acceptable 'jokes', illustrating specific practical differences that inform social performances. This aspect of the discourse again reflected the findings of Anagnostopoulos and colleagues, where teachers in their study 'consistently talked about attempting to distinguish between jokes and teasing between friends and those statements that were intended to be offensive and malicious' (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2009, p. 530). Teachers were required to read 'the subtexts of comments, touches and innuendos' (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2009, p. 530), a significant practical and subjective burden for teachers. However, at Grove and Wilson, rather than being invested in these practices, the teachers mostly recommended that if incidents were taking place, they were not serious, negating the need for review or investigation. For further discussion of the use of this discourse, see the following section detailing its usage in the discursive construction of 'slut'.

External Influences

Although this discourse was also utilised by teachers related to bullying in general and in the construct of homophobic bullying, the employment of 'external influences' in regard to gender-based bullying stemmed from an

understanding of hope and knowledge that students can be kind to each other. As the participants noted in Meyer's research, 'teachers noted how external influences from students' families and out-of-school time' (Meyer 2008b, p. 565). It was these external 'constructs' that led to insults between them. The consequent construction was that although the teachers 'try', there is no hope for change as they were operating against an ever-expanding suite of external influences that were out of their control. These influences included Facebook, TV, mass media and other aspects of popular culture. Teachers constructed these as directly producing gender-based bullying and harassment.

In specific regard to Facebook, the teachers employed this discourse to illustrate the fruitlessness and difficulty of combating gender-based bullying that took place across digital mediums. Through representing Facebook as outside of teacher control and jurisdiction the teachers demonstrated that there was no further action that they could take.

'Slut'

Discursive Construction: 'Slut'

The participants produced markers of familiarity in the focus groups, and one of the most common points of reference for gender-based bullying was the student deployment of 'slut', which was 'quite common' in its usage against girls; 'we hear quite a few of those, 'she's a slut'' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2). The deployment of 'slut' was also a more common form of gender-based commentary between girls than intimations about girls' sexual orientation. It was perceived as mostly 'girls making a comment about other girls' 'or younger boys to older girls' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2), but never towards boys. It was also seen as often being deployed 'between friends (*laughs*), that's how they are with one another. Friends maybe last week but not this week' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2). 'Slut' was constructed as being constant and inevitable: 'the girls call each other sluts no matter what' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2). The insult was presented as being quite injurious to the receptor; 'They do find it very cutting/Yeah, they're up pretty quick' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2), 'that upsets them very much' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1) and its deployment could lead to physical violence; 'it's definitely stimulated by the verbal name calling' (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2). While it was constructed as constant, at times individuals who did utilise it were positioned as intentionally harming the receptor:

'The girls say [it] to be nasty', 'They're sort of quite vindictive when they say things like that to each other I think' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2).

Despite these constructions that emphasised the damaging nature of 'slut', the teachers also engaged in a construction of the epithet as over-used and saturated in youth language; losing its meaning.

Celine:	I don't think it means as much, either
John:	No, cause …
Celine:	To call someone a slut doesn't necessarily mean that you think they go around sleeping with everyone, it's just a name
Liz:	Yeah
Katrina:	Yeah
John:	Yeah, it's that constant usage, it's lost its meaning. Sometimes I reckon some of those guys don't even know they're saying it.
Celine:	Mmmm
John:	Cause it just comes out of their mouth like that
Celine:	Yeah, whereas the racial thing is very pointed to a particular group
John:	Yeah
Frieda:	And I think most of our kids know that that's not accepted
John:	Stepping over the line

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Here the teachers demonstrate that 'slut' was utilised extensively around the school between students, whereas racially motivated language or incidents are rare. In comparison to racial abuse, the teachers suggest that its deployment is not discriminate (despite previously acknowledging that it applies to girls only) whereas racial vilification is. They position student awareness as important; students 'know' that racial abuse is not accepted and is 'stepping over the line', whereas gender-based abuse (specifically 'slut') does not fall under this category. This is cemented by the reflection of the deployment of slut being produced as 'really imma-ture' and not 'long-lasting or super nasty' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 1).

Finally an important aspect of 'slut' was its direct reference to the sexual performances of girls. Although this wasn't spoken about across all focus groups, it was voiced by the deputies at Wilson that: 'certainly I think that any girl who has perhaps made it known that they have done something with

a boy, will be called a slut' (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview). This is explored further in Chapter 6 which focuses on 'kick a slut in the head day'.

Discourses: 'Slut'

The understanding of the *usage* of slut between girls was a definitive marker of gender-based harassment for all focus groups. It represented many of the discourses that were present in teachers' understandings of gender-based harassment or bullying. The specific *epithet* of 'slut', however, functioned to illustrate the understandings of teachers more explicitly.

The above construction of the deployment of 'slut' draws from a range of discourses. The first is that of 'normative cruelties' in that 'slut' is constructed as only being deployed from and upon girls, locating it as a specific girl problem. This has been covered in earlier sections (see 'normative cruelties' within the construction of 'bullying') but overall works to normalise its usage in sex-specific ways. Specifically in regard to 'slut', the teachers produce accounts of transient and precarious female friendships that experience its deployment, yet survive regardless. This demonstrates the normalcy of its utilisation and its inherent lack of damage or impact in the bigger picture of female relationships. The second is the complex understanding of slut within the discourse of 'hierarchy of seriousness'.

Hierarchy of Seriousness

The deployment of 'slut' was defined by teachers as occurring between students (predominantly girls); as common; as dislocated from meanings of sexual promiscuity; and as tied into friendships that are tempestuous. These items come together to illustrate that 'slut' is simply 'name calling rubbish' that is a constant feature of the (female) social landscape and is relatively harmless – 'I don't want to say petty, but it is minor' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2). This understanding is fortified by the production of 'slut' as saturated and non-discriminate in the discursive culture and therefore as less divisive and problematic. The teachers resisted acknowledging that the females themselves were the particular persecuted group, as 'slut' was never directed towards the boys.

There was, however, a counter discourse of slut as potentially harmful to individuals and a potential instigator of physical violence. Due to the

construction of slut as a female phenomenon, this form of aggression was possibly not conceived as being as harmful or dangerous as that between males, or was seen as less likely to erupt into (serious) physical violence.

Action Orientation

The 'hierarchy of seriousness' discourse again functions to demonstrate the priority of teacher intervention in negative social interactions. In the case of 'slut', the construction of commonality of deployment (that is the saturation in youth discourse) functions to negate its damage in an economic sense – where there is an increased supply there is less demand for intervention. Teachers construct students as experiencing the epithet so regularly that it becomes meaningless, hence is constructed as not being damaging and therefore not requiring intervention. Additionally, the prominence in the youth culture shows that intervention would likely not result in any meaningful change. The definitional element of slut contributes to this function. The teachers discursively work to remove the vitriolic basis for the word; ('they don't even know they're saying it') negating its power and further dislocating interventional responsibility. Finally, by describing friendship contexts of 'slut' usage as being dynamic, the teachers illustrate that the consequences of deployment are not so injurious that they result in ongoing or permanent damage. Student friendships surviving (and thriving) in spite of these deployments are utilised as evidence of the short-term and harmless nature of the epithet. Indeed, teachers invest in the discourse to effectively 'resignify' slut. However, where Ringrose affirms that its reclamation has resulted in 'defiance and pride rather than shame' (2013, p. 123), here the teachers are simply affecting a appropriative shift to acknowledge saturation as a definitive reducer of harm.

The counter discourse of harm draws from the foundations of the 'hierarchy of seriousness' in that the teachers testify that slut can be dangerous or damaging when it leads to physical altercations between the individuals. This is constructed within a framework of individuals deliberately deploying slut to cause injury to the recipient and the recipient being affected by its usage. This represents a counter discourse as it is upheld by a fewer number of constructions and fails to collaborate with the dominant discourses. It does, however, still represent a subjective position to be accessed in particular situations.

Positioning

The positioning outcomes of this discourse distinctly position female students as the only ones impinged on by the invocation of 'slut', but simultaneously, their levels of affect are minimalised through discursive portrayals of its commonality, definition and contextual elements that negate its potential for harm. In this way the positioning of the girls is complex; they are positioned as having relationships that are fraught with abuse, but that this abuse (although offensive to them through the invocation of the counter discourse of harm) has no long-term implications for their friendships or for their identities. Girls are positioned as unable to manage their friendships in healthy or sustainable ways and their ongoing conflicts are constituted as normative.

Practice

As female student interactions utilising 'slut' are positioned as normative and harmless, the possibilities for action within the seriousness discourse related to 'slut' are restricted by the discourse itself. The deployment of this discourse generally results in the teachers eliminating responsibility for intervention. Intervention is deemed simultaneously unnecessary and irrelevant; if it were to be attempted, the discourse asserts that there would be no feasible outcome.

Subjectivity

It is possible that this discourse precipitates teachers feeling and embodying a sense of distance from female students. By positioning them as socially tempestuous and lacking in more sophisticated social skills, teachers patronise the ways in which the girls interact. They seem to feel as if these interactions are juvenile or 'immature', harmless and don't consist of any real long-term consequences. Their construction of the saturation of 'slut' in popular discourse (in alignment with the discourse of 'external influences') may also produce a sense of inevitability. The teachers may feel that although they could make interventions to resist the deployment of 'slut', these interventions are likely to be unsuccessful under the weight of sociocultural influences and common social practices.

Homophobic Bullying

Discursive Construction: Homophobic Bullying

The term 'homophobic' had been encountered and was understood by all participants as being related to individuals being targeted due to their perceived or actual sexual orientation or 'sexual preferences' (Grove HS:

Head teacher focus group 2). This construct was generally far better understood than 'gender-based', containing more detailed discourses and counter discourses; illustrating the increased discursive understanding of the participants that was drawn from the term.

The teacher participants constructed homophobic bullying in a variety of ways – some complimentary and some conflicting. A consistent factor across both schools was that homophobic incidents were seen to occur between boys (rather than girls), reflecting contemporary research that demonstrates that homophobia is largely a male form of social regulation and is most affective against boys (Pascoe 2007; Plummer 1999).

The teachers continually framed their discussions around the use of the word 'gay' in what they constructed as direct (related to sexuality) and indirect (not related to sexuality) student deployments.

> *Sarah*: When the boys are hassling the boys and calling each other gay it's meant as an absolute insult. It's not necessarily gen – ah . . . based on their orientation at all, it's just meant as an insult. Whereas the girls I don't think call each other that – like the girl to girl, I think the differentiation between the gender base bullying and the homophobic stuff is pretty clear, because girls just don't tend to do . . . to tease in that way.
>
> (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

> *Kate*: I think the girls handle it better. If they think there are lesbians in their class it doesn't appear to bother them and we've actually had cases where we have had gay stu . . . gay boys in our classes actually join the girls classes just to alleviate their hassles.
>
> (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Girls were instead constructed at both schools as being resistant to the trend of homophobic bullying between the boys:

> *John*: It was really interesting, the year he [an 'out' gay student] became school captain, the guy who was running for vice captain got up and said 'vote for me because I'm not gay'
> *Celine*: What!
> *Group*: (*gasps*)

John: Okay, and the girls, okay, it was all howls and like cat cries, it was very interesting . . . And I thought, wow, okay, it was nice to see the girls react like that. And he didn't get in, obviously.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Kate: It's often the girls that let you know about the boy that's being isolated or . . . highly picked on in some way

Peter: In a classroom, the girls notice

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

In these ways the understanding was produced that homophobic bullying (and 'gay') was a boy problem/phenomenon. Girls were constructed as defenders against homophobia and the boys as perpetrators. At Wilson and Grove, the dominant constructions of homophobia were also related to the lack of instances that they saw and conceptualised as occurring in the schools:

Jeremy: Yeah, to be honest I don't really think we've got a lot of that between the kids, out there [. . .] 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

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Tony: I'm struggling to think of any [instances of homophobic harassment].

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

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

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.
            [. . .]

Kate: We often discuss issues like that [in PDHPE]

Jeremy: Yeah

Peter: Yeah, that's right

Kate: So it brings it into the . . . not that it's been an issue, like we said, it's more when they're not in there

Jeremy: That's right

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

David: I'd sort of say that if it's happening, it's happening unnoticed, and I think it's happening because of the stereotypical nature of a community like [our country town] [. . .] 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.

(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

These constructions produced the understanding that homophobia at the schools was low in frequency (or non-existent), as something that was manageable and as an issue that just wasn't presented in regular classes (although it may be outside of these). These constructions were soon complicated by representations of homophobic harassment that the teachers produced (although these were not explicitly identified as such); however, the understanding that homophobia was 'not a problem' remained embedded within these constitutions. An illustration of students coming out was produced from the Wilson teachers as evidence that homophobia was not an issue at the school:

Grace: . . . we've had two school captains who have openly come out and acknowledged their homosexuality and they've been accepted across the school. Quite extraordinary in that sense, but . . . they never had a problem. And they were great role models . . . they were . . . in every respect.

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

The fact that there were two male school captains who came out as gay used to demonstrate that school culture was accepting and celebrated diversity. They further attenuated this acceptance to the reaction of the friends at school when a female student came out in the previous year:

Sarah: Her friends were accepting

Frieda: or at school, her friends were okay, it was um, within her own family that there was issues

Dejinna:	The mum was, yeah the mum was . . .
Sarah:	That was more because of the choice of partner
Frieda:	I think so
Sarah:	Than the actual . . . the actual choice . . .
Frieda:	Choice . . . well not choice being gay really . . .
Sarah:	Orientation issue

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

It is important to note here the general tone of discomfort in these conversations. The teachers seemed to have difficulty in producing language that was both politically correct and comfortable for them to use. At times there were significant silences where they attempted to find words or a more general 'trailing off' that resulted in incomplete sentences. These silences could be an important illustration of teacher ability to individually or collectively address issues of sexuality, gender or homophobia in the school. They also utilised silences to resist naming problems, avoiding their portrayals. An example of this was the way a teacher phrased 'the kick a Facebook incident' (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2) rather than its true (and known) name 'kick a slut in the head day'.

Another form of silencing was the refusal to discriminate between different 'forms' of bullying, that is the reduction of gendered bullying to just plain bullying:

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

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This quote was utilised in the previous section regarding gender-based bullying and the understanding of seriousness. In this context it can be similarly seen to render homophobic or gendered bullying invisible. By incorporating all motivations into 'anti-bullying' policies or interventions, the individual 'bully' or 'victim' is pathologised while the discursive regimes and power differentials between those involved in moments of aggression are ignored.

The commonality of homophobic aggression was also questioned.

Sarah: I think the racial bullying would be much more of an issue for us [. . .] It's something I certainly have dealt with more than I would have about homophobia.

John: It still doesn't happen though, much.

Sarah: (speaks over) It still doesn't happen a lot, but I still think that . . .

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This extract focuses on how racial bullying is portrayed as 'more of an issue' through an understanding of higher numbers of referrals than homophobic bullying. Paradoxically, the exchange indicates that some instances of bullying *are* viewed as different to others in terms of their nature, that is, the teachers identify and treat racial attacks differently to others, but resist demarcating gendered or homophobic aggression. This could represent that racism is more firmly established as an educational concern than gendered or homophobic instances (Douglas et al. 1999; Epstein 1993) and is therefore more comfortable for teachers to approach. Despite this the teachers are quick to dispel racial bullying as present at Wilson either.

Similarly, at Grove High, the teachers worked to reduce the understanding of damage from homophobic bullying through their discourses. This was achieved through constructing a reality where students did not intend to cause harm through their usage of the word 'gay'.

Jeremy: . . . when the kids are having an argument they'll yell out 'oh you're gay' or whatever, and you . . . you know, you wouldn't know whether they were or not, it's just a term that they throw around a bit.

Peter: And where they can associate two different things, it's just you're gay as an abuse, not gay as a sexuality.

Kate: Yeah

Peter: I think maybe they're two separate things

Jeremy: Yeah, it's the way they say it

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Here 'gay' becomes redefined as 'just a term that they throw around a bit'. This references the understanding of 'gay' 'to things as negative in general, detached from explicit reference to gay individuals' (Nicolas and

Skinner 2012, p. 654). Peter confirms that gay is deployed in 'two separate' ways, and that their shared meaning is unproblematic because it becomes clear through 'the way they say it'.

Teachers quantified the concern of homophobic bullying on the extent of damage that it might produce. This produced constructions of direct and indirect homophobia:

Kate:	Nah, I think like more what you said, more behind their back and discussions in class when they're not there and stuff definitely comes up[. . .] definitely behind their back, and questions and sledging and that happens, more so than to their face [. . .]
Jeremy:	You'd probably get . . . more, like, slander when there's, the kid might not be around rather than any direct bullying towards them

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Grace:	The kids will say it to kids who they know aren't gay, but they won't say it to the kids who are . . . well I haven't heard them do that
Sarah:	No, I haven't heard it either

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

As homophobic incidents were constituted as indirect it was posited that the gay kids were not targeted, and in this way the teachers asserted that the incidents were not homophobic despite 'sledging' and 'slander' 'behind their back'. This discourse was complemented by the construction of homophobia being not strictly related to sexual orientation or preferences but instead being utilised against those who don't fit in to the norm:

Katrina:	And I'm thinking that people might say, 'oh you're a pussy' or something to someone who might be more shy or a wimp that obviously isn't gay
John:	Yeah
Katrina:	Like they'll be more likely to say it to those kids than the ones that actually are openly gay

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Kate:	Their look, their personality, they might not be the norm of what fits in here, they might be a little bit different in how they dress, how they walk, how they speak. You know, just . . . all those
Jeremy:	With the girls all the time, not a footy player

Kate: Yeah, not a footy player. Friends with all the girls, yeah. That stuff.

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Sarah: . . . it's very different, the homophobic and the gender-based, whereas boys I don't see that they see it as being homophobic, they're just gender-based insulting each other
Grace: Ah, yeah, yeah, yeah
John: Yeah, it's just a power based thing, the 'I'm better than you, you're a poof', yeah

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Jeremy: I still think it's as Kate said, it's more of an identity thing than straight out, open homophobia. It's . . . some kids are different, some boys are different, and they're perceiving that as being gay

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

These dialogues each highlighted that *difference* was the factor involved in aggressions related to sexual orientation, rather than sexuality itself. This difference was inferred in some cases as being related to gender performances. As 'gay' was highlighted as a specific boy problem, this difference was represented in non-normative (or unintelligible) representations of masculinity. Other students were portrayed as drawing power from dominant or desirable masculine performances in 'just gender-based insulting each other'. This was also the understanding propagated by Jeremy at Grove:

Kate: I would say the kids who are being picked on about [homophobia] are isolated, are the ones who often do keep to themselves and don't report it
Jeremy: Mmm . . . you get . . . you know, a kid will come and say to you 'oh he's saying so and so' or 'he's saying this' and 'he's saying that', but . . . but it's not . . . homophobia related. It's just having a go, picking on him I guess.

(Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This dialogue included the concepts of isolation, reporting and invisibility; but Jeremy adds the understanding that the real motivation for the negative incidents is not 'homophobia related' but 'just having a go, picking on

him'. This qualification destabilises the 'serious' or formal foundation of homophobia and reframes incidents as normative adolescent social practices of exclusion or persecution.

At Wilson, the teachers' discursive representations also focused on the ways in which homophobic bullying, even if it was carried out at the school towards gay students, may not significantly damage them.

> *John*:   But still to some boys that will be like, the lowest of the lows, yeah wow to get [called gay] sort of thing, and they haven't got coping mechanisms
>
> *Katrina*: But I think people are kind of scared when they actually know someone's gay to actually say it because [. . .] these people probably are very strong, even though they're in a group that might normally get picked on like hanging out in the quad or whatever
>
> *Grace*:   Yeah, but I think a lot of the kids who have been homose, who are homosexual in the school, they've been strong personalities and they've been able to cope very well
>
> *John*:   Yeah
>
> *Katrina*: Yeah
>
> *Grace*:   Because um . . . well they've got a lot of internal strengths . . .
>
> (Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Although John initially proposes that for some boys being called gay may represent 'the lowest of the lows', this suggestion is immediately followed by Katrina's comment that infers that the use of 'gay' is not used towards students who identify as gay. This suggests those who would experience damage the most would be those who are gay; it situates the destructive powers of the epithet and then negates these by affirming that the intent is not towards those who are at risk. This understanding is furthered by the construction of students with diverse sexualities as being very strong.

The construction of the characteristics of the individuals that homophobic incidents affect also occurred at Grove, where homophobic incidents were constructed as being related to individuals rather than groups. This suggested that fewer students were targeted (and therefore affected) and that their remonstrative potential was reduced through a lack of social support. In practical senses of responding to bullying or prioritising particular incidents this construction could function to reduce the 'seriousness' of homophobic bullying in comparison to something like racism that affects a more visible group. The teachers at Grove

also invested in discussions that explored who were at risk when homo-phobic instances occurred.

> *Jeremy*: . . . maybe we're thinking it's not a huge problem cause the kids aren't saying anything either . . . they're probably less likely to say something to a teacher, you know, if they're going through all those emotions at this time of their life anyway
> *Kate*: Mmm
> *Jeremy*: They're probably not going to want to get that information out there, so maybe we don't perceive it as being an issue when it actually could be
> *Peter*: Mmm . . . So if a kid's been physically harassed
> *Jeremy*: Well, just . . .
> *Peter*: They're more likely to report it than . . .
> *Jeremy*: Yeah, a non-homophobia type bullying thing . . .
>
> (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

In this exchange the Grove teachers constructed that those who were likely to be targeted were experiencing confusion, change or difference in their sexual identity. This discursive link continued into representations of students resisting reporting, as well as the best process of management that should be taken if it was to occur.

> *Kate*: . . . I think, dealing with the individuals is probably a bit better way to approach it initially, than bringing it up as a whole year group or school thing, because that sometimes . . .
> *Jeremy*: Yeah, they'll start up . . . 'who they talking about? Who's gay?'
> *Kate*: Promotes, yeah (*laughs*), often promotes . . . something, or gets them thinking about it.
> [. . .]
> *Vic*: So do you think sometimes voicing that something's offending someone or it's not approved of by the school can make the problem worse?
> [. . .]
> *Jeremy*: If an individual kid was harassed . . . you know, homophobic type comments and stuff, I don't think it would be a very good idea to . . .
> *Kate*: No
> *Jeremy*: Publically go over some, a whole program . . . that type of thing, or awareness of that. I don't think that kid would feel

>   *Kate*:   Supported . . .
>
>   (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This established that a whole school approach for an incident that was not really a problem, and was framed as an individual problem, was largely an inappropriate course of action. By 'bringing it up as a whole year group or school thing', the potential for danger and damage to the students who are 'at risk' was highlighted. Silences are promoted as being produced by students, while teachers' responses that resist 'publically go[ing] over some, a whole programme . . . that type of thing, or an awareness of that' are positioned as vital and successful in protecting students.

Finally, the teachers spoke about the external influences of culture and society that either encouraged or discouraged homophobic instances from taking place. Homophobic attitudes about gender or sexual orientation were constructed as being embedded in the towns, the media or general society.

>   *Kate*:   . . . I think in some ways it's an easy one to deal with, but in a town like [ours], where it's probably not socially out there or accepted, it . . . in some ways, it's hard to try and make the . . . you know, broaden the other kids thoughts. Like the bulliers, the bullies thoughts.
>
>   (Grove HS: Head teacher focus group 2)
>
>   *David*:   I think our community reinforces some of those sort of, roles, you know and your position in society, even through the way kids are presented with information on TV and so forth, you know, the stereotypical role that women need to play
>
>   (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

The power of societal or community influences was therefore largely constructed as hindering student abilities to accept sexual or gender diversity. Parental attitudes, sociocultural values and identity presentations in the media were voiced as barriers to the promotion of this diversity. The solution to this phenomenon was equally constructed as being external:

>   *Tony*:   You know, I think it would be very difficult at a school, you know, as one isolated, to have any lasting impact. I'd rather see a bigger

community discussion on it, and that way filtering down. It's very hard for us to push stuff up.

<div align="right">(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)</div>

Tony's construction was countered by David's response to dealing with bullying or harassment that was gender-based or homophobic. When asked how they would feel about personally responding to it Tony and David replied:

> *Tony*:   Yeah, I guess it's a bit out of my comfort zone. I haven't had to do it a great deal if at all, so it's still something I've gotta do but it might be something I took advice from, maybe talk to Dave and the principal about it, or maybe the counsellor, I'm not sure . . . Certainly it would be one out of the box.
>
> *David*:   Yeah and 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[. . .] 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.

<div align="right">(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)</div>

These responses encompassed many themes that were covered across both of the schools. Tony initially positions gender-based and homophobic bullying as 'out of the box', meaning something that is not regularly encountered or considered at the school. As it exists in their conceptual 'constitutive outside', the teachers and principals demonstrate their lack of ability to notice homophobia, suggesting that there is no room for action or intervention. This is potentially a key outcome – how can an individual seek to change something that they are unable to know?

Despite this concern, these constructions did not necessarily impact upon both participants' accounts of wishing to deal with these issues in

effective ways. David speaks at length about the sociocultural realities that foster the performances that take place within the school; specifically relating to 'men in positions of power' and their use of this power over women. He also refers to the ways that these power structures can isolate victims, particularly 'minority groups' and summarises that dealing with it at school should be a visual and loud process, 'something that you would not treat quietly'. In this way David embodies a position of advocacy and espouses a desire for change.

This construction was significant in that it was the only time that 'change' was represented as a necessary or achievable outcome in the course of the participant interactions. Other references to restrictions or difficulties in this process were not introduced or inferred, meaning that the initial construct maintained its projected meanings without exceptions. Where visibility and reporting were represented as constraints in other cases, they were represented as motivators in David's account, and where victims were represented as responsible for their own positions in many other productions; they were rendered a product of entrenched sociocultural differences in his representation. This demonstrates the power of the discursive frame; that opposite discourses can be applied to the same constructions, producing novel, alternative subjective positions within the same realities.

Discourses: Homophobic Bullying

Overall the teachers presented understandings about homophobic performances that were tied to themes of bullying (including aspects of visibility, reporting, and characteristics of individuals involved) and the idea of the external environment influencing student performances and values. In light of these constructions, two of the discourses were the same as those that were drawn from with gender-based bullying – the 'hierarchy of seriousness' and 'external influences'. The understandings behind these two discourses, however, were slightly different. Where the 'hierarchy of seriousness' in gender-based bullying was constructed around consequences of the deployment of insults, the same discourse within homophobic bullying extended this by affirming the non-existence of the phenomenon. This led to a novel discursive frame of 'occurrence and impact'. The second discourse, 'external influences' again drew from themes that have been detailed in previous sections yet extended these to apply specific meanings in reference to homophobic bullying. These discourses functioned together to undermine

practical options for interventions when homophobia occurred. Due to the stages of FDA being examined in detail in the previous section, the below inclusion of 'external influences' summarises key differences rather than exploring each stage.

Occurrence and Impact

(Non)occurrence and (lack of) impact was a dominant discourse that explicitly denied that gendered or homophobic harassment or bullying was either present or problematic within the school community. Chan suggests that despite the universal nature of homophobic bullying, 'school authorities, parents, and society typically deny its occurrence and impact' (2009, p. 143). This was certainly the case at Wilson and Grove, where the teachers consistently constructed a reality where occurrences were low; asserting that if there was homophobia happening that it wasn't within their classrooms. They also proposed concepts that illustrated that insults such as 'gay' were 'absolute insults' that were not homophobic in nature. These were qualified with illustrations that students had successfully come out at school and been 'openly' gay without negative ongoing consequences. They additionally suggested that students who were gay were the least likely to receive 'gay' as an insult. Each of these strategies functioned to silence, omit and assume that (Ferfolja 2007) homophobia was 'not a problem' at the schools.

There was, however, a counter-discourse that highlighted silence as an aspect that could be contributing to teachers' minimalistic conceptions of occurrence and impact. Teachers reflected that silences from students in reporting could lead to them not conceptualising the occurrences in their entirety. This counter discourse, however, problematically labelled students with a gay sexual orientation if they received homophobic abuse, through suggesting that homophobia was not reported because of personal uncertainty and fear of exposure.

Supplementing these discourses was a development in discussions that contradicted representations of occurrence and the dominant construction of 'not a problem'. The teachers spoke about a former student, Arthur, who was openly gay while attending the school.

John: I always remember Arthur at the bus stop ok? [. . .] these kids
        yelled out to Arthur 'You're a poof!', and he turned around and
        he said 'tell me something I don't know!' (*laughter*)
John: Which I thought was wow

Paul: Good come back!
John: And he just walked off

(*laughter*)
(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

John's story supplemented other teacher constructions and succeeded in showing how Arthur thrived in the environment despite explicit homophobia. It was interesting hearing this story not long before the teachers (including John) collectively agreed that the students did not target gay students with homophobic aggression. This represented teachers' ongoing discursive investment in the minimisation of homophobic events in the school environment. Where Arthur was concerned, his strength and fortitude kept him safe and he was not impacted by overt homophobia – homophobia that was said not to impact upon gay students at all. This was another strategic investment in discourses that function to reduce the harm of homophobic aggression.

Action Orientation

The discourse of occurrence and impact functioned to demonstrate that homophobic bullying or harassment did not require intervention at either of the schools. By portraying that the problems did not occur, or that when they did occur there was no damage, the discourse functioned to revoke all requirements for change. Teachers also reduced the construction of damage by redefining homophobia as being unrelated to sexuality and inferring that this decreased its seriousness.

By framing students' usage of 'gay' as a negative 'put-down' but refraining from linking it with homophobic (or bullying) connotations, the teachers again resist the students' responsibility of action and their own of intervention, much as they did in the deployment of 'slut'. This functions to reject assertions that hate speech exists in a historical, iterative form, and that any new configuration contains historically damaging aspects of its previous iterations, rather than from the intention of the present speaker (Miller 2011). It additionally rejects contemporary research findings that demonstrate that any 'general' negative usage of 'gay' increases homophobia (Nicolas and Skinner 2012). Instead, these discursive strategies revoke epithetic intention through the explanation of appropriation. This idea of damage or impact (and the reduction of these through dialogue) was a consistent theme across the teachers' constructions. 'Gay' was positioned as a normative and undamaging part of youth culture of which students are

passive communicants who don't understand its (other) meaning, therefore don't require intervention or enlightenment (DePalma and Atkinson 2010). Indeed these constructions affirm that 'there is a common belief amongst teachers that *that's so gay* is harmless' (Witthaus 2006, p. 25).

The counter-discourse within 'occurrence and impact' is, however, meaningful in that the teachers recognised that student reporting was complicated by homophobic epithets. They indicated that students that were experiencing homophobic aggression were less likely to report it. As such, other instances may fall outside of their knowledge or visibility. This conception though may relate back to the understanding of teachers interventional requirements; if it is not seen or reported then it falls outside of their control and jurisdiction.

Finally, silence was utilised by the teachers to reduce the visibility of homophobia and gendered violence as a 'problem'. Foucault writes that 'there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses' (Foucault 2008, p. 27), this was the case in teacher focus groups. The resistance to name incidents and their broad impacts resulted in pathologised and simplified 'bullying' terms that dismissed homophobia and gendered aggression as present and dominant forces in the schools.

Positioning

There are extensive implications for the positioning of individuals and of the discursive concern in this discourse. As there are implicit understandings that only those who are gay or same-sex attracted may be affected by homophobia in the school, the receptors of damage by homophobia are automatically positioned as belonging to one of those groups. Their ability to be damaged, however, is automatically negated through their discursively produced characteristics as strong, self-sufficient, and not requiring any defence from external forces. The other students who utilise 'gay' are positioned as not caring whether someone is gay and (paradoxically) only directing homophobic comments to those who are not gay, and in the light of other discursive assumptions (that homophobic epithets are only damaging to those who are gay) this is not deemed to be problematic. These interactions are also positioned as being merely transferences of popular language and culture and not embedded with significant or damaging meanings. Students are positioned as not 'see[ing] it as being homophobic'; their performances are unknowing and therefore unintentional if they do provoke harm. Homophobic and gendered abuse incidents are

therefore positioned as falling outside of the pathologised 'bullying' per-
formance as there is no one to hurt and no intent behind language.

Due to this discourse, homophobia itself was therefore effectively
rescinded as a concern or responsibility for the schools. Recipients were
positioned as being unaffected by the epithets or deployment of these
performances (if they do occur) either because they were not gay them-
selves (and are therefore not offended) or because they were gay and
therefore had 'a lot of internal strengths' to allow them to cope.

Practice

This discourse constrained possibilities for effecting or conceptualising
interventions related to homophobia in the schools. As aggressions were
not understood as being present or harmful, there was no reason for any
efforts for prevention or intercession.

In addition to this, silences were produced in some constructions as being
the most effective management strategies. Through the integration of the
understanding that those affected or targeted by 'true' homophobia are the
kids who are gay, the management strategies are positioned as equally
attempting to target and assist those students. At Grove High, this specifi-
cally meant that the teachers resisted taking a whole school approach as it
could make the problem worse for the student involved through highlight-
ing an individual and producing student discussion or hysteria. Instead the
teachers suggested that management strategies required sensitivity and deal-
ing specifically 'with the individuals'. This measure produced institutional
silences and the resistance of an official management strategy or direction.

There is only possibility for change if there is a reconceptualisation of
the ways in which homophobia manifests, functions and is applied in the
school setting. This outcome could be found through a dismissal of
pathologised and well-understood meanings of bullying and an invest-
ment in an exploration of power structures that are taking place both in
the school and in wider sociocultural and political culture. Until this
occurs, it will remain easy for the participants to discount gendered and
homophobic abuse as a non-serious or general form of bullying without
implications for all students in the school and the broader community.

Subjectivity

The above procedures collectively create a reality in which there are no
social consequences for students who are subject to 'name calling' that
is of a homophobic manner. The saturation of terms and meanings that

are utilised in the youth environment actually function as a means of evidence to provide them with the understanding that there are no visible or direct consequences on students when this language is utilised. Gendered and homophobic abuse is not recognised as a framework that provides meanings and boundaries for young people's identities, but is instead an invisible issue that is not discerned from any other bullying instances and hence resides on the lower end of their judgement of seriousness.

For young people in the school, it's likely that they will feel oppressed, watched and fearful of exhibiting any form of difference that might allow them to be targeted with homophobic violence. There is no support for them in this environment; teachers have no language, understanding or training around how to respond to homophobic aggression, and it is likely that students are keenly aware that homophobia is not disrupted by the school/s. Students who are sexually or gender diverse are likely to feel alone, isolated and unsupported. Regardless of intention of those who are producing homophobia, these outcomes are worrying and may lead to poorer academic, emotional, social and psychological outcomes for those implicated.

External Influences
Although this was a similar discourse to that invoked by the teachers in the constitutions of 'gender-based bullying' and 'intervention and response to bullying', there were elements of this discourse that related specifically to homophobic performances.

The specific nature of homophobia as being accentuated or fortified by external factors was tied in with constructions of masculinity (students living up to and regulating others) as well as in conceptions of relationships with homophobia (in an illustrative comparison to racism) in the town and wider society. Constructs of the 'stereotypical' 'small town', same-sex attraction or relationships not being 'widely or socially accepted' and the 'conservative type of community' which upheld 'the pressure of being different' were various productions utilised by the teachers to demonstrate that the schools' contexts restricted diverse performances of gender or sexuality and simultaneously facilitated homophobia.

This was not to say, however, that external influences were consistently produced as prohibiting this diversity. Indeed, the teachers invoked various discourses showing that popular culture and wider society had

changed and demonstrated 'more accepting' attitudes, whereas the town and families in the town were largely isolated and bucked this trend, entrenching more 'conservative' attitudes that were 'stereotypical' to a 'small town'. Being gay was especially produced as problematic for boys as 'the lesbian thing [has]...never been as bad as gay', locating their interactions with gay as being directly related to wider societal values.

The functions of this discourse could consist of blame in cases of perceived negative performances such as homophobic utterances or discrimination, or they could consist of what the teachers perceived to be more general (blameless) performances such as those that drew on gendered meanings or invoked expectations of masculinity. Through the invocation of either community, family or society based values or messages, the teachers illustrated that their interactions were restricted and minor in comparison to the broader environment of the students.

School interventions were positioned as meaningless in light of these factors that were constructed as continually impacting on students and implicating their performances and attitudes. The school was largely invisible when this discourse was invoked; what remained was the understanding that external influences were those that provided real impact and knowledge to the students' social realities. They were positioned as informing their meanings about gender and sexuality with little input from the teachers. This discourse therefore located the practical responsibility for change as outside of the school. Until changes 'filter down', the participants positioned themselves as not being able to make any real practical change. This understanding lends to the construction that if it is not a legitimate concern of the external influences then it will not be positioned as a legitimate concern of the school.

These two discourses created a dominant passive subjective position where responsibility for change was placed on external, uncontrollable factors at family, community and societal levels. When questioned about homophobic bullying the teachers either acted within the discourse of 'occurrence and impact' or 'external influences'. Where the first positioned homophobia as 'not a problem', the latter affirmed it as 'out of our control'. The teachers essentially highlighted the lack of influence or resistance that they had to popular culture, either in a 'conservative' 'small town' or in a larger sociocultural sense, where same-sex relationships are 'more acceptable now'. In each of these constructions their

subjective positions reduced or completely eliminated the requirement or motivation for action or change. Indeed, their subjective positions seemed to reflect the observations of Jennings, who contributed that 'We remain silent in the face of intolerance … we simply fail to set any kind of expectation at all that these young people must respect each other, even (especially?) when the differences among them are vast and profound' (Jennings 1999, p. ix).

NOTE

1. All quotes in this paragraph were from Wilson High head teacher focus group 1.

Student Realities

This chapter presents the findings of the student focus groups that were undertaken at both Grove and Wilson High Schools. Four focus groups were conducted – a male and female group from each school. As detailed in Chapter 3, the formation of these groups contributed to the discursive performances and outcomes that they produced in that they were situated in particular geographic, institutional and gendered locations. In particular, the gendered groupings illustrate expectations and productions of meaning that differed between the male and female focus groups. These will be explored in this chapter in the same structure to that of the previous chapter detailing head teacher and principal realities. Dominant student constructions will be outlined and the discourses that they employ in these constructions will then be reviewed utilising Carla Willig's (2008b) process of Foucauldian discourse analysis.

'Boys'

Both male and female groups constructed discursive objects that were intelligible to them as 'boys' and 'girls'. Interestingly, these were constructed to different extents depending on the gendered structure of the group. Specifically, boys and girls both tended to produce equally detailed accounts of 'boys', whereas male groups produced the dominant constitution of 'girls' with some input by the female groups. In many ways, the boys constituted what 'boys' were through distinguishing what they were

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not – alluding to the performances of the girls and their constructed inferiority. It showed that their discursive constructions of themselves were inherently linked with showing their departures from the oppositional binary of 'girls', and their understanding of gender was consistently about definitive binary inclusions and exclusions. Potentially this highlighted the on-going investment of groups in compulsory heterosexuality but more importantly the ways in which there was a collective understanding of binary gendered intelligibilities.

'Boys' as a construct was, therefore, a particularly dominant production as all participants and groups contributed to its constitution. Participants proposed conceptions of boys detailing their normative performances and outlining what they understood to be common characteristics. These were significantly different to girls in terms of social relationship management, social capital production and ownership, hierarchical standing and performances of persecution or violence. Their constructions functioned to illustrate that boys had their own collective identity and expectations, and that it was not shared with girls.

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION: 'BOYS'

'Boys' were constructed in relation to several different criteria including their social hierarchies, socially expected (and required) performances, their characteristics (physical and emotional) and their behaviours when engaging with conflict.

In both the male student groups at Grove and Wilson the opening constitution of boys was related to their management of their friendships, specifically in comparison to the ways in which girls managed their own platonic relationships. At Grove this was highlighted during a discussion about the occurrence of physical violence between boys and whether it was a distinct phenomenon at the school:

Andrew:	I think the boys have grown up a lot more than the girls
Rob:	Yep
Andrew:	In year 7, 8, 9, there was a lot of physical violence
Rob:	There was
Andrew:	At the moment, I don't think there has been…there's no physical violence
Rob:	There hasn't been
Sam:	Nup

Andrew:	No physical violence at all . . . and, all the boys actually kind of integrate together?
	[. . .]
Max:	There's a lot more integration
Rob:	Yeah, we're friendlier and we know each other
Andrew:	Everyone's like, close. But the girls
Sam:	They're still . . .
Liam:	They're bitchy

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Male student focus group)</div>

Sam:	We've just matured and
Rob:	Matured up
	[. . .]
Andrew:	Less testosterone in our systems probably
Sam:	Yep, we've gotten along better
Rob:	We've matured heaps more, and like, more comfortable with everyone around us
Sam:	Yeah, while the girls, they still have their separate groups

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Male student focus group)</div>

These two passages from Grove High represent the boys' investment in constructions of themselves as mature or 'senior' students. Their discursive constructions of their social performances held understandings of changes in maturity, belonging, integration, friendliness, levels of conflict and even biological change ('less testosterone in our systems probably'), each of which illustrated that their standing as senior students represented positive movements away from bullying and into a more cohesive group as 'boys'. Significantly, each passage ends with a final comparison against 'the girls' who are 'still' 'bitchy' and 'still have their separate groups'. This differentiation highlights that the boys' social relationships are managed more successfully (and with more maturity) than the girls, establishing increased integration, friendliness and belonging and decreased conflict than the girls. This affirmed the head teacher and principal constructions of boys 'moving on' where the girls have remained the same, holding grudges over incidents of minimal importance.

Wilson High boys also produced these understandings but extended them to focus explicitly on physical fighting.

Harry:	I think as . . . being older, older students, our friend group has ah, grown up together, so we're a lot closer

than the younger guys, so there wouldn't be as many confrontations as there would be in the junior years

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Vic:	When um, when there is a kind of conflict, what form does it take? Is it kind of like the Facebook behind the back thing?
James:	Oh not really
Harry:	It can start like that, but it gets physical very quickly. Guys aren't there to talk and hang around
Daniel:	But as you say, not as many of them . . . most of them talk themselves up but not as many of them actually get there
James & Matthew:	Yeah
Daniel:	There's a lot of talking about 'oh I'll bash him if he says anything about me'
James:	And then something happens and they're just like 'oh, he's lucky . . . my hand's sore today'
Daniel:	Yeah (laughs), my hand's sore
Matthew:	. . . if they do get in a physical um
Daniel:	It's a lot worse than the girls
James:	They don't usually say stuff on Facebook, like they might work it up on Facebook but when . . . they actually start hating each other, if they're going to want their opinion to be shown they're going to show it face to face, like they don't do it on Facebook I don't think
Matthew:	Yeah, there's not as much bitchiness
James:	But a lot of the boys say 'oh yeah we'll have a fight and then we'll shake hands and get over it', but . . . I dunno, I've never really been in a fight so I can't say . . . I don't really know how that works but um, I haven't really seen that happen
Harry:	But um, I think it means more that the guy won't hold a grudge
James:	Mmm
Matthew:	Yeah, they'll get it over and done with

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Although these excerpts don't explicitly compare boys' social management to that of girls, Daniel does offer that physical fights between males are 'a lot worse than the girls', qualifying the physical conflicts between the

boys as more serious or dangerous than those between the girls (further examination of this occurs in the discursive construction of 'girls'). They also move on to further describe the type of conflict between boys as 'not much bitchiness' and instead that they 'get it over and done with' through physical altercations. The first part of the second Wilson excerpt is also relevant in that it situates verbal performance as a reoccurring aspect of fighting. The boys cooperatively construct a reality where many boys 'talk themselves up' in relation to their physicality or ability to fight, 'but not as many of them actually get there'. This aspect is discursively derided through the joking about sore hands and avoiding the fight, and therefore cements that following through with a fight (as opposed to backing away from one when they have verbally committed to it) is the option that is embedded with courage and with successful masculinity.

Although James says that he hasn't seen boys 'have a fight and then...shake hands and get over it', Harry confirms that this means that 'the guy won't hold a grudge' (like a girl would), again insinuating that this is a more positive, conciliatory and mature method of managing relationships. Sam reiterated this at Grove:

> *Sam*: Well like, generally like, with the guys, the physical fights, there'd be a bit of a build-up, and then a fight, and then just nothing. Like a fight, out of the way, done
>
> (Grove HS: Male student focus group)

This showed that even if fights did occur, there were no long-term issues with the boys, the conflict was managed and a positive outcome was produced, reflecting teacher constructions of boy 'issues' as easier to handle and quicker to resolve.

The sources of these conflicts were constructed as being intrinsically linked with social capital and power. Perhaps the most significant of these constructions was produced by the female focus group at Grove High. While they were talking about social status or popularity, Britt proposed that girl social status was arbitrated and distributed by 'the guys':

> *Britt*: It's based a lot on whether the guys like them or not. Like if all the girls like one girl a lot and all the guys hate them, the girls aren't going to let that girl hang around with them because they sit with all the popular guys.
>
> (Grove HS: Female student focus group)

This statement explicitly summarised an on-going but subverted theme within the female transcripts that located social power with males in terms of 'popularity', performative boundaries (without negative identity implications) and in a more general discursive location in the gendered hierarchy over females. In the female groups, 'boys' were continually constructed as having significant (and constant) social expectations to perform to certain (masculine) criteria, many of which specifically revolved around their relationships with girls.

Jennifer:	They just, think that, you know, they're . . . cool?
Linda:	They think that they're amazing, they really do
Jennifer:	And they're not (laughs)
Alice:	They love themselves
Bec:	They're just insecure and uneducated
Jennifer:	Yeah, that's them
Linda:	They even pick on the popular girls, like they even throw comments around them. And like, half the time, a lot of the time they're joking, but they're just . . . they're really hurtful

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

This first section of dialogue consisted of the girls at Wilson illustrating that the popular or 'cool' boys' performances were often directed towards them in a derogatory way and that this happened due to them performing as 'cool' or 'amazing' or because they 'love themselves'. This situated their performances as strategically achieving popularity through the dismissal or degradation of female students, reflecting Renold's findings of the 'ways in which all of the boys in the study engaged in some form of anti-girl talk/behaviour' (2005, p. 92) when intelligible masculinities became threatened. This construction was fortified with further descriptions of gaining social capital and the employment of multiple identities to achieve these goals:

Bec:	Year 10 is the worst year cos everyone thinks they're king shit, and . . .
Linda:	Oh yes!
Alice:	And they're just like establishing things, like people start drinking
Linda:	Yeah, smoking
Alice:	Going out
Bec:	Parties . . .
Vic:	So is that how they establish themselves as 'king shit' as you put it?

Linda:	Yeah
Jennifer:	They're just like 'cos I get drunk and I smoke and my mum doesn't care I'm so cool'
Linda:	That's exactly how it is...And it's like any guy who's in that group, they just go around and they're like, 'yeah we're cool', but as soon as they're on their own, you know, without their little gang, they'll be nice
Alice:	Yeah
Linda:	They're really nice, but it's like they want to have this image when they're around their friends
Alice:	Yeah
Bec:	Yeah
Linda:	It's like, there's this one guy who's in our year who's moved schools now, but he was like, so nice to me in some classes, and then as soon as his friends came in the next class, he'd just start acting like a dick

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Here the girls detail 'stylised acts' (Butler 1990), which the boys perform to achieve increased social status to become 'king shit', a specifically masculine term and identity at the peak of the social hierarchy. Specific performances hold social capital for the boys; drinking, smoking, going out and parties. These are framed in opposition to 'nice' behaviours that the boys are constructed as demonstrating when on their own. This shows that these behaviours are tied up with 'want[ing] to have this image when they're around their friends' and that other males cause the boys to 'start acting like a dick', apt terminology for specifically masculinised performances. This further illustrates and affirms that degrading or dismissing females exists as part of the discursive formation of what a successful male is, regardless of the popularity level of the girls. Girls were definitively positioned as lower on the social hierarchy than boys in all cases.

Alice:	See like, with those boys, who just think like, with that partying and everything, it's probably that pressure too...just because it's so...
Jennifer:	Everyone else is doing it
Bec:	They want to fit in...They don't want to be labelled like a softie or something like, 'oh you didn't come out to that party' or 'you didn't drink at that party'
Alice:	Yeah

Linda: That is . . . that's what they all talk about, they're like, 'I have to go, because they'll think that' . . .

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

In this section of dialogue 'fitting in' becomes the motivator for masculine behaviours. The Wilson girls constitute boy performances as inherently pressured and assert that boys experience constant surveillance and judgement. Their constructions of the 'boy' social hierarchy demonstrate that boys cannot necessarily be blamed for their (harmful) performances, especially when they confide feelings of pressure and constraint to the girls (as Linda demonstrates with her closing comment). Despite their negative experiences of interactions with the boys, they construct boy social realities as being constrained by sociocultural motivators and boundaries, reducing the accountability or possibility of change for the boys.

The acknowledgement of judgement and surveillance extended to encompass other activities and performances that could be performed by either girls or boys. Girls, however, presented the performances that were classed as negative as more culturally acceptable when produced by boys, further illustrating the power of gendered expectations within their settings.

Vic: So do you think it's different when a girl behaves like that compared to a boy?
Jennifer: Yeah, a boy's a hero when he gets drunk and spews everywhere but if the girl does it, it's like this big thing, and it's like 'well I'm not talking to her, she spewed!' you know?
Linda: [speaks over] That would get bullied
Jennifer: But if a boy does it he's a legend
Alice: Yeah, where a girl's trashy
Linda: Yeah
Jennifer: Yeah a girl's trashy, that's the word
Vic: Do you think it's kind of the same with sexual behaviours?
Kathryn: Oh yeah
Bec: Yeah
Jennifer: Yeah if a boy like, bags a girl or whatever it's like 'yeah yeah what a hero!', but if a girl does that it's just like, 'she's a skank, we're not talking to her'
Linda: Yeah
Vic: She might get kicked in the head

Bec: Yeah she might get kicked in the head!

<div style="text-align: right;">(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)</div>

Although it could be said that the girls are critically aware of this culture through this excerpt (in that they are aware of the differences of the expectations), in other sections of dialogue it becomes obvious that they are equally invested in its maintenance and fortification. Girls are constituted as being unable to display specific types of behaviours without experiencing explicit or more subtle persecution. Their awareness of the power in gendered contexts, however, was only one subjective position that they took up. They demonstrated subjective fluidity through their continuing investment in gendered linguistic terms, such as calling boys 'dickheads' and girls 'bitches' when describing (and ascribing) their negative social identities:

Olivia: Boys can be dickheads too
Kylie: They're not bitches, they're dickheads
Britt: Can we write that on there?
Olivia: Like they just throw shit at you or something
Jen: like Rozzo
              (all laugh)
              [. . .]
Vic: . . . So . . . when you're talking about the boys throwing stuff at
              you, is that as bad as people spreading rumours?
Jen: No
Olivia: No!
Britt: Definitely not
Kylie: They're just annoying
Olivia: Yeah
Jen: They're immature
Meredith: I reckon they'd fall into distractions . . . the guys

<div style="text-align: right;">(Grove HS: Female student focus group)</div>

Here the Grove girls specifically allocate gendered meanings to negative social performances and demonstrate movement from a subjective position that critically questions gender relations to one that affirms gendered understandings. This demonstrated that their positions could be changed for particular strategic reasons or purposes. In their second position they espouse that 'dickheads' are less harmful than 'bitches'. The girls, therefore, invest themselves in the same discourse of the teachers and the boys in that they minimise the seriousness or risk attached to particular boy behaviours,

while emphasising the harm caused by girl behaviours. The Grove girls were additionally aware of the criteria that the boys looked for in girls:

Britt: I dunno, boys just base . . .
Jen: If they have a good body
Britt: Yeah, I suppose everything on looks really
Jen: They won't really look into their personality
Britt: (speaks over) They're really shallow
Kylie: And they'll ignore . . . the cooler guys will ignore ugly girls

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

This section added to the former production of boys as possessing and distributing social capital and indicating certain standards at which this distribution can occur to girls. Through the collective construction of boys as 'shallow', Britt, Jen and Kylie portray a reality in which the only factors that matter to boys are those related to the physical aesthetics of the females. 'Personality' becomes unimportant in comparison to 'looks', and 'a good body', and the illustrative anecdote of the 'cooler guys' ignoring the 'ugly girls' cements this as a real outcome for those who don't meet the standards. In this patriarchy where social capital is only accessible through interactions with boys, it becomes a necessity to reside within the objectified standards of femininity. This was also the reality that was constructed by the girls at Wilson:

Alice: Most guys just care about boobs

(laughter)

Bec: Yeah
Jennifer: And what your ass looks like
Linda: Yeah, if you have a booty ass and big boobs you're pretty right
Jennifer: Yeah, even if you've got a size 12 body, they won't care as long as you've got nice boobs and then it's all good!

(laughter)
(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Both the girls at Grove and Wilson, therefore, constructed ideas of observation, surveillance and judgement of their bodies from the boys in their schools. Their discourses resided firmly within a context of heteronormative binary gendered intelligibilities; the girls performed and were judged within a specific form of femininity and the boys equally performed a sort of

hyper-masculinity. This extended further in the girls accounts of 'boys' and their sexual desires. The Wilson girls produced accounts that constituted boys as being 'obsessed' with these desires as well as illustrating the role of females in boy language and performances:

Alice:	. . . like, to a guy, if their friend had like a hot girlfriend, they're like a god
Jennifer:	This area [indicates pelvic region] they're always

(laughter)

Bec:	Oh don't even talk about that! Whoever's got the bigger . . .
Linda:	Yep – they're obsessed with it
Jennifer:	It's all they talk about!
Alice:	And I hate how they talk about girls like they're a rag doll . . .
Kathryn:	Yes, definitely

(groans from group)

Alice:	Like, I wanna tap that ass or . . . like, and it's disgusting
Kathryn:	Like, yeah, no respect
Bec:	Yeah
Linda:	I hate how they just think they're amazing, like, they're what's important, we're here just for them. That's what it feels like when they talk
Jennifer:	Yeah, we're here to pleasure them
Linda:	Yeah. It's like, yeah, they're the main thing and we're just . . .

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

In this excerpt the girls explicitly discuss how the boys' language influences them – 'what it feels like when they talk'. This shows the power of the boy language to position girls as items that are there 'to pleasure them', that 'they're the main thing' and the girls are a lesser object, only valued for their aesthetics or sexual outputs. This again reflects the tiered social strata within the schools where girls reside on a lower level than the boys and struggle to gain social capital. Immediately after the above passage the girls do, however, outline that this is not the case with *all* boys:

Alice:	Yeah but see, they're like, people we actually know, they're the confident people in the classroom, but then there's all those guys who are just sitting there who . . .

Linda:	Who are different, yeah
Alice:	Who don't look as good at the moment, and who just don't have the confidence to talk, but they'd be the people who
Bec:	Are nice
Alice:	Are nice, and do have respect, we just don't know them
Linda:	There's only like a group of boys who are like that
Bec:	Yeah there's not a lot
Linda:	And then the rest are like
Jennifer:	Yeah, the rest of them, like three or four in each year are just absolute idiots, and then the rest of them just . . .

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

These comments were offered immediately after a section of dialogue that produced a significantly negative illustration of boys, opening a potentially undesirable subject position for the girls in light of the social capital of boys and their own comparative lack of power. This dialogue could, therefore, be seen as the girls' way of creating exceptions and safety in their discourse through illustrating that there are 'nice' boys as well. This demonstrates the ways in which the girls are complicit in the social regulation process; they show that they are unwilling or reluctant to provide the boys who are outside of the dominant forms of masculinity with social value. This leads to a further affirmation of what is and remains intelligible and valued as a boy performance. It also offers an illustration of the dominant boy forces in their social realities; the people they 'actually know . . . the confident people in the classroom'. These boys reside in the front of the discursive landscape that the girls render in their accounts. Those that are more spectral are the ones 'who are just sitting there', 'who are different', 'who don't look as good at the moment, and who just don't have the confidence to talk'. These portrayals confirm the power of particular performances. The boys who are known are those that dominate the discourse and reality of the girls, who embody the masculinity that makes them intelligible. Despite the lack of quantity of those boys who do embody that masculinity, they still dominate the girls' conversation and their social spheres. The others reside outside of it, not within the 'people we actually know'.

The girls at Wilson could, therefore, be seen as reflecting on their understanding of boy positioning; however this (arguably) critical examination was undermined through their constitution of 'boys' in relation to looks and appearance. The girls demonstrated their shock when boys took

interest in their own appearance, especially to traditionally feminine realms of hair (both head and body hair):

Bec:	And they're all obsessed with their hair
Group:	Yeah
Alice:	All their hair cuts are the same
Jennifer:	Yeah
	[…]
Bec:	We have a guy in our year that will walk past a window and like, stop and check his hair
Jennifer:	Oh!

(laughter)

Alice:	Girls don't even do that!
Jennifer:	We, actually on the excursion the boys were straightening their hair and everything, and us girls were just chucking it up in a bun, not even doing anything about it, and the boys were actually straightening their hair and putting gel in it, and we were just like 'youse are boys!'

(laughter)

Jennifer:	But like, yeah
Alice:	And like, how some boys shaved their legs

(group gasps)

Bec:	What!
Jennifer:	Oh, I don't get that!
Linda:	Some people, guys will tease each other like, 'oh my god you're so gay you're shaving your legs' and stuff like that
Alice:	Yeah
Linda:	Some of the sporty guys will do it because of taping

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Hair was a large point of talk and contention at Wilson High and this point came in reflection of the contextual obsession with hair. What is important, however, is that the girls construct a reality where boys are performing unintelligibly through non-normative gendered behaviours. Their tone of incredulity, including phrases like 'believe it or not', laughter and exclamations establish that boy behaviours are not how they should be. 'Girls don't even do that!' summarises the general understanding that hair checking is a feminine behaviour. The anecdote about the boys

'straightening their hair and putting gel in it' is powerful, as the girls show their regulatory behaviours through the finalising statement 'youse are boys!' Their discourses shape what is allowable in boy performances and equally, what is abject. Linda's allowance for 'the sporty guys [who] will do it because of taping' provides a particular frame of meaning for understanding and accepting the behaviour, but otherwise the behaviour is unknowable; 'Oh, I don't get that!' This process reflects Foucault's understanding of panopticism, where the girls are 'caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers' (Foucault 1991, p. 201). As they experience the constraints of gendered expectations they reinstate these onto others, becoming 'the principle of his [sic] own subjection' (Foucault 1991, p. 203). The girls maintain and fortify gendered expectations and invest in the on-going regulation of the boys' performances.

The heterosexualised, hyper-masculinity of boys was also produced during the course of the boy focus groups, especially at Wilson. At the beginning of the focus group there was a sort of collective display of heterosexual masculinity to establish a group tone and understanding. While I was asking them about their main reasons or motivations to come to school, they contributed:

James:	Pick up?
Daniel:	Pick up!
James:	Create connections with other people
Daniel:	Work as a cohesive unit
James:	As in females
Vic:	You can put that down, if it's, you know, meet chicks, or whatever, that's fine. Is that important to you?
James:	Alright!
Daniel:	And James seizes the texta! Just write 'meet girls'
Matthew:	Haha, meet opposite gender
Harry:	But then that just throws everything out of proportion
Daniel:	Yeah, then that goes back to one [the main priority], and everything shuffles down

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Although this performance was mainly by dominant group members Daniel and James, Matthew and Harry also participated and aligned with their productions. The enthusiasm shown by the boys to present this as one of their motivators functioned as an active display of their heterosexualised subjectivity. They presented their relationships with females as

decisively different to 'seeing friends' and initially frame it as 'pick[ing] up', a directional term that positions them as the active facilitators of heterosexual relationships. Although it is obvious that there is a lot of 'joking around' going on in the above, this performance is no less meaningful. The strength of the performance permeates the group and involves all participants except for Paul, who attempts to clarify (or disrupt) this performance in the following section of dialogue.

> *Paul*:   So is that why youse come to school?
> *Daniel*:   Pretty much
> *James*:   Pretty much! But that will obviously change, hopefully
> *Daniel*:   Why, to not meeting opposite gender? To being alone for the rest of your life?!
>
> (Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Paul's questioning of the groups' enthusiasm over meeting girls and 'special friends' results in James' immediate reaction of defensiveness and aggression; Daniel demonstrates incredulity at Paul's attitude and suggests that if he doesn't prioritise this then he may be 'alone for the rest of your life'. To the group, this performance therefore demonstrates the strength and implications of remaining within a heteronormative masculine discourse. Paul's position becomes untenable in the immediate aftermath of Daniel's comment and he doesn't speak again until the subject changes to the priority of 'gain skills and qualifications'.

Although this represented the idea of discourse in action, demonstrating the ways in which masculine performances were produced in real time and held values and implications for those who participated, there were other more explicit sections of dialogue that also detailed the boys own expectations of 'boys'. The boys' conversations around social capital, support and hierarchy were linked with the understanding of conflict and held implications for their conflictive interactions. When discussing what created difference and disagreements between males, the Wilson boys offered:

> *Harry*:   I think ego's a big thing with guys
> *Daniel*:   Yeah definitely
> *Harry*:   A lot of pride
> *Vic*:   What do you mean by ego?
> *Harry*:   A lot of pride and ...
> *Daniel*:   How good they think they are
> *James*:   Who pulls the most chicks and things like that, I mean ...

Paul:	The bigger man
Matthew:	So how do I write that?
Vic:	The bigger man?
Matthew:	So, competition, competitiveness?
Vic:	So what's the competition about?
Daniel:	Who . . . well who they think is the better person?
Paul:	Stereotyped to be . . . who's the coolest, most attractive sort of thing
Daniel:	(speaks over) cooler.

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Here the boys portrayed their experience of social hierarchy with explicit reference to a heterosexual masculinity. Aspects such as 'who pulls the most chicks', who is 'the bigger man', 'the coolest, most attractive sort of thing' align with a culture of 'competition' and 'competitiveness'. 'Ego' and 'pride' complete the construction, demonstrating that particular performances of masculinity lead to ownership of social capital. These constructions echo those of the 'King Shit' performances that were described by the girls at Wilson; they portray masculinity and establish social capital. This social capital is relevant and necessary at the schools particularly in the context of physical fighting, where the boys constructed social support as a vital component for survival and success.

Paul:	They'll surround themselves as well, with other guys
James:	Yeah there's a whole mob mentality
Paul:	And like, talk it up amongst themselves sort of thing?
Daniel:	Half the time it's not one-man fights, it's like thirty people . . .

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

In this dialogue, the Wilson boys affirm that physical violence largely takes place in a group context; not only through the actual fighting, but in the lead up to incidents as well. This presents fights as largely a peer supported (or pressured) process.

| *Harry*: | . . . even this year I think I've seen two fights which have been peer pressured . . . the person didn't want to fight that other person, but they've been told by their group 'oh do it, just hit him', and then, so he's going to |

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

The social realities of the boys that rely on being 'the bigger man' or 'king shit', therefore, contain physicality and aggressiveness as an avenue to gain hierarchical movement. Individuals reside within a culture of 'competition' and 'competitiveness' that results in particular performances that are sanctioned by expected gender performances. This theme represents relative limits of potential male performances and the legitimising of some masculinities over others. As some subjective positions become more desirable and more socially sanctioned, the boys potentially become streamlined into these – in other words, 'an optimum towards which one must move' (Foucault 1991, p. 183). Another implication of this was the understanding of 'toughness' or sensitivity in boys. While talking about insults that worked against boys and girls specifically, the Grove male focus group began discussing the lack of power that the girls could utilise against the boys:

Max: Like, girls don't really have much against boys because it doesn't affect boys as much
Andrew: Are you sure?
Sam: The majority of us just...don't seem to show that they care, they just kind of shrug it off and like, move on, but...the girls will kind of
Liam: Harbour that
Sam: Yeah, and cry, and pent up inside and just...yeah
Andrew: Um, I think the girls do offend guys a lot...They're just.... Saying that you're unwanted and things like that, the guy's sad
Sam: Yeah, the guy doesn't show it
Max: Yeah, it leads to mental disintegration eventually

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

This dialogue showed that there were particular expectations of emotive displays for boys that were in opposition to girls'. The conversation allocates specific expectations onto boys to not show their levels of affect. Max's conclusion about this resistance leading to 'mental disintegration eventually' illustrates the dire outcome of this performance, despite this outcome failing to disrupt it in their daily lives and rituals.

The discursive constructions of 'boy' therefore drew from particular representations of social capital, social support, masculinity and performance. 'Boys' as constructed by male and female student focus groups at both Grove and Wilson were produced as holding particular social and relational characteristics. These discourses produced what boys were and could be while still remaining within the definitive gendered boundaries of 'boys'.

DISCOURSES: 'BOYS'

Intelligible Masculinity and Disciplinary Power

The above construction of 'boys' is, in itself, an exclusionary construct. The participants who produced this construction illustrated a group of individuals that shared inherent characteristics and performances. While they produced these expected (and accepted) identities, the individuals remained firmly within the category of 'boys'. This construct, therefore, invoked a discourse of 'intelligible masculinity' (Butler 1990). When this version of masculinity was not realised, or not continually evoked in rejection of the abject identities that existed in the constitutive outside, Foucault's (1991) understandings of 'disciplinary power' engaged. Hierarchical observation and normalising judgement were on-going realities for the students. They continually reflected on the expectations of 'boys' – of what they do and how they constitute others. These productions revealed the on-going requirements of boys to continually perform particular subjectivities to gain access to social capital and avoid marginalisation. Specifically, they revealed that boys' gendered performances became culturally sanctioned and intelligible when they 'in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire' (Butler 1990, p. 17). Indeed, those that did maintain this coherence and continuity become 'subjects' (Butler 1993) as opposed to the abject identities that failed to align with cultural endorsements.

Action Orientation

The discourse of intelligible masculinity and disciplinary power has multiple functions. First, it works to establish an 'inside' and an 'outside' of social being. 'Boys' were continually constituted as a homogenous group with shared performances and characteristics. The boundaries of their performances were iterated through discourse and included aspects of physicality (through fighting, hair styling or body hair removal), emotional displays (not showing hurt or emotions) and heterosexual performances (displaying desires, producing sexual performances or results and degrading females in everyday interactions). Each of these functioned to show who was 'the bigger man' in a context where 'ego' and 'pride' operated within a culture of 'competitiveness'.

This discourse also manufactures a foundation of intelligibility. This was constituted at the schools as aligning the boys' gender performances

with a regime of heterosexual desire. The particular masculine performances of boys make them visible and intelligible – make them 'boys'. Without these performances, their identities become untenable, questioned and marginalised. Equally, those who don't produce overtly masculine performances became 'the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to exiting norms of continuity and coherence' (Butler 1990, p. 17). This shows precisely how individuals are framed as 'different' or not 'fitting in'; they are only conceivable as aberrations to the norm, rather than autonomous beings. Each of these performative acts functions to distance the boys from femininity, marking intelligible masculinity as oppositional to any form of feminine practice. Indeed, the abject identity becomes femininity and the subsequent requirement of intelligible masculinity is to repudiate feminine attributes in all of their forms. This continual repudiation is discursively endowed as an avenue to achieve social and cultural capital. As such, this discourse predicates that misogyny can be purposefully and strategically used to gain social standing.

The action orientation finally works within Foucault's conception of 'disciplinary power'. Social hierarchy was a large part of the boys' realities, with them framing it as 'competition' for who is 'the coolest, most attractive sort of thing', who 'pulls the most chicks' and who is 'the bigger man'. Their language illustrates their desire to meet up to expectations of masculinity, and this functions as hierarchical observation 'that sustains itself by its own mechanism' (Foucault 1991, p. 177). As they produce a reality that affirms the norms of heterosexual desire and masculine performance, they simultaneously conceal these norms and fortify their rules. They produce an unquestioned hierarchy that relies on particular performances of physicality, heterosexuality and 'toughness' that are continuously observed and arbitrated in reference to the operative social ladder.

Positioning

In terms of 'normalizing judgement' (Foucault 1991, p. 177), the discursive deployment of 'difference' or 'fitting in' works alongside corporeal performances to constitute the boundaries of social acts and to divert offenders away from these towards a culturally sanctioned alternative. When this alternative is achieved, rewards are offered to the individuals in the forms of 'friends', 'fitting in' and becoming a 'winner' in the 'competition'. Social capital is gained within a framework of achievement,

and the boy can move up the ladder of social hierarchy utilising the garnered social support. In other words, this discourse functions to position boys into the 'boys' category.

There are specific boundaries that make only particular subjectivities available. Individuals are positioned as either 'inside' or 'outside' of these boundaries. Those who don't 'fit' these reside outside of the category become unintelligible. This was especially proven by the girls illustrating that they didn't know those boys 'who are just sitting there', 'who are different', 'who don't look as good at the moment, and who just don't have the confidence to talk'. These performances represent the 'outside' of their social zone; they don't associate with them and they don't 'actually know' them. The limit of their knowledge represents the limit of their social zone and visibility.

As well as being 'inside' or 'outside', boys were also positioned on a hierarchy of performance. Their performances act as insertion points on a social ladder, dictating and continually defining their social platform and place. To achieve positive movement, boys work to become positioned as 'king shit', engaging in various behaviours like 'drinking', 'smoking' and 'partying' (not to mention misogyny) to become a 'hero'.

Practice

The practical implications of performance (of 'masculine' desires and actions) and discursive repudiations of particular identities can be framed as the on-going practices of discipline, punishment and reward. The intrinsic power deployments of the social settings at the schools incorporate practices that illustrate acceptable and expected performances, police boundaries of masculinities and reward those that successfully produce dominant masculine subjectivities. Particular announcements of gender, and their associated performances, produce the fixity and status of gender through the compulsory reiteration of norms. Through repetition and citation, gender is continually constituted and individuals are continually informed about and contribute to its formation. This process leads to an outcome where acceptable performances are eroded; there is less difference and diversity as the population learns that only some identities are viable. The incorporation of epithets fortifies these understandings and continually render outside subjectivities as deviant and as 'threatening spectres' (Butler 1993, p. 3).

In this environment, it is difficult to conceptualise real change. Individuals contribute to a cyclical understanding of power in which all seek to gain status and standing. The desire to achieve an intelligible

masculinity is continually enforced with the prospect of failure envisaged as social expulsion and rejection. Unless there is a dramatic shift in the understanding of gender and an associated shift in performance and discourse, the cycle will continue to reiterate and invest in static, hetero-masculine norms that boys are forced to take up.

Subjectivity

This discourse contains multiple, complex and inter-related themes of gender regulation. Individual movements and subjectivities are governed by the conception of observation (and surveillance) and the requirement to 'fit in' to the hierarchy. In this discourse, boys continually work to become and remain 'boys' through their sexual and social performances and invocation of various discourses. These efforts may cause people to feel trapped, concealed, regulated or afraid to move outside of their acceptable (and continually evolving) gender category. This reality points to contemporary findings relating to the poorer mental health outcomes (including higher rates of self-harm and suicide) for students who are gender or sexual diverse and the pressures, emotions and shame that they feel due to their differences. It becomes increasingly difficult for young people who have interests, values or identities that are outside of the heterosexual matrix to enact their diversity, and it is more likely that they will become isolated, conflicted and unable to talk about their feelings (McDermott et al. 2008; Scourfield et al. 2008). Those who do perform successfully may feel a sense of power, control and safety with the social support and discursive power in their surrounding environment.

'Girls'

The construction of 'girls' was undertaken by all groups and offered particular ways of viewing their conflicts, behaviours, characteristics, positions (in relation to boys), social structures and levels and sources of social capital. It's important to note again that the majority of 'girl' constructs emerged from male focus groups. The constructions that were put forward by boys illustrated that girls had particular, exclusive identities. This succeeded in achieving an exclusive discursive object of 'girls' that was in binary opposition to 'boys' and contained attached meanings that should only be embodied by females. In other words, the boys continually positioned the girls as the oppositional 'other';

'defining and securing one's own positive identity through the stigma-tisation of an "other" through markers of differentiation' (C. Davies and McInnes 2012, p. 135), much as the girls had done when constructing 'boys'. This ensured that there was no space between these categories for any diverse gender identities, or even movements for subtle gender disruptions. When girls constructed the object of 'girls', they simulta-neously contributed to the discourses by engaging with normative gen-dered productions of themselves. These constructions will now be discussed in detail and the discourses that were utilised within both boy and girl student groups will be explored.

Discursive Construction: 'Girls'

'Girls' as a discursive construction was produced by predominantly male voices, and both high school groups were in unison when describing the performances of females during conflict. Overall, girls were constructed in opposition to that of boys as responsible social managers. Where boys were illustrated as utilising direct actions to resolve conflicts quickly and without on-going repercussions, girls were constructed as utilising indirect or 'behind the back' methods of conflict, more commonly known as 'bitchiness'. 'Bitch' and its derivatives were exclusively allocated to female behaviours, implicitly linking the term to girls rather than boys. This included representation from the boys at Grove in relation to social conflict.

Max:	There's a lot more integration [in the senior years]
Rob:	Yeah, we're friendlier and we know each other
Andrew:	Everyone's like, close. But the girls
Sam:	They're still …
Liam:	They're bitchy
Andrew:	They've been having massive fights for the last couple of weeks, and … it's all over the place

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

In this dialogue 'the girls' are fundamentally 'othered' by the boys. The boys normalise their social practices through 'everyone's like, close' and then compare 'the girls' who are 'still' 'bitchy'; the girls are positioned as departing from socially endorsed norms. The boys' reflections of girl 'massive fights' that are 'all over the place' shows that they are not part

of these; they are observers rather than contributors. This positioning was extended further later in the transcript:

Sam: Well at one point last year like, all the girls were like, inter-group, like within our group were just bitching, we're all just contemplating just getting up and leaving

Andrew: Yeah, actually, a group of boys and girls used to sit together, and all the boys just walked away

Sam: Because there was that much

Andrew: And like, never sat with them again, because they were bitching so much

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

This frames 'bitching' as a distinctly female behaviour that the boys refuse to take part in. The boys at Wilson extended this oppositional positioning:

Daniel: There's huge bitch fights between the girls at school at the moment

James: Oh Yeah, they're always uh . . . Entertaining

(laughter)
(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Here the boys again work to other the girls and their social performances by constructing them as 'entertaining'. The use of this word and the immediate laughter following its deployment function to position the girls' conflict as non-serious and literally laughable, as well as objectifying them. We can see that this objectification is approved of through the laughter that it generates.

When the girls were constructed in relation to physical fighting or conflict, the boys at Wilson deliberately differentiated it from boy fighting. This came in the form of framing it as a 'scratch match':

Vic: What else happens between girls?

Daniel: Scratch match

(laughter)

James: Oh that doesn't happen!

Daniel: We've had one scratch match and that was last . . . no, the year before wasn't it, when what's her name . . .

Matthew:	No I've seen a couple of physical confrontations. No there's actually . . . when you think about it, there's more physical girl fights than there is boy fights . . .
Daniel:	I've seen maybe four or five girls like, slapping and hitting each other in a full on fight when I've been at school

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

The significance of the linguistic term 'scratch match' is its specific deployment in relation to 'physical girl fights'. The notion of this is ridiculed as evidenced by the group laughter after its insertion. 'Scratch match' functions as a term that references two aspects – the first being the failure to compete in an event (in sports terminology) and a resulting match that holds no value in terms of the official competition. When this is utilised alongside the literal addition of 'scratch', that is to scratch with ones nails, a specifically feminine means of fighting, the term synthesises these metaphoric beginnings to create an event that is entertaining, meaningless, non-serious, non-competitive and specifically feminine. In this way, a simple linguistic term provokes a complex understanding and is discursively powerful in its communication of meaning. Although Matthew frames these as 'confrontations' and 'fights', Daniel immediately moves to clarify the meaning of girl fights and narrow the expected performance to 'slapping and hitting each other in a full on fight'. This illustrates again that the fights are unlikely to produce significant corporeal damage to the participants, unlike more male fighting verbs like 'punching', 'kicking' and 'mob fights' that were utilised in their own productions. The boys also denigrated the motivations for girl fights:

Vic:	What happens between the girls at the moment?
Max:	Mad bitching, just behind each others' backs. It's absolutely crazy
Andrew:	Look, there's a battle, it's standard
Max:	But sometimes it's over the most asinine stuff, like . . .
Vic:	What is it about?
Max:	Stupid stuff!
Andrew:	Yeah, I don't know
Max:	She goes out with Luke now, ahhh! Like, 'look at how ugly her earrings are' or something stupid like that
Sam:	Yeah, relationships
Max:	Material goods [. . .] like, if the dress, if it doesn't cost like five thousand dollars and like designed by Versace then it's crap

Sam:	Yeah
Rob:	The girls are more picky with like . . .
Max:	[speaks over] Yeah, like everything hast to cost a lot of money, like . . . bargains are for losers with them
Rob:	how they choose friends . . . if you're not, if you don't . . . just they think they have to be pretty on the outside to make friends and everything
Andrew:	Well not all of them
Rob:	Most of them
Sam:	Yeah
Andrew:	I think if you're different, you're gonna get teased
Rob:	A lot
Andrew:	That's like, yeah. Like look at all the people that's split from groups and gone to other groups because of bitching
Liam:	Mmm
Andrew:	And it's all because they're just slightly different

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

Here the Grove boys utilised discourses to again frame girls as oppositional and as having distinct social behaviours that are different and incomprehensible to the boys. Their 'mad bitching . . . behind each others' backs' despite being 'absolutely crazy' was also 'standard'. Although Andrew offers that 'not all of them' are like that, Rob and Sam agree that 'most of them are', and Andrew's admission that 'if you're different, you're gonna get teased' shows the persecution that comes with not living up to these particular performative standards. Andrew's contribution also demonstrates that bitching has led to people splitting from groups and moving to other groups, 'all because they're just slightly different'. Bitching is therefore produced as a regulatory force between the girls that works to identify and exploit perceived performative failures. Through their language they ultimately position these concerns as meaningless and as not worthy of conflict. The boys' collective construction renders girls as superficial and obsessed with displays of wealth and aesthetics. At Wilson, the boys recognised that 'reputations' (about sexual activities and identities) were also aspects that encouraged girl conflicts:

Vic:	What do you think the fights are about, and the comments are about?
James:	Other comments made to other girls- that starts a lot of it
Harry:	Rumours

Paul:	Rumours
James:	Yeah rumours. Rumours play a big part
Vic:	Rumours about what though?
Harry:	Reputations
James:	Yeah
Harry:	So that could be, well yesterday it was about that sort of – I'm going to say the word – being a slut sort of thing

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

James begins by framing this dialogue with a clarification that girls make 'other comments...to other girls' that 'starts a lot of it'. This immediately removes boys from the equation of conflict and resists blame being placed upon them, especially in the context of 'being a slut sort of thing'. The boys at Wilson High would have been particularly aware of the danger of this implication in the context of the previous days' incident; 'kick a slut in the head day' that is detailed in Chapter 6. However, their acknowledgment of sexuality and the deployment of 'slut' are relevant in the construction of 'girls' as they recognise other avenues of power that can be accessed and utilised by either boys or girls. Girls are constructed as being 'at risk' of negative 'reputations' that relate to sexual performances, and subsequently their construction embodies understandings of ideally rejecting 'slut' performances. Liam and Sam at Grove enacted this in a crude discussion:

Sam:	I heard someone did it three times in one night, with three different guys. That's ridiculous, and...she admitted it
Liam:	(laughs)
Sam:	Now that's...
Liam:	Slut-tish!
Sam:	Promiscuous I would say
Liam:	Yeah, promiscuous indeed

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

This dialogue illustrated discursive regulation in practice. The girl performance is troubling to Sam and Liam in two ways: she (allegedly) had sex 'three times in one night, with three different guys' which was 'ridiculous', and that second 'she admitted it'. The admission and ownership of the performance seems to be equally troubling or disconcerting to the boys as the sexual act itself. Their construction, though simplistic, potentially renders the girl as willingly moving into the 'slut' category by resisting

denial and taking ownership of her behaviours. This allows them to invoke the epithet of 'slut', although in this setting it was in its diluted forms of 'slut-tish' and 'promiscuous'. The boys become less resistant or ashamed in utilising these regulatory frames (in a formal setting) due to the construction of the girl's willingly deviant behaviours. Their performance asserts that self-admission of her acts revokes any potential for her to avoid these labels or regulatory practices.

At Wilson, the boys also reflected on the specific nature of girl conflicts and allocated particular performative understandings to their interactions:

Vic:	...I want you to tell me what kind of bullying or harassment goes on between these two people [two girls]
Matthew:	Behind your back, bitchiness
James:	Mmmm
Vic:	Well okay you can write it down
Harry:	Facebook is a big thing because that whole, gossip behind the back, which is ... cat fight turns out ...
James:	And it's a lot like ... I mean, when girls post a status and they'll never say who, they'll be like 'oh you skanky person, what do you ... just keep your mouth shut' and they won't say
Harry:	They won't say the name
James:	And then that just creates suspicion and then all these girls ... the girls are ... I'm not sure but they might be self-conscious ... well I'm not a girl
Daniel:	(laughs)
James:	Well I hope I'm not but there's ... and maybe they think 'maybe I've done something' and then it creates all these things
Harry:	Tension and drama
James:	And then it ... usually a year group will split off into two sides, like are you on her side or on her side? And not really much in between
Harry:	That especially happened with um, Year 8 and 7, because people wanted to be popular, so they'd make a decision and then join that side even though they're just a bystander

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

This dialogue again contributes to the understanding of girl conflict as relational or indirect (Ringrose 2013), or in their overall production, as irresponsible. Harry introduces the concept of Facebook as a contributing factor or medium to their interactions and ties it in with

discursively feminine conflict productions of 'gossip behind the back' and 'cat fight'. James extends this to show that although Facebook may be utilised by both girls and boys, girls use it in a particular way that 'creates suspicion' and increases the specific girl experience of being 'self-conscious'. This in turn facilitates 'tension and drama' and the 'split' of a year group into 'two sides' with 'not really much in between'. By then relaying the understanding that individuals have to choose sides 'because people wanted to be popular' the boys also incorporate the knowledge that girl conflict can function as a distributor of social power and a facilitator of hierarchical movement. They frame the girls as investing in this power through showing that their knowledge of how to 'become popular' caused them to 'make a decision and then join that side even though they're just a bystander'.

In comparison to 'boys', 'girls' were continually understood as lacking in their ability to resolve (insignificant and petty) conflict or to sustain positive friendships. The boys at Wilson furthered this in their explanations of 'girls' post-conflict:

Harry:	...I don't know whether anyone else has seen this but when a girl holds a grudge, it stays for a while
James:	Yep
Paul:	Oh definitely
Harry:	There's friend groups in our year, and they're all in the same group but then that person won't talk to that person and this one won't talk to that one because someone did something then, but then that person didn't actually do it, someone else did it – so there's this whole web of 'I hate you because you...' (laughs) [...]
Vic:	Do you think girls will report this more readily? What's going on?
Harry:	No
Daniel:	No
Matthew:	They keep it between themselves
Daniel:	Yeah
James:	They'll tell their parents...well, if something gets really bad they'll tell their mum
Daniel:	(speaks over) they'll tell their parents, and their parents will normally get involved which makes it even worse

James: They won't directly tell, like an adult . . . they won't directly tell
              the police or a teacher

                                    (Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Here the boys infer more gendered norms – this time related to reporting aggression. James again clarifies that directness is not part of the feminine operation; 'they won't directly tell' shows the resistance of females to take direct action and positions them within a regime of practice that is definitively 'behind the back', rather than 'face to face'. Although the boys spent a large amount of time constructing girl conflicts, the girls focused their discourses on the realities of girl social capital. Girls were aware at times of the distinct inequities that were prominent in their social realities. This was the case at Grove High where the girls reflected on what made 'girls' 'cool':

Vic: Are they cool because of their . . . kind of like sexual activities as
              well?
Jen: Yes
Meredith: Yeah
Kylie: Yes
Meredith: I guess that's what most people base it on
Kylie: Because they put out
Olivia: Yep
Jen: I don't know why that's cool
Olivia: Because the boys want it
Meredith: Yeah
Kylie: Yeah
Jen: But if a girl sleeps like around and that she's called like a slut
              pretty much but if a guy does
Olivia: Yeah
Jen: He's pretty much a legend
              [. . .]
Britt: It's based a lot on whether the guys like them or not. Like if all
              the girls like one girl a lot and all the guys hate them, the girls
              aren't going to let that girl hang around with them because
              they sit with all the popular guys

                                    (Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Here the Grove girls constructed the conditional and tenuous reality of how social capital was accessible (and maintainable) to girls. Their social capital was determined by what the boys wanted and who they

wished to provide it to. This is a powerful representation; the girls are immediately positioned as attempting to please boys through sexual acts, despite the real and damaging consequences of being 'called like a slut' 'if a girl sleeps . . . around'. Comparatively, boys are fortified against these consequences and their social capital increases with increased (hetero)sexual acts. Britt's final comment asserts the power of boys; girls' status is dependent 'on whether the guys like them or not'. Girls are incapable of self-sufficiency or of independent movement in social relationships. This aligns with Ringrose's exploration of teen girls that demonstrated their 'discursive incitement to shift from primary relationships with girls to a heterosexual orientation toward and higher valuing of relationships with boys' (Ringrose 2013, p. 87). Girls' power and control was accessible from their relationships with boys, not from those with other girls. Indeed, they were situated as insertions into boy worlds, attempting to balance sexual performances that produce social capital with tenuous 'reputations'. As sexual acts were 'what most people base' coolness on, they were dependant on these acts to maintain a sense of social control.

At Grove, this was also recognised by the girls as a source of power and control that some girls attempted to utilise over boys:

Meredith:	Would you count tease as bullying? Like what girls do to guys? Like sexually teasing them maybe? Like saying they'll put out but not?
Kylie:	Oh yes . . .
Britt:	Yeah
Vic:	Does that go on?
Meredith:	Yes
Kylie:	A lot
Olivia:	And when they don't put out they get called a slut
Jen:	(speaks over) Our school is really messed up!
Kylie:	I know!

(laughter)

Britt:	It is

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Here the girls attempt to examine any forms of power that girls might be able to hold or utilise. Their identification of the power structures that are available to them are questioned: could 'teasing' be counted as 'bullying'?

This indicates their questioning of the nature of bullying and its definitional boundaries, but more specifically it focuses on the avenues of power that are accessible to girls at the school. These, again, are tenuous 'tightropes' (Warrington and Younger 2011) where individuals are required to balance between two complex gendered expectations. The power of the 'reputation' is at stake once more, and what little power was gained over the boys is quickly and easily dispersed through the invocation of 'slut'. The girls recognise that this environment is 'really messed up', yet there is no demonstration of (or propensity for) a serious resistance to it; the girls laugh at their predicament where they have been dispossessed of their social capital.

The requirement of heteronormative interactions with boys extended to epithetic and conflictive performances of girls. The most damaging and pressing conflicts between the girls related to their sexual status, competition and identity, and as such they regulated and shamed one another in this way. The invocation of 'slut' was again a distinctly female-targeted phenomenon in student focus groups, a powerful epithet to regulate girl sexual and social performances. In line with the research of Chambers, Loon and Tincknell (2004) and Pascoe (2007), it became clear that in the lives of girls at Grove and Wilson, 'slut [was] the worst thing a girl could be called' (Pascoe 2007, p. 56). It did not present a discursive construct that was as dominant from the students as it was from the teachers, but together with 'scrub', represented the regulatory frames of females and boundaries of expected performances. The girls at Grove reflected on the common epithets that were utilised at their school, noting that those that were specifically sexual in nature were the more common:

Vic:	We've got name calling for example slut, (laughter) is that kind of standard?
Kylie:	Yes
Jen:	Yeah
Meredith:	Skank, whore, ho
Olivia:	Bitch
Vic:	What else? Just toss them out there

(laughter)

Olivia:	Yeah it's mostly skank, whore and slut, but guys say them
Jen:	I don't think they even know [what they mean] anymore cos they're so dopey
Meredith:	They don't really

(laughter)

Meredith:	They don't call them a slut because they sleep around with everyone . . .
Kylie:	They call them a slut if . . .
Jen:	They don't even know the definition
Kylie:	No, I think they call them a slut because they don't put out
Britt:	Yeah . . . half the time, cos they did the opposite to what they want
Meredith:	Slut gets thrown around at our school very much around out of context like . . .
Kylie:	Yep
Jen:	Everyone just calls everyone a slut
Meredith:	And it's mostly . . . like, the sluts never get called sluts

(laughter)

Jen:	Pretty much it's true

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

The girls here framed the use of 'slut' as largely coming from boys, and additionally recognised that boys often used this for strategic purposes. The deployment of 'slut' was a policing and controlling force, utilised when the girls did not perform as they were required to. Through this construction, and through the inference of slut getting over utilised and 'incorrectly applied', the girls collectively determine that 'slut' is common and not utilised in reference to its original meaning. This outcome again references the definitional power of 'slut', that is, if it isn't utilised with the original definition maintaining integrity, then its utilitarian power is rescinded. The Wilson boys also invoked these understandings:

Daniel:	Everyone uses it [the word slut]
Harry:	It's becoming more common
Daniel:	Like insults aren't viewed as bad, like back when my parents were kids, as an example, if you called someone a slut it was like, seriously bad and you'd get in heaps of trouble and everyone would find out. But today, if you call someone a slut, they'd just go 'eeehhh' and keep walking
James:	Yeah and if a teacher hears it they'd just be like 'hey! Don't use that again.' And then walk off
Daniel:	'Hey, I heard that'
Vic:	So do you think they're less serious terms than others?

Harry: No. They've still got the meaning in the dictionary of what they are. It's just um . . .

Paul: It's just, within context, it's just . . . sort of seen as a passing comment, instead of a more personal, real personal attack on them

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

In this exchange 'slut' is re-constituted as more culturally acceptable and less offensive or damaging. The discourse of 'occurrence and impact' is utilised by the students in a similar way to the teachers; it negates the meanings and responsibility behind deployment. Through this negation, the discourse produced the understanding that students can iterate 'slut' without definitive consequences and its usage becomes an accepted part of the culture.

At Wilson, the girls employed remarkably similar constructions of their experiences of 'slut' deployment. When asked about the occurrence of gender-based harassment at their school, they immediately responded:

Linda: It happens all the time. Every second person you've got, like, you wear your skirt too short and everyone will just turn around and call you a slut

Alice: Yeah everyone . . . slut's so common

Linda: Yeah

Jennifer: Yeah, it's overused

Linda: It's lost its meaning now

Jennifer: Yeah, you get called a . . .

Kathryn: But I think some boys don't understand the actual meaning of it. Like, they just

Jennifer: They just use it as a word, yeah

Kathryn: It's like a normal word, it doesn't mean anything but sometimes people do take it to heart

Linda: Yeah

Jennifer: Like, we never do our hair for school or our makeup, we're just not those kind of people, and like, one day we'll do it and they'll go, 'oh who are you trying to impress?'

Linda: Yeah

Alice: Yeah, definitely, that happens to me as well

Jennifer: And it's just like, well maybe I just wanted to do my hair for once? (laughs) You know, I washed it last night or something, and everyone automatically thinks that you're trying to impress someone or get a boyfriend or something

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

In this excerpt the boys are again framed as not 'understand[ing] the actual meaning of it', and that they 'use it as a word', 'like a normal word' that 'doesn't mean anything'. Although this discussion is in the reference of 'slut', there is a distinct construction of boys as either innocent or aloof as their utilisation of the term is produced as unintentional. The girls position them as unknowing of the damage that they can cause as 'sometimes people do take it to heart'. What is of further relevance, however, is their discursive link between 'slut' and their everyday performances such as doing hair or makeup or how they wear their skirt. Following the discussion of slut deployment, the girls immediately move to representations of femininity as tied to sexuality and sexual acts. By stating that 'we're just not those kind of people' Jennifer positions and 'others' those that do perform these particular 'stylised acts' as embodying an abject identity. When the girls from the group engage with these activities, their (hetero)sexuality is immediately foregrounded through assumptions that they are 'trying to impress' others. The girls become sexualised and objectified through being positioned as attempting to catch boys through using various materials and bodily performances. This reflects that the girls were defined solely by their bodies and sexuality, with serious implications for their identity and life at school. While Jennifer disclaims that 'we're just not those kind of people', this statement reiterates the understanding that girls who do engage with hair, makeup and 'short skirts' are those who are attempting to 'impress someone or get a boyfriend or something'. Indeed, these disclamations function to illustrate the tiers of meaning within the discourses; where some displays of femininity are accepted, and others require contextual understandings, such as self-identifying as 'sporty people who couldn't care what we look like' (Wilson HS: Female student focus group).

One foundation of aggression that was both produced and experienced by the girls in this research was clearly based upon determination of how females lived up to or failed in their femininity. One representation that of a failure (a difference from the norm) was that of 'scrubs', a term encountered within the female focus groups at Wilson when they were discussing individuals who were targets of bullying:

Jennifer:	And like the ones who are the scrubs I think they get targeted too
Linda:	Yeah
Vic:	When you say scrubs, just clarify that for me
	[…]

Bec:	Kind of like, dirty people
	(laughter)
Bec:	Like, they just don't look clean
	(laughter)
Vic:	Some country people say townies, or like, bogans or like … is it kind of like that?
Alice:	Yeah sort of
Bec:	It's kind of like that
Jennifer:	It's people who like …
Alice:	Slobby …
Jennifer:	Some of them are like skanks with the big makeup and like, the black eyes. And there's other people who you can just tell have worn the same shirt like three days in a row
Linda:	Yeah
Jennifer:	And they're wearing the same shoes that they wore in year 7, they've got a bag from Big W or things like that that people like, just stereotype like a scrub, but like, they might be nice, they might be the nicest people in the world, but straight away people are like, 'I'm not gonna talk to you, you wore that shirt yesterday', like, you know, just little things like that

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

'Scrubs' was a localised term that was restricted to Wilson high's social and geographical setting. Although the teachers had been aware of its deployment and suggested that it had racial undertones I was unaware of those perceptions at the time of this focus group and therefore did not pursue a line of questioning that may have exposed the rationale or power of the label further. Indeed, I was trying to ascertain what the girls were describing as it was a novel word to me as well. To the girls, however, it was a well-recognised and commonly utilised term, despite their difficulty in producing a comprehensive (and illustrative) definition. This showed that the understanding was well ingrained into their language and social settings and was potentially flexible; a constitutive outside that could be inferred for a range of deviations from the norm. The example proffered by Jennifer of 'skanks with the big makeup and like, the black eyes' demonstrated that makeup and sexual performances (where skank is semantically linked with slut) represent one aspect of the scrub. The other relates to performances and expectations of socio-economic status, wealth or class.

The deployment of 'scrub' therefore shows further regulatory practices that were in place at Wilson. The girls were surveilled, yet at the same time adjudicated and policed others on performative divergences from 'the norm' – both gendered and classed. Personality became irrelevant in the face of these performances such as wearing a particular style of make-up, a bag or repeated wearing of the same shirt. These aspects defined who was in, and who was out. Those who were out were excluded and dismissed with immediate effect, through the simple measure of not talking (silence, exclusion). These concerns were also continually observed and regulated by discourse and talk, illustrated by the understanding that a significant part of their bullying performances were caused by 'gossip' and 'jealousy':

Vic:	Gossip and jealousy about what?
Kathryn:	Everything
Jennifer:	Um, what boy you're dating, what colour's your hair, how long your hair is
Kathryn:	Oh!
Bec:	Weight
Jennifer:	The biggest!
Bec:	Weight issues
Alice:	Weight, yes
Jennifer:	Oh! Your body
Linda:	If you've worn your hair the same way twice in two days
Jennifer:	Yeah
Linda:	Jealousy is about like . . .
Bec:	Usually about guys . . . and how you look

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Here the girls constructed their reality of continual surveillance and arbitration. Physical displays of hair and body weight combined with knowledge of intimate relationships to form the substance of 'gossip and jealousy' demonstrating that these aspects represented social and performative importance to the girls.

The ownership and social capital gains of 'girls' therefore relied on their outward displays of promoted and intelligible femininity. They were required to observe rules of 'fitting in' to particular sexual categories (balancing a tightrope between being sexually resistant and a slut), social groups (maintaining relationships with socially powerful boys and resisting friendships with undesirable girls) and socio-economic classes.

Moving outside of these categories resulted in epithet deployment or social exclusions that simultaneously regulated individual capabilities and movements while communicating boundaries and norms to others. This was demonstrated by the boys at Grove:

Vic: What about when boys and girls are trying to insult each other, or say something degrading, what kind of stuff goes on there?...
Andrew: Especially from the guys, you know, you're fat, and that sends them off
Sam: You're fat, you're a slut, just that kind of stuff

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Male student focus group)</div>

The prominence of epithets that were directed towards girls (from boys or other girls) that were related to physical attributes or sexual reputations further demonstrated the performative pressures for females that were continually constituted through discourse. As the power of girls was determined through the patriarchal environment and their objectification, the strength of 'slut', 'scrub' and 'fat' lay within the reality of failure and subsequent abjection in these areas. Through attacks on their aesthetic performances or ability to meet social guidelines, the girls experienced increased vulnerability and the real risks of falling off the 'tightrope' of social inclusion. This was particularly problematic when the boys were able to use misogyny as a legitimate tactic to gain social capital. The subjugation and persecution of girls in both schools were almost ensured by the social structures and pressures that manifested from the operating gendered expectations.

DISCOURSES: 'GIRLS'

(Girl) Inferiority

Male students invoked the discourse of inferiority, and as they contributed to the majority of the productions, it became a prominent discourse. 'Girls' were constructed as inferior social managers that took part in unnecessary conflict in ways that were unlikely to lead to resolution. They were also constructed as socially indirect in their relationships, resulting in 'rumours' and 'bitchiness' as they communicated 'behind the back' of others in negative ways. These behaviours were portrayed as increasing 'self-consciousness' and 'suspicion' that lead to 'massive fights' that were 'all over the place'. Their conflicts

were also seen as inferior even when they moved into more masculine realms of violence such as physical aggression. In these cases their 'scratch matches' were positioned as 'entertaining' and subsequently as harmless and comical.

This discourse draws from themes of post-feminism that relate to understandings of girls' inherent manipulative and competitive urges. These are produced as intertwining in 'mean' and 'successful' girl discourses and become 'the logical conclusion of inserting the feminine into the masculine rational worlds of education . . . where feminine lack and indirectness adds up to feminine pathology' (Ringrose 2013, p. 35). The discourse itself rests on these foundations of 'lack and indirectness'.

Action Orientation

This discourse specifically functions to negate the importance of girls' experiences through classing their sources of conflict as substantively lacking and relating to superficial concerns, rendering their conflicts as unnecessary and irresponsible. Girl 'bitch fights' were positioned as a form of entertainment for the boys, perhaps a reflection and affirmation of the status of females on the social hierarchy in relation to males (further illustrated during the following discourse of intelligible femininity and through the remainder of this chapter). Compared to male conflicts, there was less significance and potential of danger or damage with female conflicts, especially when framed in terms of physicality. Through using specific ways of framing female fights such as 'entertaining' and semantic deployments of 'scratch match[es]', the boys' accounts functioned to illustrate the inadequacy of (failed) female attempts to be physically violent.

Constructions of girl conflicts therefore reproduced male identities through the illustration of non-male ways of being; that is, they were identified through their departure from the norm or standard of male–male fighting, rather than in their own right. The ideal mode of physical violence is constructed as a specifically male act, and female experiences are positioned as being of lesser value or significance. This sets up the feminine norm as indirect and non-violent. Although this positions females to participate in violence in 'relational' or 'indirect' ways, it also negates the ability of females to participate in physical violence to an extent of harm, damage or 'seriousness'.

Positioning

In each of the above discursive representations, 'girls' are portrayed as being inherently responsible for their own negative social experiences. They are cast as the persecutors and the persecuted, positioning their conflict and suffering as internally applicable to their specific grouped population. 'Bitchiness' was constituted as a definitively 'girl' phenomenon; boys played no part in it and literally 'walked away' when it occurred. They discussed their disdain towards these performances and subtly implied that conflicts between girls could be far more successfully managed in direct ways where there are no insidious 'grudges', rather than 'behind the back'. Through this pathologisation and blame of the girls, the boys contributed to the construction of an oppositional gendered grouping of individuals, of 'girls'.

This produced a hierarchy of social management where boys were positioned as responsible social managers of 'real' problems or 'serious' issues, and girls problems were laughable, their conflict 'entertaining' and unnecessary. Through boy discourse, girls are positioned as entertainers while boys are equally positioned as knowledgeable observers, offering continuous critique of their performances. As the purveyors of social and discursive capital due to their position in the patriarchal hierarchy, this is a significant position – their discourses are somewhat reflected by the teachers.

Practice

The discourse produces expectations for both males and females. While interacting with females, males are continuously required to monitor their behaviours and to 'walk away' if these behaviours are deemed bitchy (unacceptably feminine). The subject positions that are created by the males, therefore, value specific, continuous relational performances.

Females simultaneously have practical options minimalised through this discourse. Their conflicts are consistently positioned as superficial, unnecessary and even laughable. Each of these productions closes down options for them to feel or communicate discomfort or concern with particular aggressions, lest they be dismissed or ridiculed. Their options for confronting these conflicts are also complicated through gendered understandings of girls as indirect. If they are to directly approach a conflict, this may call into question their own gender performance, positioning them as unintelligible as girls. Finally, their options for discursively respected (masculine) modes of conflict (physical violence) are revoked

through the discursive construction of girls 'doing' fighting. They are unable to produce respected physical performances while their violence is constructed as 'entertaining' or as a 'scratch match'.

Subjectivity

The subjective experiences of both boys and girls are implicated in the discourse of inferiority. Indeed, this discourse contributes to understandings of social hierarchy, physical and social worth and autonomy. As boys are produced as owners and regulators of conflict, girls are equally and oppositely denigrated. It could be argued that boys could feel a sense of supremacy, confidence and authority over girls and their social realities. Their discursive performances do tend to indicate that their subjective position was superior to that of 'girls'. Simultaneously, the girls may experience feelings of dismissal, rejection and patronisation as their lived experiences of conflict, aggression and persecution are rejected (or ridiculed) as being meaningless, harmless or entertaining. They may also sense a lack of autonomy and a feeling of frustration as their interactions are constantly judged and arbitrated by others outside of their immediate settings.

The sense of surveillance, judgement and arbitration that they may experience is also relevant to the following discourse of 'intelligible femininity'.

Intelligible Femininity and Disciplinary Power

This discourse considers similar themes that were detailed within the discourse of 'intelligible masculinity and disciplinary power' that was utilised in the discursive construction of 'boys'. However, the intelligible femininities of girls were more complex and fragile than those of intelligible masculinity. Popularity and social capital, the markers of intelligibility, were more tenuous and diverse, reflecting that the girls' 'power comes from the ability to invoke the unspoken 'rules' that police the boundaries of acceptable femininity' (Currie et al. 2007, p. 23). Girls were more frequently exposed to a wider range of damaging epithets and had complex expectations of image, wealth, class, sexuality and social performances. Each of these contributed to understandings of what it was to be a girl, and what it was to be successful as a girl. There were a series of 'demands, taboos, sanctions, injunctions, prohibitions, impossible idealizations, and threats – performative speech acts, as it were, that wield the power to produce the field of culturally viable sexual

subjects' (Butler 1993, p. 106). Each of these performative acts functioned to establish social and performative boundaries of 'girls', and to illustrate the consequences of moving outside of these accepted regimes. When these were departed from, 'the whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable' (Foucault 1991, p. 179), referencing 'disciplinary power'.

An important part of this discourse was the subtle but consistent deference to boys as the holders and distributors of social capital. There were definite understandings that 'coolness' and popularity were achievable through interactions with a certain group of boys, and that girls were required to meet these boys' demands (social, aesthetic/bodily and sexual) if they were to maintain their status.

Action Orientation
This discourse produced 'culturally viable sexual objects' (Butler 1993, p. 106) through 'stylised acts'. 'Girls' were repeatedly iterated as heterosexual subjects (or objects) and their actions were continually related back to their sexual performances – both in terms of sexual acts and aesthetic qualities. Disclosures around social capital or 'coolness' illustrated that sexual performances were the only sources of power that girls were able to access. These were framed as being related to boy desire; it was only 'cool' 'because the boys want it'. Their bodies were produced as sites of desire or projects that were continually surveilled and regulated through a wide range of discursive strategies. Sometimes the pleasures of investing in these aspects were undermined by the anxieties, pressures and discourses of 'keeping up appearances' (Renold 2005).

One of the strategies that promoted these understandings of expectation and surveillance was the utilisation of 'slut' and 'scrub' as markers of intelligible boundaries. These epithets defined the line between 'fitting in' and an unintelligible femininity. The girls were required to manage 'an impossible set of demands to be attractive but not inappropriately sexual' (Ringrose 2013, p. 93). Those who failed to meet these demands were swiftly labelled and abjected regardless of their other characteristics, even if 'they might be the nicest people in the world'. As 'slut' functioned to police sexual performances, 'scrub' simultaneously demonstrated the boundaries of class and wealth using judgements of consumerism and aesthetic performances such as hair, makeup, clothing and accessories. These classed undertones showed how gendered and classed discourses continually asserted expectations of social performance and the repercussions of failure.

Positioning

As girls became positioned as culturally viable sexual objects, boys became users of these objects in both social and sexual ways. The girls from Wilson phrased this positioning eloquently as being constituted as 'a rag doll'. This (re)generated a powerful patriarchy, where the 'girls' power was firmly rooted in the approval and distribution of social capital from boys. 'Boys' constituted their actions and reactions at all stages. Girl social power and autonomy was minimal as compared to that of the boys', and they were positioned significantly lower on the social hierarchy. Their dialogue also indicated that although pejoratives were labelled as 'indirect' or 'not serious', they still produced significant positional and practical effects on those that were subjected to it. The 'boy' culture that is 'obsessed' with understandings of penis size and sexual performance continually functions to silence the desires, autonomy and consent of girls. Within a collectively degrading setting of masculinity, the girls become 'a rag doll', dispossessed of their sexual ownership or of any say at all in sexual encounters. When this integrates with the understandings of status (e.g. a boy is a 'hero' and a girl is 'trashy' when interacting sexually), it becomes obvious that sexual intimacy is fraught with danger for girls. Although they were able to identify the sexist culture that they resided within, the girls' discursive platform and wider social reality failed to facilitate the ability or a willingness to confront or alter it. The pervasive nature of discourse withdrew any possible foundation for disruption.

Practice

Practically this environment is fraught with danger for girls. As they are objectified and their autonomy and consent is disregarded, they are in a highly vulnerable situation. They rely on their sexuality to ensure their social status, yet simultaneously have their consent, autonomy and desires disregarded due to the discourse constructing these aspects as irrelevant. As their options to negotiate about sex are diminished, they are likely to be corralled into situations where they have few (or no) allies, and may face the disturbing reality of sexual assault or a disregard of their consent. If this does happen, the dominance of the discourses that operate will reduce their chances for reporting or railing against an assault. They may be constructed as a 'slut' with various allocations of blame and little consideration of their lived experiences.

Their relationships or friendships with other girls also become insecure in the discursive culture that expects them to reject same-sex friendships in

the face of gaining social capital. 'Picking sides' in conflicts in strategic moves to increase social standings becomes common practice and the understanding of the 'mean' and 'successful' girls who 'compete with each other because of inherent, manipulative competitive urges' (Ringrose 2013, p. 34) develops and expands into common sense notions of females.

Subjectivity

This discourse was particularly oppressive of difference or diversity in girls' performances, especially when it came to female autonomy and desire. With the boundaries of accepted performances around sexuality, physicality, social processes and socioeconomic status, girls were required to 'fit in' with constrictive expectations that, if broken, had significant consequences. Their subjective experience may therefore include a sense of being trapped and of excessive social expectations that dictate every area of their life. They may also understand their reliance on boys to succeed in this social reality and alter their performances to allow for this – affecting and producing compulsory heterosexuality. When we also consider the ways that their lived experience is dismissed and ridiculed, and their increased potential for being in situations that may not respect their consent or autonomy, this is an extremely pressured and distressing environment. At the same time, girls have no avenues to express this distress or concern.

BULLYING

As a construct 'bullying' represented distinct difference from interweaving understandings of 'conflict'. Conflict was produced as a general form of negative social interactions or altercations that occurred constantly and day to day. As such, conflictive interactions were included alongside social realities of 'boys' and 'girls' and had implications for their gendered subjectivities. In comparison to this understanding of conflict, 'bullying' represented particular definitions that were different to those of conflict and held different institutional and social implications.

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION: BULLYING

One of the first themes that became evident in participant responses regarding this construct was a sense of confusion around terms and definitions, aligning with tensions in the academic arena. It was difficult

for participants to reach consensus about what bullying or harassment was either within their groups or between the groups.

Max:	Well the line between them is kind of blurred, because they can be the same thing or they might not be . . . Like, harassment can be like asking people for dates multiple times, and getting rejected, but you keep going at it
Andrew:	But that's not bullying
Max:	Yeah, that's not bullying, that's harassment, but like – the line's kind of blurred. Cause like, bullying them, you are harassing them
Andrew:	Yeah
Sam:	It's just more kind of intense

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Male student focus group)</div>

Linda:	Isn't harassment like, when you just . . .
Alice:	When you're just pissed off maybe
Linda:	Yeah
Alice:	Bullying's really caring
Jennifer:	Yeah, bullying happens longer, whereas, I dunno. They both come in all different types I guess, which is hard to separate them because they're both really similar

<div align="right">(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)</div>

Jen:	Can't harassment lead into bullying but?
Meredith:	(speaks over) Harassment could be toward your face
Kylie:	(speaks over) Always in your face, always just . . .
Olivia:	(speaks over) Like saying stuff straight to you
Meredith:	(speaks over) Like annoying
Jen:	Bullying or bitching could be behind your back, and it's like rude
Meredith:	I thought harassment was kind of like . . . annoying . . . Harassment like annoying you so much that you can't take it, and then it leads into bullying
Olivia:	Yeah
Jen:	I thought harassment would be after bullying
Britt:	Oh
Jen:	Cos there's things like physical harassment and sexual harassment and . . .
Britt:	Oh yeah

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Female student focus group)</div>

Daniel:	Bullying and harassment . . . where's my thesaurus damn it!

Vic:	It's funny that you've heard them so often . . .
Daniel:	But they then have no meaning
James:	What do you mean they have no meaning Dan?
Daniel:	Well, we hear them so often that . . .
Matthew:	Would bullying be a smaller scale than harassment?
Daniel:	Yeah wouldn't harassment be . . . it depends on what type of harassment

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

These conversations showed that both bullying and harassment were terms that were well known to student participants, and in some cases participants reflected on their saturation in popular and institutional discourses. Despite this saturation across both schools, the students had difficulty allocating definitive or practical meanings to the terms. This could indicate that 'bullying' in its traditional essentialist representations may not reflect the contemporary aggressions of students, and therefore the term becomes irrelevant when viewed against more common forms of conflict.

Some of the constructions of 'bullying' among students therefore defined and differentiated between what could be seen as bullying and what was excluded from the definition. One of these was a recurring theme across both schools – the production of 'joking'. 'Jokes' were produced as an intermediary between regular social interactions and bullying:

Max:	Sometimes like, things that wouldn't normally be seen as harassment can be interpreted as harassment by certain people that are more sensitive than others
Andrew:	Mmm
Vic:	Okay, like what?
Max:	Oh gee I've gotta think . . . like, say we're making a joke, and some girl's over there and she listens and she's like [high voice] 'that is sexist!', like, that's an example, and she'll probably go to the teacher or something
Sam:	But it's not
Max:	That's an example of non-serious harassment
Rob:	It wasn't directed at her
Andrew:	But that's more bullying wouldn't it be?
Max:	If she doesn't like it she shouldn't listen

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

Matthew: Yeah there are a couple, I spose it happens nearly all the time, just little things like, just people just go a step too far and start like, getting on people's minds, like, I dunno, people say stuff and next thing you know someone's taken it to heart and it's really hurtin' em
[. . .]
James: But that happens a lot with boys, boys are always joking around with each other, and knock each other around and then they'll go that one step too far

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

What is interesting here is that these are two moments of aggression/conflict/persecution that the boys self-identify and reflect upon – yet they do not qualify as 'bullying'. Instead, both groups contend that it is joking – normative boy behaviour. Max's representation of 'we're making a joke' that was at the expense of 'some girl' due to its sexist nature affirms that it is also often between boys but can also target girls (and that sexism has comedic potential). Immediately the girl who takes offence is positioned as at fault as the comments weren't 'directed at her' and 'if she doesn't like it she shouldn't listen'. This account begins to illustrate the complexity of these moments, and the ways that discourse effectively opens up and closes down opportunities for disruption.

Max from Grove furthered this dimension of 'joking', through rationalising that his inherent qualities prevented him from being hurt:

Max: Well I don't really perceive things as harassment that other people would, like, more easy going. So I can't really think of anything

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

His production illustrates that it is a specific kind of person who is affronted by normative social behaviours, positioning the blame solely upon the person who is 'over-sensitive'. It also fails to recognise that some are more at risk of 'jokes' than he is, and that his personal situation or performance may have prevented many jokes from being invoked.

The explicit descriptions of those who can't take jokes were representative of more subtle understandings of joking that included things like 'laughing it off' as necessary social skills, and positioning those who were unable to participate in the joke as socially awkward or deficient.

At both schools, joking that caused conflict or discomfort among female students took the form of 'kitchen jokes' that were continually produced by boys, but again had complex positional implications.

Max:	Well like, sort of feminist jokes? That can be seen as harassment by some girls even though it's a joke
Vic:	What do you mean?
Max:	You see some girl coming towards you and you're like 'get back in the kitchen' or something like that
Andrew:	(laughs)
Max:	Like, they just laugh most of the time, but if they take it the wrong way
Sam:	Some of them are really serious about it
Max:	It can end up in disaster
	[. . .]
Max:	Like, it's probably a step below harassment; it's more of a joke
Andrew:	Yeah
Sam:	Yeah, it's a joke and they take it serious

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

In this example it is the prerogative of the (girl) respondent to get the reaction 'right'. While the girls at Grove didn't specifically reflect on their experiences of these 'jokes', the Wilson girls demonstrated that although they were affected, they often went along with them anyway:

Alice:	The other thing that's so annoying, you know how all the guys make jokes about girls being in the kitchen?

(groans from group)

Bec:	I hate that!
Alice:	I hate those jokes!
Linda:	I hate that! It's the worst thing in the whole entire world
Jennifer:	Yeah, sexist jokes
Vic:	Tell me about them
Bec:	Oh just like, you'll say something and they'll go 'no, go back to the kitchen' or like, 'no, go make a sandwich'
Alice:	Yeah, like you'll say you're doing something and they'll be like 'well why were you out of the kitchen?'
Jennifer:	Yeah like all women should just stay in the kitchen and not be in society

Linda:	Or in the laundry or something like they're like 'you don't need your license, there's no road from the laundry to the kitchen' or something like that
Bec:	Yeah
Alice:	It's funny, like you laugh at it but ...
Linda:	If it's directed at you, you're just like
Bec:	Yeah, shut up

<div align="right">(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)</div>

The understanding of joining in with this laughing was of social importance to many of the participants, especially the boys:

Rob:	Oh and I just thought of Mia, how she plays
Sam:	Mia yeah, she plays sport
Andrew:	Mia, yeah, I was about to say the same thing
Rob:	She's very aggressive
Sam:	We call her butch
Max:	She doesn't look too manly
Sam:	She doesn't really even care, she just kind of laughs it off because like, because we don't mean it, and she knows it
Liam:	Like it's just a joke sort of thing, yeah

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Male student focus group)</div>

Harry:	Um, someone being called Asian? For the last, two years is it?
Daniel & James:	(snickering)
James:	Oh it's not funny, why are you laughing?
Daniel:	Cos you're laughing!
James:	It's true though, we shouldn't laugh
Daniel:	No we shouldn't laugh
James:	We're all guilty of it
Daniel:	But it's sort of, they say something to you so you sort of say it back and then they say it back to you again and it's sort of back and forth, until someone eventually takes it too far and ...
Matthew:	Verbal tennis. People went in to the back of court
James:	I mean even Daniel, Dan's got pecs [chest muscles] and we all say
Daniel:	They call me boobs
James:	Yeah we call him boobs, do you find that, do you take that ...

Daniel:	I don't find it offensive
James:	Good cos I'm going to continue joking around with that (laughs)
Daniel:	Like when we call you a lanky bastard you don't take that to heart
James:	Exactly! I'm cool with that
Daniel:	I suppose being called Asian isn't very nice though
Harry:	No, cos of someone's physical properties

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

In these examples it became clear that there were some aspects that were acceptable realms of joking and some that weren't. Gendered or bodily displays were 'court' that could be safely covered. Calling a 'sporty' and 'aggressive' girl 'butch' was acceptable, especially because she is positioned as being unhurt, she laughs with the joke and because the boys say that their intention is not to harm – they don't mean it. Laughing it off becomes an important aspect of joking; those who laugh it off effectively join in with the joke, and the possibility for harm is removed. Instead of being hurtful, it becomes 'just a joke'. Equally, someone being called 'boobs' because he has developed pectoral muscles or calling someone 'lanky' because he is skinnier and taller than others is acceptable, largely because the objects and others 'join in' on the joke. Their discursive strategy incorporated a repertoire of 'underestimation', changing the violent meaning of bullying or harassment through illustrating it as a harmless interaction (Teräsahjo and Salmivalli 2003). They use their own experiences as proof that it is just a game and that they are all willing participants.

The realm of acceptability is departed from, however, when racial aspects are invoked. 'Being called Asian isn't very nice though' marks this movement across a boundary between joking and causing offence. It shows that the speakers are active in defining what things are allowed and what are not. This line was explicitly recognised by the boys at Grove:

Sam:	So like, if we were sitting down there and someone said a racist joke, everyone would be kind of like 'whoa', step back. But if it was just kind of like a sexist joke, everyone would be like 'yeah, okay cool', and move on. But . . . things like that
Liam:	The racial ones they take it . . . they take it hard, like they believe that they shouldn't say anything about it, and it's wrong

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

This example showed that joking had boundaries within the group, and racism was one of those boundaries. Aspects of sexism or gender were constructed as free rein and resulted in on-going jokes about variations or subscriptions to gendered norms. As boys were the main producers of these jokes, it was understood that no girl was safe, regardless of their position in the social hierarchy:

> *Linda*: They even pick on the popular girls, like they even throw comments around them. And like, half the time, a lot of the time they're joking, but they're just . . . they're really hurtful
>
> (Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

This may have been due to the assumption that intelligible masculinity entailed the performance of misogyny. In spite of this, joking didn't only have negative consequences for girls. Boys were also constructed as using it as a strategic 'out' in terms of their responsibility for bullying events.

> *James*: . . . in my wood work class, there's this one big group . . . and their goal is to pretty much bully people . . . . And there's this one kid . . . he's tiny . . . and they just pick on him. And we had this one free period one time and that whole hour . . . they picked on him, picked on him, picked on him – like always. And they made it out like it was a joke, that's what they do. Like they'll push him around and say 'nah . . . nah bra, I'm jokin', and then like five minutes later they'll go and do it again
>
> (Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

In this excerpt, James shows that individuals can utilise 'joking' with teachers and with other students to negate their responsibility or role in causing harm or distress. The repetitive nature of these acts – 'that's what they do' – shows that it is an effective strategy that groups can repeatedly deploy to evade repercussions. Harry from Wilson also identified that joking or the consequences that it produced could be particularly damaging in the context of 'bullying'. He interpreted joking as either bullying or the precursor for bullying performances, yet the teachers either resisted or found it difficult to recognise or respond to:

> *Harry*: . . . it's a thing that commonly occurs throughout the school. You don't have to look hard to see it, and somehow teachers

half the time don't see it, I don't think they know what bullying looks like. And I don't think that they understand that a kid's not going to go to a teacher they hardly even know about an incident as well. So many of them go unchecked by teachers

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Harry's construct of bullying recognised a zone of difference between students and teachers, where students understood power plays or negative social interactions as taking a number of forms yet teachers didn't 'know what bullying looks like'. This was affirmed by the rest of his group later in the transcript, and through the boys group at Grove:

Vic:	Okay, so…you said even if it's in the class right in front of them, they don't intervene?
	[…]
Daniel:	…they're not sure whether it's joking around or serious. Some teachers are really strict on it but others…most others…
Matthew:	Yeah there's some teachers where they're too strict, and most of the time it is joking around, and then there's ones that aren't joking around

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Max:	Some of them say they'll crack down on it, but when they crack down on it they miss the target, like completely
Vic:	What do you mean?
Max:	Like say
Sam:	They'll either get the wrong person…
Max:	Yeah, like say we're bullying each other, well they think we're bullying, we're just joking, they pick on us. That happened once in year 7
Andrew:	Once? (laughs) Remember when they tried to put us, me and you, on a bullying slip? (laughs)

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

The girls from Wilson raised similar constructions when discussing when teachers would intervene in cases of bullying:

Jennifer:	They're kind of out of the loop? Like, I dunno, some of our teachers are really old, and they don't

Alice:	Pick up on things
Jennifer:	They don't pick up on things that aren't a joke
Kathryn:	Yep
Jennifer:	Whereas we know, as soon as you take it too far we all know when you've taken it too far, but teachers are kind of one step behind, kind of thing, and they get there too late
Linda:	Or they'll be the opposite, and they'll stop it like, when it is still a joke and everyone's still laughing
Jennifer:	Yeah – they're either one extreme or the other

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

They also suggested that teachers allowed bullying to happen at the school when 'it's a joke, or when the person that it's happened to thinks it's a joke' (Wilson HS: Female student focus group). If teachers were convinced (wholly or partially) that there was not an inherent desire for individuals to harm, and that the actions were occurring in a context of 'banter' or humour, students potentially escaped some or all responsibility. The student awareness of this happening to themselves or others showed that joking could be recognised as a distinct strategy to utilise when required.

It became apparent that bullying and its associated understanding of 'joking' emerged from understandings of difference or the failure to fit in. Jokes illustrated and ridiculed individuals' departure from dominant regimes of power. Being 'Jewish', 'Asian' or 'gay' were distinct examples of these departures, and significantly so was being female or departing from intelligible femininity. Bullying similarly sprung from these differences and moved across the subjective line of the 'joke'.

These constructions illustrated a reality of socio-cultural expectations, acceptability and coherent performances. They were derived from the production of social structures including 'fitting in', being 'cool' and the more hierarchical investments of 'popularity'. Understandings of bullying were further produced from students' differentiations between those who were bullied, were not bullied and those who demonstrated bullying behaviours.

Vic:	What about people who get bullied? What do they have in common?
Max:	They have a brain
Andrew:	Oh . . . a little more socially awkward

Liam:	Yeah, they tend to be different, in like . . . any kind of way
Andrew:	Or unique
Max:	If they're different that's probably why we pick on them
Andrew:	Or exuberant in like, a certain manner that's different to . . . the main
Rob:	Normal, yeah, normal
Andrew:	The main stream
Rob:	That would be classified as normal
Andrew:	The cool kids

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

Vic:	What do kids do or talk about or look like if they're getting bullied?
Daniel:	They go to parties because they're trying to fit in
James:	They'll do anything they can to fit in
Daniel:	And be cool
James:	Yep, I know one kid who get's bullied, the one being called Jew – he'll go to a party and he'll come back to school and he will brag and he will try and tell everyone that he's been to a party so they will know and find out . . . and they'll maybe thing 'hey, he's alright'. I know he tries to try and fit in with that.

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

In these two examples, the students discursively constructed that there were categories of 'normal', 'main stream' and 'cool'. These were, at time, synonymous; 'main stream' 'would be classified as normal' which is 'the cool kids'. Equally, those that were constructed as the receivers of bullying were constructed as those who existed outside of this category; they were 'different' to 'the main' in 'any kind of way', and that was 'probably why we pick on them'. It became imperative for these individuals to 'fit in' 'and be cool' – so much so that they would 'do anything they can to fit in'.

At Grove, the girls constructed that bullies usually took the form of:

Jen:	A popular person
Kylie:	Yep
Meredith:	They kind of intimidate you
Jen:	They know everyone will follow their opinion
Kylie:	What they do, yeah
Meredith:	What they do, other people will back them up
Kylie:	And if someone thinks something they follow them

Meredith:	And the other people think they're cool if they say something horrible to one of the weird kids
Britt:	Yeah
Meredith:	So they do it just for the other people to have shits and giggles about it

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Here the 'bullies' were known as those who were popular; they had social support in that 'everyone will follow their opinion' and 'what they do'. This provided them with social power, as 'other people will back them up' and became intimidating. Status was also tied up with performances that demonstrated this power, like 'say[ing] something horrible to one of the weird kids'. Power was cyclically produced and deployed through these performances to inform social capital and insertion points onto the hierarchy. The 'weird kids' represented the bottom of the social strata; their persecution (and repudiation) ensured that those at the top were continually rendered powerful. The 'weirdos' also had distinct discursive implications placed upon them:

Olivia:	...there's the group that people call the weirdos or the ferals or the uncool kids. Like I like a lot of them
Meredith:	Yeah...they're all really nice but...
Olivia:	(speaks over) It's just because they don't fit in
Meredith:	Yeah there are some of them that are very very very off, like you avoid them because you think they will hurt you or something

(all laugh)

Meredith:	Umm...but there's ones that are just quiet and aren't obviously very good at making friends and a lot of the cool kids just give them shit constantly
Britt:	There's that pregnant one in there too

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Vic:	So when you're talking about students who get bullied in the weird group, do you think it's associated with any particular activities they do, or how they look or...
Meredith:	They're really individual
	...
Britt:	I think their interests are different
Kylie:	Yeah, compared to other people...
Britt:	They don't play sport like everyone else does...
Meredith:	The popular group bullying I think is based a lot on looks...

Jen:	Looks, yes
Meredith:	Looks and like...cos most of the people in the weird group don't really do sport
Kylie:	Nup
Meredith:	They sit and play video games

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Female student focus group)</div>

One of the main constitutions of what it is to be a 'weirdo' is that although 'they're all really nice', 'they don't fit in'. This was asserted as occurring through non-normative social interactions, different interests or being unique/individual. Finally it may be because of their looks, activities or status; people that 'sit and play video games', and 'don't really do sport', and 'there's that pregnant one in there too'. In these ways the girls rationalise that 'other people' represent a normative and promoted standard where 'weirdos' represent a departure from this norm. These departures represent their social worth and their hierarchical status is assigned in reference to these. Their deviance is produced as the rationale behind their bullying, and the students' constructions emphasise the pressure to conform and the personal failure (and thus deservedness of bullying) of those who do not. 'Fitting in' and being 'popular' indicated that someone was ascribing to and meeting these standards:

Vic:	So what does fitting in look like?
Meredith:	You have to have perfect clothes and perfect hair
Kylie:	Yeah
Britt:	Yeah
Olivia:	Perfect everything
Jen:	Even though they aren't perfect
Meredith:	And like...
Jen:	They're really not
Olivia:	The latest things out and stuff like that

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Female student focus group)</div>

Max:	Yeah, like at a public school to be popular you have to do drugs, have sex...do all this other stuff by the age of fourteen...like, if you see the popular group that sits down there, you should see all the stuff they get up to. Like, they've got more friends than anyone
Vic:	So they're popular because of what they do?
	[...]

Andrew: They act the way they want other people to see them, not who they are themselves . . . like, cause they get by themselves, like, they'll go away from their group and to us, and they're like, totally different to the way they act over there

Rob: Yeah, when they're by their self they're good, but as soon as they're with their mates, they just . . .

Liam: Yeah, they change personality completely

Vic: So how do they want other people to see them?

Rob: As the popular kids

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

There were distinct performative requirements for individuals who wanted to 'fit in' and remain 'in'. The students understood aspects of subjectivity and identity that particular productions of meaning could be strategically deployed at various times to achieve various aims. Here, Andrew talks about the popular kids wanting to be seen in a particular way, and therefore performing in a particular space, as if on stage. When they moved 'off stage' or were not surrounded by similar actors, their performances changed again.

Understandings of expectations for social standings also included academic performances:

Bec: Smart people . . . get bullied, like the really, really smart people

Alice: But they're like the smart ones that don't really mingle

Linda: That don't want to talk, yeah

Bec: Antisocial, yeah

Linda: Like there's Josh like, he's smart, but he's normal

Alice: Yeah that's the same as James

Jennifer: Yeah, it's the people that don't . . . I think the people that get bullied here are the ones that don't have many social skills . . . and people skills, cos people just think that they're either being rude to them or . . . but really they don't really know how to interact with people

Bec: And people that don't have any confidence

Alice: Yeah

Linda: If you're super smart and sporty no-one cares, but if you're like just really smart and you just want to do homework all the time, everyone . . .

Jennifer: Teases you

Linda: Calls you a nerd all the time (Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Matthew:	I reckon if you get bullied your school work's gonna drop off because you're gonna want to fit in a bit more so you'll start trying to get worse grades so that you're fitting in with every-one else
Daniel:	Yeah, that's true
Vic:	So you fit in more if you have worse grades?
Harry:	Oh yeah

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Engagement with creative arts was also implicated in the performances of the 'popular group':

Sam:	Nah, music art and drama, that's lower [in their priorities] than school work
Liam:	School work? Nah
Sam:	Nah, seriously, who do you know that does music, art and drama? Like
Liam:	(laughs) Sophie Ellis?
Sam:	Does she?
Liam:	I dunno
Rob:	She does not!
Sam:	None of them do

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

These excerpts demonstrated the participants' collective knowledge about the popular group and their performative boundaries. They knew who engaged with particular activities and which ones were not acceptable to them. Their constructions demonstrated their investment in surveillance and their embedded roles in the process. It also showed that the individual act's worth (in this case, school work, music, art and drama) is determined by the numbers of students who participate in it (to an extent), but more significantly by those individuals' status. Through these constructions it was illustrated that any type of difference could be utilised against individuals, including an individual that was targeted for being 'country' for demonstrating:

Sam:	Tractor knowledge and everything
Andrew:	He's pretty funny at times!
Sam:	Yeah, but he's a really nice kid but everyone kind of picked on him for being

Andrew: Intensively different
Sam: Yeah, really really different and everyone picked on him for it
Andrew: Like they really picked on him, like bashings … and intensive
Sam: Like for no other reason other than he was different

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

These examples showed that individual 'difference' was in relation to any factor or context and was integral in constructing social inadequacy or failure. Being 'intensively different' was the same as being 'a bit off' or not 'having many social skills'. Individuals who 'fit in' were those who demonstrated sameness in looks, performances and priorities. This could include normalising activities that reduced or negated difference such as sport.

In summary the construction of bullying by students demonstrated less of a reliance on school processes or formal reporting procedures and more of a construction of why individuals bullied or were targeted. Their constructions of particular bullying performances, often taking place within 'joking' contexts, were complex and relied on an understanding of social context and localised systems of interaction and hierarchy. Overall, however, they understood that individuals could be safe from or subjected to bullying because of particular performances. Their productions of social hierarchies and the acts that defined individual insertion points into these ladders demonstrated that there were ways of avoiding or being subjected to bullying performances. Being 'cool', 'normal', 'main stream' or 'popular' became synonymous with 'fitting in'. Their investments in this discourse of 'fitting in' had significant and entwined power implications and knowledges.

Discourses: Bullying

Fitting in

The discourse of 'fitting in' was utilised by the students to locate identities and rationales within bullying frameworks. It 'confirmed that those who were seen as unpopular, "uncool", odd or misfits were students who stood out from the crowd or were perceived as being different in some way from everyone else' (Warrington and Younger 2011, p. 155). 'Fitting in' was subsequently produced as an ideal way of being a student at Wilson and Grove; it provided access to social support, feelings of belonging, safety and popularity, as well as social

power. Simultaneously, however, the discourse worked to demonstrate social boundaries, expectations and acceptable performances. These were rewarded when successfully achieved or punished when individuals failed to meet the desired outcomes.

Ascription to the discourse and structure of 'fitting in' can be seen as a 'method of surveillance and normalization, of "othering" those who transcend' (Ferfolja 2007, p. 151) various social priorities. In a way this discourse alludes to the understandings of intelligible identities and regulation in that those who fail to fit in are continuously judged against the success of others and their performances are disciplined in various ways. However, 'fitting in' extends these notions to include a variety of criteria.

Foucault refers to the 'art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power' (Foucault 1991, p. 182) and suggests that it promotes five distinct operations:

> ...it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal
>
> (Foucault 1991, pp. 182–183)

These operations were present in the discourse of 'fitting in' and were variously placed within discursive aspects of action orientation, positioning, practice and subjectivity.

Action Orientation

This discourse functioned to establish that social belonging was desirable for all individuals. This occurred through the initial Foucauldian understanding of referring 'individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed' (Foucault 1991, p. 182). 'Fitting in' represented this field, space and principle. Successfully achieving 'fitting in' was discursively constructed as being beneficial to social connections,

belonging and security, each located as being important in the context of the schools. Importantly, it produced understandings of 'in' and 'out'. By asserting that 'fitting in' was desirable, it simultaneously established that there was an 'in' to 'fit' into. This equally assumed that if you were not 'in', you were 'out', and that to be 'out' was undesirable. Therefore the function of the employment of this discourse was to illustrate the terms of belonging to 'in' as well as the consequences of falling 'out'. It was understood that 'if you're different, you're gonna get teased'. Being 'different' was equal to falling outside of the 'in' realm – 'that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it' (Foucault 1991, p. 178).

Positioning
'Fitting in' positioned individuals in relation to their success of achievement of its principles. In reference to Foucauldian understandings, it 'differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move' (Foucault 1991, pp. 182–183). 'Fitting in' was consistently referred to as a goal for individuals to achieve in that it represented significant social benefits. Positioning was therefore simplistic in its understanding that you either 'fit in' or you didn't, recognising that your social performance was deviant and that you were not participating in the normative goal of 'fitting in'. This additionally functioned to position individuals into a quantitatively measured hierarchy 'in terms of value the abilities, the level, [and] the "nature" of individuals'. Individuals were positioned in terms of their success of fitting in, bringing persecution on themselves if they were perceived as inherently 'different', 'a bit off' or 'socially awkward'. This may also tie in with the 'serial victim' subjective positions constructed by the teacher groups. Similarly, those that policed the boundaries of difference (the 'cool group' or the 'main stream') gained discursive power that situated their positions within an accepted framework. Their actions to cause harm to those who fail to fit in are understood as being inevitable in the face of difference and those that are different are blamed for their position as victims of their own created circumstances. This positions individuals along a social stratum through either social discipline, punishment or rewards. The ranking structure 'marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes' (Foucault 1991, p. 181).

Practice

Practically the discourse of 'fitting in' 'introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved' (Foucault 1991, p. 183). Through their continual surveillance, judgement and arbitration, individuals are constantly aware of the expectations of their performances and where they insert on the social hierarchy. Fitting in becomes not just a social goal, but also a continuous performative constraint. One act can represent deviance and produce regulatory repercussions (persecution). The practice of individuals is, therefore, constricted and continually re-defined in reference to the actions of 'the cool group' or 'the main stream'. Any diversity of individual performances becomes constrained by popular discourse. No acts or deviations are restricted from this regulation; in fact, 'the whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable' (Foucault 1991, pp. 178–179), reducing any form of individual difference in the social environment.

This discourse also provides those who pursue and achieve conformity with the power to discipline and direct others towards particular social performances. This was referenced in Jen's account of the reasons for physical violence at Grove:

> *Jen*: Or sometimes it's just cos they think the other guy's weird so they think they need to bash him to fix it
>
> (Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Individual regulatory practices, therefore, have 'the function of reducing gaps [and] must therefore be essentially *corrective*' [emphasis in original] (Foucault 1991, p. 179). Performances are disciplined to move towards 'a conformity that must be achieved'; to 'fit in', and the ways that these are formatted are complex, elaborate and dynamic processes that are constantly re-negotiated by students.

Subjectivity

Subjective experiences or positions that are made available through the invocation of this discourse are reductive and limiting. Individuals are made aware that their performative displays have distinct implications for their social realities. Through continual discursive displays and through the policing of performative boundaries, individuals are faced with the possibilities of social relegation or promotion when they move outside of accepted or celebrated acts or subjectivities. This results in constrictive options for the

performance or exploration of identities, which are continually monitored to position individuals along a dynamic social hierarchy. To perform in a non-normative or unsanctioned way, to resist the mainstream, is dangerous for these young people, and could result in exclusion or violence.

Joking

'Joking' was constructed as both a normative social phenomenon and an interactional strategy that resulted in a dislocation of responsibility when bullying occurred. In both cases, students were constituted as producing offensive meanings in the guise of jokes; however this was not consistently rendered as intentional. Instead, joking was constructed alternatively as being acceptable in social interactions, but also as something that under-mined an individual's ability to take issue with the comments. Students showed that it was common practice and often was 'taken too far' when individuals 'crossed the line' in their deployment of jokes, especially when utilised by boys. They also acknowledged that when bullying took place in the form of jokes teachers often disregarded it.

Action Orientation

The action orientation of 'joking' was relevant to both of the two ways that it was understood by students. First, joking was constituted as a social phenomenon that normative and sociable individuals utilised and engaged with. Individuals (and boys especially) were understood to be 'always joking around each other' and 'making jokes'. According to Lahelma, '"doing masculinity" appears to involve the ability to deal with and engage in joking relations' (2002, p. 301). Reflecting this, respondents to jokes were produced as normatively accepting these and 'laugh[ing] most of the time'. Where individuals failed in this expecta-tion, they were skilfully positioned as responsible for taking jokes 'the wrong way', or for any harm or offence (Ryan and Morgan 2011), redistributing blame towards the respondent to the 'joke'. These con-structs worked together to create a social reality in which it was imperative for individuals to go along with jokes and to respond appropriately (with acceptance and humour).

Second, 'joking' was constructed as a strategic notion to be utilised against students or teachers to revoke responsibility of actions. As students understood that 'joking' could at times be utilised as a disguise for offensive constructs, they also knew that this strategy could be used in

negative ways in social and institutional contexts. They demonstrated that 'joking' existed in a space between celebrated social interactions and bullying, but this space had undefined and subjective boundaries. Ideas of 'taking it too far' or 'crossing the line' showed that there were particular joking acts that caused damage to students – 'really hurtin' em' or being 'really hurtful'.

Finally the jokes themselves functioned as reminders of gender differences and the power of boys to position girls into gendered subjectivities. The 'kitchen jokes' happening at both schools were a constant and celebrated part of boys' joking. The boys that used them, despite positioning them as a 'joke', were invested in the invested sexism and misogyny that asserted their own positions and denigrated those of the girls. As the joke was so ingrained in their culture, many of the boys (and some of the girls) didn't perceive that there was any particular issue with these comments or jokes; however they did continuously reference gendered displays, divide individuals into sexed groups and allude to the inherent dominance of males. These interactions composed the constitutive outside and confirmed their position as subjects.

Positioning

The first positional outcome of this discourse was that of a division between those who were seen to be socially capable and desirable (through accepting and enjoying joking performances) and those who were not (those who rejected jokes or took them 'the wrong way'). An important aspect of this positioning was that the jokes were often constructed as boy behaviours, while the objects of the jokes were girls, or femininity more generally. In a way this affirmed that jokes an innate and unchangeable aspect of 'doing boy'. Girls were, therefore, closely observed in their responses to jokes – responses that deemed whether they were judged as being socially capable or incapable. This process works to ward off any conceivable complaints of sexual harassment or bullying, as the reporter would be positioned as someone lacking a sense of humour.

A framework of victim blaming fortified this understanding even further. Discursive constructions such as 'certain people . . . are more sensitive than others' and that 'some of them are really serious about it' 'even though it's a joke construct the receptor of the joke as being at fault', especially as 'it wasn't directed at her' and 'if she doesn't like it she shouldn't listen'. Girls who respond with disdain are immediately cast as

the ones who are ruining the fun between boys. Conversely, the joke is positioned as innocuous through the identity of the 'joker'.

In a complex addition to this positioning, the understanding of jokes that were strategically utilised to cause harm yet reduce or negate responsibility, conversely constructed the roles of the joker, the receptor and the viewer. These three positions are similar to those of bully, victim and bystander in essentialist bullying understandings. The joker in these contexts becomes laden with negative understandings about intention of harm and the clever avoidance of consequences. Individuals who receive these 'jokes' are positioned as largely powerless as their ability to locate the harmful intentions of the joker are reduced in the context of humour. The 'we're just joking' refrain is understood as a tool that can be used in these negative situations, meaning that teachers are less able and likely to pursue consequences.

Practice

As girls were positioned as receptors (or the targets) of jokes, and boys as those who produced and communicated jokes, practical implications of social responses were invested in these performances. Boys were expected to make jokes that ridiculed females; indeed they were a celebrated and dominant aspect of the boy culture at both schools. Kitchen jokes were well known and constant in their deployment. Girls were, again, exceptionally vulnerable in this environment because they could receive sexist comments at any moment. With the increased depth and power of sexism, they faced more intensive possibilities and frequencies of 'joking' due to the wealth of discriminatory comments that were made available (and encouraged) from its discursive landscape (Hand and Sanchez 2000). Girls, equally, were tied to passive performances due to the negative consequences of diverging from these. They were practically unable to actively reject or disrupt these jokes due to the negative repercussions of responding in any way other than 'laughing it off'.

The understanding of joking as occupying a space between acceptable social actions and 'bullying' also problematises its disruption. Interventions and disruptions by friends and teachers are complicated. Equally, students understand that institutional repercussions can be avoided with its invocation. This ensures that joking becomes a more accepted and widespread practice, and that its capability to produce harm is increased as it is difficult to disrupt.

Subjectivity

This discourse reduced available subjective positions, with social inter-actions being strictly controlled due to individuals' desire to 'fit in' and be accepted. Individuals were required to 'joke' and take jokes in 'the right ways' – to see them as funny rather than offensive. Individuals became forced to go along with jokes even if they were directly offend-ing unchangeable aspects of their identity (such as sex or gender), as to not go along with them was to be labelled as socially inept or incoher-ent. For this reason it is likely that the young people would feel that they were unable to disclose moments where they have been discrimi-nated against or hurt by 'jokes'. This may cause them to feel trapped, ashamed or isolated from the group due to their embodied differences that are within the joking repertoire.

HOMOPHOBIA AND HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

In light of the discourses of intelligible gender and the constant usage of epithets like 'gay', 'slut' and 'scrub', it was not unexpected that the students spent time detailing homophobic instances that were happening at their school. They produced narratives and dialogues that illustrated their experiences of receiving or seeing homophobic harassment, bullying or more general homophobic slurring taking place. The following details the students' discursive constructions and the subsequent analysis of these.

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION: HOMOPHOBIA AND HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

The Grove boys constructed their school as saturated by homophobia in both student (social) and teacher (institutional) performances. Homophobic instances as well as broader anti-gay cultures were identified and reflected on by the students with relative ease:

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?

Vic: Mmm?

Rob: 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

Rob: Yeah, he gets it all the time, he just wears skinny pants all the time, he has these glasses that are

Sam: Very feminine

Rob: Yeah feminine, he's really feminine...and also what are they called, the burns or something? He's gonna get one of those in his hair

Max: Oh no (groans)

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

Andrew: People don't realise they're being homophobic, like...people go around and say 'oh you're gay, I don't want you to touch me'

Sam: Yeah

Rob: Yeah and if you're like walking down the street, people will point out people, pointing out saying 'oh he looks gay' and that

Andrew: ...well we went on a cricket excursion, and they said 'who are you texting, it'd better not be your girlfriend otherwise you get a strike', anytime something bad happened you'd get a strike, and I said 'oh it's not my girlfriend it's my boyfriend', I got in so much strife for that. And they were just like 'oh get away!' and they were just like 'no, that's inappropriate', um...Yeah, there's just...there's a lot of homophobic behaviour I think around...

Sam: Yeah

Andrew: They just don't like hugging or anything...They don't like any

Sam: Male–male contact

Andrew: Yeah male–male contact

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

These excerpts from Grove illustrated first that it was unsafe to be 'gay at this school', and that the boys recognised the breadth and extent of the homophobia that was operating. These two aspects may demonstrated the boys' understanding that heteronormativity operated as continuous 'cloaked bullying' (Sweet and DesRoches 2008, p. 173).

However, this knowledge may have been produced in light of a recent transgression by Andrew, who dressed up as a fairy for Valentine's Day at the school. As Meyer's (2008a) asserts, the most illuminating portrayal of heteronormativity emerges from the experiences of those who step outside of the boundaries of the heterosexual matrix. Andrew had a specific knowledge of this power as his performance was met with an extreme and homophobic reaction from students and a parent:

Andrew:	It was valentine's day, we were dressing up . . . and I didn't really care . . . and I knew I'd cop a bit of it, but I didn't mind, I just laugh it off . . . and we were just going around the school, and I was surprised actually, at the amount of people that would be . . . slightly . . . they'd be like . . .
Sam:	Stay away from us
Andrew:	Like 'you're not gay', and they'd like swear at me, 'you faggot!', and . . .
Sam:	And kind of like, pull away from you . . . I noticed it as well, and we'd walk around like and people would just kind of back off
Andrew:	Stay away
Rob:	They'd see them and just be like 'okay he's coming this way'
Andrew:	He's gay . . . They were saying like, 'Why would you do something like that? Are you gay?' and I was like, 'no I'm fine with my sexuality, thanks', (laughs) 'I'm confident with it'. Or if I . . . at the end of the day, some of them were like 'oh are you gay?', and I was like, [low voice] 'better cover your ass when you walk the other way'

(laughter)

[. . .]

Andrew:	I went down to pay money, and there was actually a parent there
Max:	Oh Jesus
Andrew:	And she was just full on, swearing, [yelling] 'oh you're a faggot!'
Sam:	Oh she was, she was, yeah
Andrew:	And she was like 'oh I can't believe you, he's a faggot, oh why would you do something like that'
Max:	Was she a gronk?
Sam:	She is, definitely I would say
Andrew:	Yeah
Max:	Like if you're a gronk, you're definitely- well not definitely, but you're more likely to be homophobic and voice it
Andrew:	Yeah, you can tell, there's a lot of homophobia, homophobic people . . . in this school

> *Sam*: Just the way they look at you, yeah
>
> (Grove HS: Male student focus group)

In the above dialogue Andrew and the rest of the group constructed the reality that he faced when he transgressed intelligible masculinity and moved into a deviant gender performance. Through dressing up as a fairy, despite the contextual alibi of the school event and raising money for charity, he moved into an abject identity. The consequences of this movement were immediate and included aggressive social remonstrations. Individuals rejected his identity as a heterosexual male and interrogated his sexual orientation in light of his deviance from the performative norm. There was a physical reaction from the students in that 'people would just kind of back off', 'stay away' and 'pull away from you'. They also produced aggressive homophobic language including 'faggot' and 'gay'.

Foucault affirms that individuals negotiate existing power relations through the particular discourses available to them. Andrew's experience and recount demonstrated his ability to draw upon significant social and cultural resources (that were available to him) in order to retaliate against extensive discriminatory structures. His initial commitment to the fairy performance as well as his nonchalance towards homophobic slurs and discursive gay bashing (which we can imagine extends far beyond this incident) demonstrates the disruption of prevailing norms and expectations of gender and sexuality. His employment of a range of counter discourses resists and goes some way to disrupting dominant discourses of intelligible masculinity, 'fitting in' and 'occurrence and impact'. His access to discursive resources presented a real moment of difference in this research and functioned to demonstrate the power of the counter discourse in practice. As one agent, he offered significant social disruption and equally encouraged those around him to question the social structures that surrounded them. As Robinson claims (2012, p. 72), 'how individuals perceive and react to sexual harassment is based on negotiating the various discourses operating in the context in which the behaviour is enacted or encountered'.

The incident with the parent is also significant in the other boys' constructions. She is immediately cast as a 'gronk': presumably a term that relates to her (low/er) class status. Her performance is recognised by the boys as homophobic; however many of the aggressive reactions that Andrew faced were positioned as normative. Max immediately assumed

the worst when Andrew mentioned the parent at the office through his interruption of 'oh Jesus' at the beginning of the narrative. Both the school and the town are cast as homophobic:

> Max: Couldn't do that down the main street
> Andrew: I went down the main street, and people were taking pictures of me
>
> (laughter)
>
> Andrew: And the council guy, oh my god, he gave me the dirtiest look in the world
>
> (laughter)
>
> Liam: Well see cause it's a small town word gets around fast as well
>
> (Grove HS: Male student focus group)

The town is constructed here as a significantly dangerous place for gender performances that don't reside in normative frameworks. While Max asserts that you 'couldn't do that down the main street', Andrew counters that he did, and that 'people were taking pictures'. This qualifies the sensationalist nature of the event, while the 'council guy' that was there shows that regular people in the town also engage in gender regulation and homophobic performances. Finally, the understanding of word getting around fast in the 'small town' shows that the boys are aware of (and continually assert) the surveillance of gendered performances. These recounts demonstrated that the homophobia that Andrew experienced was expected, yet the intensity of it surprised him:

> Andrew: Yeah, but I was actually surprised, I thought yeah, okay, I'll get a lot of stick but I don't really care, stuff what other people think. But we've all done that
> Vic: So, kind of the intensity of the ...
> Andrew: Of their comments, and how much people actually commented
> Sam: You wouldn't think about it
> Andrew: And just the ... the behaviour, even the unconscious behaviour of people just going and backing away
> Sam: Step back and go the other way, let's go the other way, he's coming
> Max: It reminds me of this time Sam and I dressed up as a girl for relay for life ... I was actually worried that we would have gotten attacked ... cause, yeah

Sam: Yeah...well we would've been by like the cool kids as well
Max: Oh yeah, yeah

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

In this section it seems as if Andrew's performance in the fairy costume was an enlightening experience for him and for the other boys that were involved in it. While they expected that homophobia would be experienced, its depth and overt production shocked them. The boys constructed that 'you wouldn't think about it'; perhaps because in their regular gendered performances they occupy successful, sporty, dominant and intelligible masculinities. When he transgressed and became abjected other, the immediacy and the vehemence of the response illuminated that any deviations from these norms would be significantly and swiftly punished. This understanding operated not only in reference to this particular event but also in their general culture, such as Max being worried about being assaulted for dressing up like a girl in another context. The potential attackers – 'the cool kids' – are also of significance in this construction, which aligned with former productions of the 'cool' or 'popular' groups as the arbitrators of subjection. Here they are constituted as producing the 'main stream' and policing the boundaries of gender performances. In light of this production, it again became relevant that these expectations were informed by particular constructions of what is 'main stream' or 'normal'. It was constructed that boys and girls had different expectations for same-sex sexual performances:

Vic: What about female–female [contact/affection], is that okay?
Max: Well like, people seem to approve of it because like, say the boys actually want to see two girls together? Well some of them

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

Meredith: Yeah but guys don't like being called gay and that's why they call each other fags and gay and stuff cos
Britt: Fags?
Meredith: They know it makes the other guy feel smaller
Vic: Do you think it happens more with boys than with girls?
Jen: Yeah
Meredith: Yeah definitely

Jen:	Yeah the term gay gets thrown around more than what lesbian does

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Alice:	And guys kind of think that lesbians are hot
Linda, Bec & Jennifer:	Yeah
Linda:	What's with that?
Jennifer:	They always think that it's like the best thing ever
Linda:	They're obsessed with lesbian hook ups

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Bec:	I think guys would get teased about it a lot more
Jennifer:	Than girls
Alice:	Yeah, I reckon that too
Kathryn:	Cos girls are more understanding
Linda:	Yeah
Alice:	That's true
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

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

In these discussions, the students indicated that it was worse for boys to be known as gay than it was for girls. This differentiated valuing emerged from the understanding that males are more okay with female same-sex contact than they were about male same-sex sexual acts. They also based these understandings on the fact that 'girls are more understanding' and that although they would be 'shocked' if their friend was a lesbian, they would 'still support her' and 'get over it'. This attitude was not the same in relation to boys having diverse sexualities, and the reactions of the girls were not nearly as accommodating, meaning that their premise of female 'understanding' was disrupted. Accordingly, there were increased social and cultural sanctions against same-sex sexual performances or identities

from boys than girls. 'They'd cop so much crap . . . No wonder why people don't talk about it' serves as a final demonstration that even discussing being gay is risky in an environment where there is a constant threat of sexuality attribution. At Grove, this understanding extended into the understanding of reporting homophobic instances:

Meredith: Cos I think if someone's being bullied, like homophobically, they're not going to go to a teacher and tell them that,
Kylie: Nup
Meredith: cos that'd make them uncomfortable

<div align="right">(Grove HS: Female student focus group)</div>

As implications for male sexuality deviations were more extreme than those for females, discomfort and persecution was also prominent in boy environments, as detailed by the girls at Wilson:

Alice: But there's a lot of sort of gay jokes that go on too
Bec: like about people, like someone will do something and the boys will be like 'oh my god, that guy's gay'
Linda: Yeah
Jennifer: Yeah like okay example, like this is bullying as well, we were on the bus and we were going to Wollongong, and like all the boys had those magazines with the girls and um . . . one boy, he has a girl-friend, they were like, 'look at the magazine', and he was like 'no', and they were like 'oh you're gay' ra ra ra, even though he has a girlfriend he just didn't want to do that, and he felt uncomfortable doing it, but they just still teased him about being gay

<div align="right">(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)</div>

This excerpt explicitly demonstrated the power of gendered regulation and of the potential of being labelled gay, even when articulated through 'jokes'. The individual involved in this recount resisted taking part in a heterosexualised ritual, and when he performed this resistance, he was instantly threatened with the 'spectre' of gay. The fact that he held a 'heterosexual alibi' (Larsson et al. 2010, p. 67) by having a girlfriend was potentially the only aspect that maintained his positional integrity within the heterosexual 'inside', evidenced by Jennifer's disclamation of 'even though he has a girlfriend'.

At Grove, a similar concept was produced in the girls' construction of when one of the boys at their school was being bullied because of

being gay, despite denying that he was. The boys at the school treated him badly until he 'came out':

Vic:	What was happening before he came out? What kind of stuff were they doing?
Jen:	They were giving him so much
Olivia:	(speaks over) They were just bagging him out about it
Jen:	Like we always knew what he was
Britt:	(speaks over) It was obvious
Jen:	And he just made up stories about how much he'd done with girls
Britt:	He lied about it
Olivia:	And you could tell he was lying, just the way he . . .
Kylie:	But it was just to get them off his back
Britt:	Yeah
Jen:	It was pretty much to protect himself from being bullied from other guys
Vic:	Do you think guys kind of throw the 'you're gay, you're a poofter' thing around a lot between them?
Britt:	Yes
Jen:	Yeah
Olivia:	Mhmm
Jen:	Sometimes they do it as a joke, like and sometimes it's not . . .
Olivia:	They put a lot of pressure on other guys to do, to go and do stuff with a girl, like to prove that they aren't that
Jen:	Gay, yeah

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Performances were important to establish (hetero)sexuality, and the ownership of this sexuality was integral to staying safe. The boy that they refer to strategically invested himself in performing a heterosexual identity to avoid punishment for his sexual deviance. Within a discursive culture that demonstrated the zone of acceptance, the boy resided within the endorsed heterosexual norm and the context of relative safety. This culture creates pressure for all boys to perform (hetero)sexual acts to continually repudiate the gay label and identity.

There were moments when the performance of intelligible heterosexuality failed. The girls at Wilson discussed who was 'at risk' of being labelled gay:

Bec:	Um, someone who is not confident or a jock . . .
Linda:	Yeah

Bec: Can just be thought of as being gay. Like it's very easy just to, just if they're not…if you're not full on, like sport…

Jennifer: [speaks over] Muscley, yeah

Bec: Muscley

Linda: [speaks over] Yeah they're obsessed with how big their arms are these days

Jennifer: [speaks over] Popular, good looking…you're gay

Linda: They're like, all about the gym

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Jennifer: If you're jock, like you're sporty or you're muscly, like, whatever you do, you're gonna be a god

Linda: Yeah

Jennifer: But like, if someone that was smart, and like, not attractive to like, you know, the girls at school or whatever, and they shaved their legs, it'd be like this big deal like, 'oh what a poofter', you know?

Linda: Yeah

Jennifer: But if a jock did it, 'oh he's so cool let's all shave our legs'

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Linda: Yeah, its how it is – it doesn't matter what you do, if you're popular, you're fine

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

These quotes reference the 'heterosexual alibi' (Larsson et al. 2010, p. 67) of being popular and athletic. When individuals demonstrate that they are 'confident' or a 'jock', if they are into 'sport', 'muscley' and 'all about the gym', they are able to ward off the abject spectre of 'gay'. This shows the power of citationality – the utterances cite the power that enables them to produce their words as action. Performativity is not only about the repetition and citation of power, but about who cites this power and how they present their authority in doing so. The boys who embody the dominant form of masculinity within the heterosexual matrix hold citational power. They are able to dictate the forms of masculinity as their heterosexuality remains intact and guarded against any possibility of damage. The risk for individuals is not necessarily being gay, but the movement away from celebrated, binary and heteronormative gender performances.

While these considerations operated at a social and cultural level, there were also institutional understandings of homophobia and homophobic violence that were produced by all of the student groups. They produced

the understandings that their schools and their towns privileged some forms of bullying over others in terms of seriousness or importance, particularly racial bullying:

Paul:	I think probably racial, at the school, even though it shouldn't be, is probably more frowned upon than homophobic. Cause you can tell, we've got our own racial bullying coordinator but there's no homophobia coordinator or anything, so perhaps it's seen as less serious, or perceived like that [. . .]
Daniel:	I reckon they'd look more for racial bullying than they would for . . . Homophobic and thing [gender-based] bullying
James:	Yeah, definitely

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Rob:	It [homophobic bullying] shouldn't matter less, but I think it does. I think racial is taken a lot more seriously
Andrew:	Yep
Max:	Yep
Sam:	Yep
Vic:	So who's it taken more seriously by?
Sam:	Anyone in any kind of authority really
Max:	Yeah
Andrew:	It seems to be a more taboo type of bullying

(Grove HS: Male student focus group)

Each of these quotes contributed to the collective construction of homophobia as present in the schools but largely ignored by teachers. Both of the schools were not seen as taking homophobia or gender-based harassment seriously, especially in regards to immediate teacher responses.

Jen:	Well because the boys always call each other like we said, fags or poofs or gay and stuff, and nothing is done about it
Meredith:	Nothing's done about it
Olivia:	Nup
Kylie:	Like there are some teachers who say 'don't call each other that'
Jen:	But that's about it
Kylie:	That's all they do, they just say it

Meredith: They like, don't get talked to, they're just like 'don't do it'.
              They don't get talked to about why they shouldn't do it

                                    (Grove HS: Female student focus group)

James: Mmmm, the teachers have got to start setting an example.
              Cause I mean, as a student I think, well if Mr Carter can do
              it, say something like that, why can't I?

                                    (Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

The students, therefore, produced a context in which using homophobic
or gender-based aggression was problematic, but there was little incentive
to change due to the lack of teacher interventions. Teachers were under-
stood as either engaging in the behaviour themselves, or being complicit
in it through their construction as 'bystanders'.

Wider cultural factors such as attitudes in the town and wider society
were also considered by the students to contribute to this situation,
including the visibility of difference:

Daniel: Cause we're a very multicultural town, there is more room for
             racism and cultural disputes rather than homophobic stuff
James: Yeah
Daniel: Cause like [the town] has got heaps and heaps of different
             nationalities
Vic: So do you guys think that because there's less gay people who
             are visible, it's less of a problem?
Daniel: Yes
Matthew: Probably

                                    (Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Meredith: You get bullied for your sexual orientation just as much as your
             race or your culture if not more
Jen: Yeah
Kylie: Yeah
Meredith: I think people are more accepting of different races and differ-
             ent cultures than they are of homosexual people

                                    (Grove HS: Female student focus group)

Kathryn: There was a lesbian couple last year
Bec: Yeah

Linda:	That was like, the talk of everyone, of everything. Everyone was like, oh my god, how can you even know you're a lesbian now?
	[…]
Jennifer:	I think that's a shock, because … like, people know about it but never really see it
Linda:	Yeah
Alice:	And when you do see it everyone's just like … [gasp] like, oh my god

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

| *Linda*: | And like, if you see a gay person everyone's like 'did you know that they're gay?' and you're just like 'Whoa!' but if you see like, say an Indian or something it'd be like 'yeah they're just an Indian' |

(laughter)

Linda:	Like, do you know what I mean? Like it's, they don't look at it … like sometimes they'll be like, they'll say comments, but they don't turn their head around and go 'Whoa!'
Jennifer:	And make a big deal about it, yeah, 'did you know that he's gay?!'
Linda:	Yeah
Jennifer:	Yeah, like you don't go 'did you know he's Indian?' it's not a big deal
Linda:	(laughs) it's just he's Indian, that's it
Jennifer:	Yeah, that's where the line stops
Bec:	That's just normal, like. Yeah

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

When drawing from this understanding of 'visibility', the students affirmed that individuals might be increasingly targeted if they were visible. Diverse sexualities (or gender identities) were not seen in the town; and it was, therefore, a 'shock' if someone performed outside of the heteronormative culture. It was 'just normal' to be racially different, whereas sexual difference was positioned outside of this zone of normalcy. In this way, the students constructed a complex reality where displayed difference placed individuals at risk. In the context of homophobia, this could include things like wearing 'skinny pants' or glasses that are 'very feminine', as initially discussed by the Grove boys. This meant that individuals who

invested in these performances were at risk; however the more common displays of difference were the more normal and the less of a 'big deal' they became. Therefore this conception had a two-pronged outcome – one of which was that there was a discursive link between being gay (and importantly displaying it) and experiencing homophobic abuse:

Vic: ...I want you to either agree or disagree and then we can talk about why you're saying that. Alright, so gender based or homophobic bullying or harassment happens all the time at Wilson

Daniel: Disagree, because there's not many that people openly gay

James: Yeah

Paul: They don't display it

James: Yeah, because they're afraid of what some people will do to them, some people that don't understand. I mean, I haven't got a problem with anyone being...a homosexual or anything, but some people really do...And I mean...one situation, I can't remember how it was raised but one kid goes, 'oh all gays deserve a bullet', and I just don't understand how he could say that, like I mean...say his dad came out and said he was gay, I don't think he'd be saying that anymore

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

In this dialogue, the students discursively constructed a reality in which only those who were openly gay were at risk of homophobic bullying. Students presumed that most, if not all gendered or homophobic harassment would fall upon those who had non-heterosexual orientations. This was despite long discussions before these comments detailing the experiences of girls and boys who experienced homophobia or gendered abjection despite maintaining their heterosexuality. It was also despite a clear and recent utterance of aggressive homophobia from another student ('one kid goes, "oh all gays deserve a bullet"'), which was not positioned as being homophobic bullying or harassment.

At Grove, the girls' focus group produced dialogue at the end of their session that referenced this lack of visibility, the institutional protocols and their understandings of bullying:

Vic: ...What do you think would help prevent or stop gender based or homophobic abuse happening at your school?

Jen:	We don't really, our school doesn't really mention it to us
Olivia:	Nup
Meredith:	Like I think that we need to be told that some people are gay
Britt:	(speaks over) it's okay
Meredith:	and that we just need to
Britt:	(speaks over) Accept it
Meredith:	Get over it
Kylie:	Yeah accept them for who they are
Jen:	Like we get talked about bullying all the time
Kylie:	But they don't ever mention
Olivia:	Yeah gender never
Jen:	It's never gender
Britt:	Nup
Jen:	It's always like internet, physical or
Kylie:	Cyber bullying
Jen:	Never anything serious
Olivia:	Never gender based
Jen:	So we never get told that it's ok if someone's like that . . . it's alright

(Grove HS: Female student focus group)

This was a powerful summary from the group that reflected their isolation from discourses of diversity and acceptance in relation to same-sex relationships or diverse gender performances. They positioned their 'education' about bullying as being naive or irrelevant, and entirely silencing issues of gender and sexuality. Without the foundations of harm or the allusions to how individuals utilised power over others, the modes became irrelevant to the students. 'Internet', 'physical' or 'cyber bullying' were modes of deploying power and the girls constructed that these were not the root of the problem, they were not 'serious'.

'Gay'

A final conflicting understanding of homophobia and homophobic bullying was the production of the epithet 'gay' and its usage in the schools. Research has documented the diverse use of 'gay' and related epithets (such as 'fag', 'poofter', 'homo', etc.) in contemporary youth linguistic culture (Pascoe 2007; Plummer 1999; Witthaus 2006). Pascoe (2007) suggests that much of the former research that has been conducted asserts that 'homophobic teasing often characterizes masculinity in adolescence

and early adulthood and that antigay slurs tend to be directed primarily at gay boys' (Pascoe 2007, p. 53). The presence of homophobic insults at Grove and Wilson High indeed suggests that they assist in the characterisation of masculinity; however the assertion that gay boys are the major targets proved to be inaccurate in this research. The deployment of 'gay' or it's similar variation, 'that's so gay' was not always necessarily linked to depictions of (homo)sexuality. Rather, it was utilised as a 'spectre of discontinuity and incoherence' (Butler 1990, p. 17) to regulate and control masculine performances. Specifically, its deployment functioned to question and confront boys' masculinity. At each of the schools, it became clear that 'gay' was utilised as a general epithet that signalled anti-maleness or femininity. Its presence as an iterative act reflected its power through repetition and the constant revisiting of its applications and functions. Individuals were required to avoid its attribution through particular performances, and it therefore operated as an 'abject spectre' that could emerge at any particular moment. Its assignation was, therefore, something to be avoided, as well as something to deploy to ensure that it would not be attached to the user.

The utilisation of 'gay' at Wilson not only included this initial usage and its implications, but also the discursive regime that supported its deployment. In other words, the ways in which individuals and groups interpreted its meanings and applied these interpretations to justify its presence in their linguistic performances. Conversely, at Grove the students did not discuss its location in their discursive practices; there was no justification or acceptance of its presence. The participants at Grove believed it to be problematic, but unchanging, whereas at Wilson they consistently worked to locate it as normative and harmless:

Daniel:	It's too widely used a term gay these days. Gay just pretty much means bad
James:	Yeah
Daniel:	Like, you don't like it. These days it's not even anything to do with homosexual. Although wasn't it ... Isn't the meaning of gay like happy and stuff like that?
Harry:	It was. It used to be yeah
	[...]
James:	I mean even the teachers, like I mean 'oh that's homo', the class will go 'oh that's gay!' the teachers haven't got a problem with it, but I mean I think that needs to change

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Matthew:	Gay is a very um, like, widely used word. Like if some kid doesn't like it, he'll go 'this is gay'. Which has no meaning at all, anymore, like it used to mean something. Like when you say it in front of your parents, they go 'how is that homosexual?', and you go 'it's not, it's just like, what we're saying'
James:	I mean, I use that as like a ticked off word quite a lot
Daniel:	Everyone does. If they say, 'oh we're not doing prac today', you go 'oh that's gay sir, why not?', but it's just sort of a widely used term these days
James:	I mean, if I lose in FIFA, I'll announce to the house 'oh that's gay!'

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

These excerpts show how the students were active in the process of high-lighting distance between 'gay' and any sexual meanings. They produced the word as a general adjective for describing something that they didn't like, that was boring or that was perceived as generally negative. The Wilson girls, however, challenged this alleviation:

Linda:	Everyone, they'll just say 'oh you're gay' all the time
Bec:	I remember in year 7, when everyone had just started saying 'that's gay', like all the time, 'that's really gay', and I remember Mr Plummer, which is our year adviser, and we actually, we had a year meeting about it, about not saying things were gay
Alice:	And that didn't work
	[…]
Bec:	It has like a new meaning, like, something boring or …
Jennifer:	[speaks over] Yeah or something crap that you don't want to do
Bec:	bad or something that you don't want to do is gay
Jennifer:	It's over used so you don't know when it's appropriate or when it's wrong
Alice:	And people don't think that it's going to offend anyone because it's just a word that we all use
Linda:	Yeah
Alice:	So no-one really thinks about the consequences of it I guess
Linda:	But then imagine if there was a gay person there and somebody said that
Bec:	And that's going to make them even more scared to come out
Jennifer:	They'd be even worse … to come out yeah

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

Jennifer: And that's what like, it happens all the time you'll say 'oh you're gay come to touch'...You know, like come to touch at 6 o clock and stay there until 9:30, like 'you're gay, come', but you're actually offending that person, like if.... Like if they were gay then they'd be offended by you saying that, and they'd think 'well I have to go to touch until 9:30 at night now'

(Wilson HS: Female student focus group)

This focus group accepted that there could be some consequence or harm produced through its usage, but that it's saturation meant that it can 'be a joke or a general insult' (Lahelma 2002, p. 301). Their conception of the object of harm as a gay individual asserts that its meaning is found in its definition of homosexuality, regardless of other ways that they may attempt to construct it. Gendered or identity regulation is referenced through their example of the widespread usage of 'gay' making 'them even more scared to come out'. This shows that the concept of the 'gay' phenomenon did not reside outside of their conception and that some students were able to acknowledge wider structures of gender and sexual regulation through discursive structures. Other students did not accept this however; some believed that the intention of the deployment was the meaningful factor of its perception. In other words, students' who felt marginalised or affected by its usage were the ones who were at fault.

Vic: What about students though who might actually be bullied in a way? With more kind of offensive words, like it could be poofter, faggot, lesbian, anything like that. Does that happen in your school?
Harry: Uh, yeah...it would definitely happen but um...Like, I wouldn't be able to name anyone off the top of my head – that I know personally, because they wouldn't really come out about it. There would be people, but um, and it would be very offensive, I imagine, to some people...if they are...because they'd misunderstand the context I think...like the FIFA

(Wilson HS: Male student focus group)

Here Harry again constructs the links between individuals who experience homophobic abuse and their non-heterosexuality, assuming that these are the only individuals to be targeted. The main concluding factor, however, was that Harry recommended that only those who 'misunderstand the context' of the deployment of 'gay' could be offended. Through this construction, Harry passively attributes blame to those who do experience

harm. This re-allocation of meaning and dislocation of responsibility that the students at Wilson constructed reflected the discursive measures that teachers took to minimise illustrations of the 'occurrence and impact' of homophobic bullying.

Discourses: Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying

The following discourses have been detailed at length in other sections of this book. For the purposes of this section, the discourses have not been repeated in their extensive form, rather they have been simplified and reduced into the ways that they were utilised in the construct of 'homophobia and homophobic bullying' as specifically told by the students. For broader descriptions of these discourses please see detailed descriptions of 'occurrence and impact' within the previous chapter under the construction of 'homophobic bullying' and 'intelligible masculinity and disciplinary power' above in the construction of 'boys'.

Occurrence and Impact

The discourse of 'occurrence and impact' was mainly produced by participants from Wilson High. Similar to the teacher groups, the students used this discourse to reduce or dismiss understandings of harm or seriousness from the deployment of homophobic performances. In student groups, however, these performances were less pervasive and more complex. The students at Grove did not invest in this discourse showing that it was not spread across both of the schools, and the girls at Wilson also complicated its usage through their admissions of harm caused by invocations of homophobia and of intention to harm. This meant that students did not reject the power of 'occurrence and impact' as the teachers did, but they did invoke the discourse at times.

Examples of the deployment of this discourse included the portrayal of 'that's so gay' as innocuous. The boys at Wilson continually utilised constructions that functioned to reduce the significance of these deployments, asserting that 'gay' had lost its meaning and that it was broadly used by both students and teachers. This functioned to show that it was discursively contextual, and removed the potential for vehemence or for negative intentions to be embedded with the word, meaning that it became difficult to dispute its usage.

In turn, this positioned the linguistic deployment of 'gay' or its derivatives as harmless and widespread in discursive culture. Students (especially boys) were unlikely to rail against the aggressive usage of 'gay' as those that did this were positioned as socially uninformed, sexually deviant, not being able to take the 'joke' or 'misunderstanding the context'. As long as individuals maintained that 'gay' was not damaging to anyone who was not gay, or that it was just a 'joke', the practices of its deployment and non-disruption were likely to remain. It also allowed the continued use of joking without the risk of censure. Therefore subjective positions were restricted to maintaining the idea that saying 'gay' was harmless and contextual with 'not even anything to do with homosexual'. This position maintained social integrity, especially for boys that operated within strict regimes of intelligible masculinity and 'joking'.

Intelligible Masculinity and Disciplinary Power

This discourse draws from and integrates the understandings expressed in the construction of 'boys' earlier in this chapter. Homophobic performances were rooted in the understanding of the unintelligible body – of gender performances that departed from accepted and expected norms, particularly those who were male. When individuals moved outside of intelligible boundaries, they were made 'abject', as Andrew experienced first-hand when he dressed up as a fairy at Grove High. In this act, his linear story (Renold 2005) of gender and biological sex was disrupted, throwing his sexual desires into question. Andrew and any others who made these departures were positioned as 'the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to exiting norms of continuity and coherence' (Butler 1990, p. 17). They represented departures from the realm of acceptability and became unknowable without this comparison. This abjection included significant persecution or punishment to forcefully reinstate the linear continuity between 'sex, gender, sexual practice and desire' (Butler 1990, p. 17). Homophobic utterances and actions represented the disciplinary processes that spawned in response to these performances and served to regulate them both in the present and future.

In terms of the FDA processes that were applicable to this discourse drew significantly from those that were constructed in 'boys' above. Specifically, they related to the ways in which the boys were made abject and that the discipline that followed was extreme but expected in the culture of the school and town. The events that they recounted were an explicit demonstration of

the positional and practical risks of adopting deviant subject positions and the ways in which these were policed in a variety of ways. Additionally, it could be argued that boys were forced to engage with homophobic utterances, as it was imperative for them to continuously repudiate same-sex desire from themselves and shift it to others to evade abjection.

The discursive location of these implications as being specifically related to boy same-sex sexual performances and expectations (rather than girls) demonstrated the dominance of intelligible masculinity and the strength of its framework. Individuals invested in maintaining its gendered values and immovable performative boundaries, resulting in a reduction of available (and diverse) subjective positions.

'Kick a Slut in the Head Day'

This book began with a very brief description of this event. Since then, the intermediary chapters have detailed the discursive environments that minimise the severity of aggression, persecution and 'bullying', which devalue girls through valuing misogyny, and which shift blame onto the receptors of violence. Concluding these data chapters with a detailed examination of one incident allows us to see how the environment where these discourses flourish can lead to the manifestation, and dismissal, of a violent incident. This chapter again contains descriptions of the discursive constructs and their discourses that were employed in the (re)construction of this event. These continuously reiterate and reconstitute the social, gendered and institutional contexts that enable (and close down) acts, identities, interpretations and subjectivities into the future. In other words, 'kick a slut in the head day' was an act that was pre-determined by the discursive context from which it emerged, while simultaneously fortifying these discourses through its own constitution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

'Kick a slut in the head day' was originally designed as a Facebook event. Facebook events are created by individuals or groups online and can be related to a physical attendance or an online movement. For example, they can be used to invite individuals to a party, or could be utilised to invite

individuals to take part in a physical or digital activity. At the time, individuals had three response options – 'attending', 'not attending' or 'maybe'. Those who designed the event had the option to invite friends to the event and to release it privately (where only those who are invited can see the event) or publicly (where anyone on the list can invite anyone else and all people online can view the event).

In this particular incident at Wilson, a female student who had previously attended the school but had now moved on to the local Catholic school created the event online and invited individuals from Wilson High to enlist as 'attending'. The event was public and hence many students saw it and enlisted as 'attending'; it was also visible to any student that had online contact with those who had responded to the request to attend. Overall, therefore, it was a highly visible event that was seen by many within the school population.

The 'kick a slut in the head day' event took place the day prior to data collection with the female and male focus groups, so when the students reflected on this event they demonstrated clear and uninterrupted recollections. The first head teacher focus group at Wilson was held on the same day that the events transpired, and there was no reflection on the events at this time. This may have been due to the teachers being largely unaware or unwilling to disclose information about the event. It may have also been due to the first focus group being focused specifically on incidents of bullying of a non-gendered nature, and as will be explored in this section, teachers rejected that this was an incident of bullying at all.

While reflecting on the event in focus groups (and in the deputy principal interview), participants demonstrated significant discursive movements; however, these arguably moved towards similar conclusions in terms of positioning, practice and subjectivities.

Discursive Construction: Kick a Slut in the Head Day

The discursive constructions of the students and teachers will be reviewed separately in this section as they demonstrate differences in their frameworks and outcomes. After the illustration of these constructions, each of the discourses that they generated will be considered in relation to the framing of the event. For this reason, some of the discourses will be shared across groups.

STUDENT DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

The foundation of 'slut', as discussed earlier, rests on the understanding that it is a powerful regulator of female gendered performances and subjectivities. The acknowledgement of this foundation proceeds to the recognition that 'kick a slut in the head day' specifically related to the persecution or humiliation of girls – predominantly by boys. For this reason the responses of the females can be pre-construed as those who are potentially at risk of being targeted. It was, therefore, significant that there were discourses that denigrated those that were targeted as well as those who resisted the persecution through various performances. It came to light through these discourses that the females in the focus group were largely intent on dissolving responsibility for actions from the boys and shifting it onto those who were attacked.

In acknowledgement of the gendered nature of these positions and responses, and the specific gendered investments that participants had in these constructions, the student constructions have been grouped into male and female responses.

MALE STUDENTS' DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Each of the groups independently participated in an initial narrative that outlined the creation or conception of the day. From the boys this revolved around the understanding that the school participated in a number of 'joke' days, where individuals could sign up for things like 'hug a tall person day'. They understood that 'kick a slut in the head day' was a similar concept, except that 'somebody took that too far':

Matthew:	Oh yesterday we had a huge incident, it was a website page and it was 'kick a certain type of person in the face' day
James:	Head
Matthew:	And somebody took that too far and
James:	A lot of people actually did it
Paul:	A lot of people took it too far
James:	How stupid can you get?
Matthew:	It was just a joke to start with but then it like, I hate when you have a good joke and someone takes it too far

(Wilson HS: Male focus group)

> *Harry*:   And so um, people read that [the Facebook events that are
>   set up as jokes] and then at school it's a bit of a joke that
>   comes up. So the same happened yesterday but with some-
>   thing that
> *James*:   Should just never have happened
> *Harry*:   A bit offensive
> *Matthew*:   A bit more serious
> *Harry*:   And painful (laughter)
> *James*:   I just can't believe
> *Daniel*:   Kick a somebody in the face day
> *James*:   I just can't believe it happened
> *Vic*:   Can you name the somebody for me?
> *Paul*:   It's kick a slut in the face day
> *Vic*:   Right
> *James*:   And people went around and were doing it . . . I mean that's just so
>   stupid
>
> (Wilson HS: Male focus group)

This initial framing showed that the boys produced the intention behind
the event as in line with regular school rituals or 'jokes'. However, the
quantity of people that got involved, and the level of violence meant that
the event was no longer a joke. Individuals who 'took it too far' were
immediately framed as 'stupid' and as ruining 'a good joke'. Those who
took part in the event were immediately separated and judged:

> *Vic*:   And this escalated yesterday to an actual physical attack?
> *James*:   Yeah
> *Harry*:   Yes
> *James*:   Like, a group of year-10 boys went around kicking girls that they
>   thought were sluts in the face day, like that's what they went
>   around at lunch time doing – in the head
> *Vic*:   Right
> *Harry*:   A bit weird
> *James*:   Who would do that?
>
> (Wilson HS: Male focus group)

The boys framed it was 'a bit weird' that some boys took part in this
'event', and James' summary of 'who would do that?' functions to demon-
strate his (and their collective) distance from those who took part by
separating himself and marginalising those who participated.

Despite these discursive movements, the boys did, however, participate in the culture of 'slut' in that they affirmed some of its meanings. This occurred when they were discussing conflict among girls:

James: ...Rumours play a big part [in causing conflict]
Vic: Rumours about what though?
Harry: Reputations
James: Yeah
Harry: So that could be, well yesterday it was about that sort of – I'm going to say the word – being a slut sort of thing
James: Mmm
Harry: And so that, so many year-10 boys went around kicking who they thought were. And so, that's probably still having a big effect on those girls at the moment
James: Oh yeah. They'd have to ask themselves a lot of questions...like, 'these boys obviously think I am, so...am I?' I mean that would play on their mind a lot

(Wilson HS: Male focus group)

Here the boys demonstrate that being labelled a slut, either through linguistic deployments or through the identification of kicking, was something that had social and cultural meanings. It could be damaging for girls to be known as a slut, and therefore it 'would play on their mind a lot' that the boys thought they were. Harry also asserts the kicking was targeted at particular individuals ('they went around kicking who they thought were [sluts]') and amplifying the label of 'slut'. It also demonstrates that it was the boys who were responsible for deciding who was and who was not a slut and that the girls accepted this power through doubting themselves after being marked by the kick. These constructions were both affirmed and contested by those from the female focus group.

FEMALE STUDENTS' DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Bec: Yesterday this girl made a Facebook group, and it was like... (whole group groans)
Alice: Did you hear about that?
Bec: Kick a slut in the head day right,
Vic: Yeah I've heard about this
Jennifer: And these girls were just getting harassed, and the boys were meaning to do it. Like, a couple of boys in our year did it and we just

laughed it off, cause you don't let it bother you, but like, some girls that have a name for that got really upset by it and everything . . . - like that was just like, so bad. And I'm glad that they're all getting in trouble. Like, it did get out of hand but, I dunno. They're just, they knew it was wrong and they still did it

(Wilson HS: Female focus group)

Here the girls initial narrative focuses on the boys' behaviours; however it complicates notions of responsibility and blame for the event. Jennifer's recount takes the form of a justification of the boys' behaviour; namely that boys will always act that way, and you 'don't let it bother you'. This produces the understanding that boys have inherent and unchangeable characteristics, which they are powerless to change. In a way, this is an embedded form of complicity with the behaviours; Jennifer herself was kicked in the head (as was Bec), and she recounts that 'we just laughed it off'. This demonstrates that they are really not bothered by the behaviour, in fact, that they are part of the 'joke' of 'kick a slut in the head day'.

Those that were not part of the joke included 'some girls that have a name for that [being a slut]' who 'got really upset by it and everything'. Their discourse, therefore, simultaneously functions to criminalise the behaviour of other girls who do get upset, by saying that they 'have a name for it'. In this way it's difficult for girls to respond in a manner that shows their disapproval, it's difficult for them to find power or agency at all, because the platform is embedded with negative gendered and socio-cultural meanings. By stating that those who reject it have a name for themselves (as sluts), it prevents them from rejecting violence towards them. It embeds agency within an 'abject' identity to be avoided.

Finally Jennifer ensures that there is not any sense of a rejection of boys in her portrayal. She asserts that they 'were glad' they got in trouble, yet none of the girls took direct action to intervene in the incidents. They weren't able to voice their disapproval because that would position them within an abject identity, that is, having agency and countering the boys' social agenda. This agency would not place them within intelligible femininity; it would potentially disrupt their femininity and place them within an abject identity that can be persecuted on the basis of gender norms. This was especially the case as their platform for disruption was embedded

with the understanding of 'slut'; that those who rejected the actions of the boys 'have a name for that'.

Jennifer:	. . . And so yesterday at school like all the boys were going around kicking girls in the head
Linda:	Like they actually were
Jennifer:	They were violently
Bec:	I got kicked in the head
Alice:	You did?
Bec:	Yeah
Jennifer:	So did I
Alice:	Really?
Bec:	Yeah
Vic:	Wow, okay
Jennifer:	So just . . . yeah, and then Mr Jensen [the Principal] got up in assembly and sort of said it's unacceptable and whatever, and everyone got in trouble for it. But one girl, a group of boys pushed on the ground and kicked her in the head, like actually kicked her, hard. When we did [get kicked] it wasn't that hard, like we knew it was a joke
Linda:	But that's a joke, yeah
Bec & Alice:	Yeah
Jennifer:	But these boys took it like, to the next level, and were actually kicking her in the head. And like in the back and all that stuff while she was on the ground
Linda:	Was it like a girl who actually had a name for herself though?
Alice:	Yeah
Bec:	I think so
Linda:	That would be why, like, and . . . boys are just . . .
Kathryn:	But that's like . . .
Linda:	boys. They're just like that!

(Wilson HS: Female focus group)

In this excerpt the girls reaffirm Jennifer's initial constructs and add discursive depth and detail. First, they construct that the actions were violent and that they affected a number of people, including two of the group's participants. Jennifer produces a recount of one girl who was attacked with more intense aggression and physical consequences than the others. Her description of the group attack on the girl is both shocking and illustrative of the extent of the incident. However, she qualifies that this was an isolated

incident and that the rest of the kicks experienced by others weren't 'that hard'. Although this was probably meant to lessen the seriousness or the conception of harm of the incident, her following constructions, 'we knew it was a joke', and Linda, Bec and Alice's agreements that the other kicks were different, functions to produce two tiers of subjective experience. Linda automatically assigns the more violent attack as being related to the status and 'reputation' of the victim; 'was it like a girl who actually had a name for herself though?' After an affirmation from the other girls, she follows this with a qualification; 'that would be why'. The severity of the violence is discursively constructed as understandable in light of this information. Additionally, Linda once again refers to the inherent qualities of boys, who are 'just like that!' These constructions function to dislocate responsibility from the boys in social ways (knowing it was just a joke), biological ways (asserting that boys are inherently different and that their behaviours should be expected) and in cultural understandings (that the girl deserved the violence towards her due to her sexual reputation).

This discursive performance, therefore, demonstrated that the girls participated and contributed to systems that actively persecuted them. Jennifer, however, did produce one construction that demonstrated a departure from this standing when she reflected on what she had heard from another male student the day after 'kick a slut in the head day' following the school assembly:

> *Jennifer*:   And he was just walking, he was like, 'oh who cares about that thing, it's not even a big deal', and I felt like turning around and just saying, 'you're not a girl, and you didn't get kicked in the head. You don't know what it feels like for someone to do that to you', and like, you were probably the one that was doing all the kicking in the head, you know being a smart ass about it

> (Wilson HS: Female focus group)

This quote demonstrated that Jennifer had been affected by the incident, despite participating in 'laugh[ing] it off' and knowing that 'it was a joke'. She cemented that there were negative consequences to the event and that these were felt by the girls who had been targeted. There is also an insinuation of emotional consequence, knowing 'what it feels like for someone to do that to you'. This references the power of the event and the assignation of 'slut' onto girls. Although this is a particularly passionate quote, it is also important to recognise that although Jennifer 'felt like

turning around and just saying' that his statement was not okay, her actions did not reflect this, and his discursive performance went uninterrupted. This may have been in reference to the culture of understanding and going along with 'jokes' or dominant social meanings, or a deference to a boy who had a particular (powerful) position in the school, seeing as he was 'probably the one that was doing all the kicking in the head'.

TEACHER DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

The final constructions that produced understandings of the event at Wilson were those of the teachers and deputy principals at the school. This was raised initially in the deputy principal interviews in the context of gendered bullying:

> *David*: The specific Facebook one, was the posting on Facebook about slap a slut day
> *Vic*: Mmmm
> *David*: So that particular thing ended up being where girls within the school were then slapped by boys within the school, as part of that slap a slut day. So that was actually quite specific in terms of bullying those particular kids ... I still don't see that as a one-off incident as actually being bullying. It's an inappropriate action which is harassment, and it's ... once somebody realises that they're doing it as bullying that's when ... that would suit certainly the definition of bullying, is that it's actually a constant thing. So that was a one-off incident actually, where they were dealt with and that sort of stuff
>
> (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

Here David refers to what 'bullying' is and importantly what it is not. He asserts that as it was a 'one off incident' he didn't 'see that ... as actually being bullying'. A further reduction of seriousness related to the number of students that were involved in the event:

> *David*: But there might've been about sixty kids who went to that particular ... or registered for that particular day, but sixty kids out of ...
> *Tony*: 800?
> *David*: 800 kids is very small. But I just got after that assembly too I just got the impression that there was a lot of kids going 'oh ...'
> *Tony*: What are you talking about?

David: What are you talking about. You know, what are you actually talking about, did this actually happen? So there was a group, and still a larger group, but again as a percentage of the school population it was actually quite small

                         (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

In this context, the deputies moved onto a construction of the event as localised misguided humour, asserting that the perpetrators were certain boys with 'a history of poor behaviour...[who] thought it was funny...or a joke':

Tony: Certainly I think that the boys involved at our school had a history of poor behaviour, and for whatever reason thought it was funny, and so they participated in it thinking it was funny or a joke.

David: Peer influenced too, I mean the reason why David Smith would have gone over and actually done it would have been for the reaction he would have got from his peers

Tony: Would've got a laugh, yeah. Not sure why...there was a senior boy who did it too, but I'm not sure why...I mean he thought it was funny to start with

                         (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

In this way Tony and David frame the event as being perpetrated by a certain type of boys with significant discipline issues as well as being a 'peer-influenced' incident that would have been motivated by the boys trying to get 'a laugh' from their friends. This was partially disrupted by a discussion on 'how they picked the girls':

Tony: ...now how they picked the girls, that's probably an issue. I...I...

David: It wasn't aggressive kicking either, it was sort of like a...(makes a kicking motion)

Vic: Like a tap?

David: Yeah...

Tony: But very much making fun of them, and I would have to say particularly with the...cos it was certainly a year 10 group and a year 12 group. I don't think the year 12 boys singled out any particular girl based on any reason, however I think the year ten one did target some girls who they perceived as sluts. Um, for

whatever reason, whatever they had, I'm not sure, but I think that was more targeted too. They actually went and sought the girls out who they were going to kick, where I don't think the year 12 boy did that, I think it was just opportunistic for him. Um, and so, certainly I think that any girl who has perhaps made it known that they have done something with a boy, will be called a slut

<div align="center">(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)</div>

This construction contains a variety of complex and conflicting constructs. Tony locates 'an issue' that might require some kind of address or disruption, but David interrupts with another construction that he poses as important, that 'it wasn't aggressive kicking', and was more of a light tap. However, Tony maintains that its purpose was 'very much making fun of them', demonstrating that problematic considerations remain, while yet again rejecting concerns of aggression or misogyny within a framework of the more passive 'making fun'. He then establishes that the boys in year 10 'did target some girls that they perceived as sluts' and 'actually went and sought the girls out'. This again asserts that there was some kind of strategy or campaign on behalf of the aggressors, however still lacks conceptual awareness of a minority group (i.e. the girls) being targeted by a more powerful majority. Through finalising that the girls at the school 'will be called a slut' if they 'made it known that they have done something with a boy', Tony references one aspect of the wider culture that led to this event occurring. It was also understood that this culture included parental discourses about the inherent 'nature' of boys, and the barrier that this presented the school.

> *David*:   The reaction from some of the parents was also, perhaps a little bit disappointing in terms of their response. You know, you would've thought it was absolute outrage, but it wasn't necessarily outrage, it was more sort of 'oh you know they shouldn't have done it, but you know, boys will be boys' sort of stuff. So they accepted the fact that is that the school had to deal with it and it wasn't appropriate, but you would have thought it would have been outrage if you were a parent of those particular kids, so you go back to again some of the barriers that we face when dealing with bullying types of behaviours

<div align="center">(Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)</div>

It is interesting in this section that David is disappointed with the lack of parent outrage, when there is also a lack of outrage not only in his account, but in the on-going discursive production from both he and Tony in their conversation. Almost every construction minimises aspects (such as intention and the level of harm caused) of the event that may have prioritised an institutional intervention. This construction further highlights that even if the deputies had wanted to perform a disruption of the behaviours, they faced barriers from the local community and the parents. Again, this further closes down options for addressing the behaviours in a cohesive and consistent way.

Another sociocultural aspect that the deputies noted was that there was no backlash from the student population against the boys who kicked the girls. This was related back to their standing on the social hierarchy:

> *Tony*:   No, they were untouchable boys sort of . . .
> *David*:   But there wasn't a backlash at all, with regards to it, there was more like a . . .
> *Tony*:   There was probably an under backlash of . . . you know, but no one's going to go and front David Smith and say 'you're a dickhead for doing that', cause he'd probably kick them

> (Wilson HS: Deputy principal interview)

This showed that the boys who took part in it were socially powerful within the school and perhaps could have been discursively placed by the students in the 'cool' or 'popular group' that enforced gendered boundaries. Ironically, the danger of the student's rebelling against David Smith for kicking them consisted of the threat of 'he'd probably kick them'.

John from the teachers group similarly constructed that there was a kind of 'backlash', but it was not necessarily directed towards the perpetrating boys, and represented 'an under backlash', where the girls spoke to teachers about their concerns:

> *John*:   Well I was really proud of them because they [the girls] were horrified. They were really upset about it and they were totally horrified. So it was good to see, and they said, one of the girls said to me, our vice captain, she said 'that sort of stuff should not happen at our school', and I said 'yeah, you're right', and I think they realised . . . because that's . . . I think that's the first time we've had a really serious assembly like that, isn't it? And the deputy and the principal both spoke very well, and we don't

often see that. And they...you could have heard a pin drop, which is pretty unusual at this school

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

This quote again demonstrated that female students were affected and 'horrified' by the event and that they communicated their concerns to teachers. John's attribution of pride in these girls functions to show that this reaction was not necessarily predictable or expected, and that he may instead have believed that the girls would not produce a rejection of the behaviours. The response from the school was 'a really serious assembly' where 'you could have heard a pin drop', demonstrating that the students were engaged with the process and were taking the messages on board. This also showed that despite discursive movements to reduce responsibility or seriousness on the boys by the deputies, the school did produce a swift, direct and 'serious' intervention:

Vic: What do you think was serious about it that the school responded so swiftly and kind of...seriously?
Dejinna: Well it was across all three high schools
Sarah: Yeah I was going to say it's so public
Dejinna: Yeah, it's public

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

Visibility for the school in this situation was perceived as the primary concern and rationale behind the response. This was also in the context of the event being 'followed up a bit by the local media as well', making it 'so public'.

The final consideration and construction by the teachers was related to their discursive positioning of the students that were targeted during 'kick a slut in the head day':

Vic: So she was...you know...
Sarah: Perceived as being...the slut, and a particular boy went and kicked her in the head. Um, following up from that Facebook page. He thought it was a joke
Vic: And was she injured?
Grace: She's not back at school yet, is she? Or is she?
Celine: Yeah
Katrina: Yeah, she is

John:	But there was some really nice girls as well – it was just random
Frieda:	They were, yeah, because they were just walking past at a particular time
John:	Yeah a couple of girls in my year 11 . . . who were absolutely delightful, they were hit . . . so . . .
Celine:	So were some in year 12

(Wilson HS: Head teacher focus group 2)

In this section of dialogue John and Frieda actively construct that the targeting of many girls was 'just random' as 'there was some really nice girls [who were kicked] as well', some 'who were absolutely delightful'. Although John potentially assumed that these comments would portray that the event wasn't necessarily targeting just the 'sluts', and therefore the violence is less problematic as it is not aimed at particular identities, this statement functions to position 'slut' as a category of individuals that is in direct opposition to 'delightful' or 'nice girls'.

Discourses: Kick a Slut in the Head Day

The following discourses have each been represented in other parts of the previous chapters. For this reason, the specific FDA stages have not been repeated in detail, although references to them have been made in text where necessary. For further information on the discourses, 'seriousness' references the discourse of 'hierarchy of seriousness', found in Chapter 4 beneath the construct of 'intervention and response to bullying'. 'Essentialism' as a discourse is detailed in Chapter 4 after the construct of 'bullying'. 'Joking' is a discourse within Chapter 5 beneath student constructions of 'bullying', and 'intelligible femininity' is also referenced in Chapter 5 in reference to the discursive constructions of 'girls'.

Seriousness and Essentialism: Deputy Principals

The most prominent discourse that was produced by teachers and the deputies was that of 'seriousness' (i.e. referencing the event against a hierarchy of seriousness that they produced in 'teacher realities' from their constructions of interventions and responses to bullying), constructed with references to essentialist definitions of bullying. The deputy principals utilised this discourse to qualify 'kick a slut in the head day' in terms of its level of harm and to their roles of intervention and response.

In this construction, these discursive movements took a number of forms. The deputies especially engaged in meaning making around the numbers or proportion of students 'attending' the event, for example, indicating that there were 'only' 60 students in the school that participated, a 'very small' proportion of the student body. Their production of students even knowing about the event also added to this; they asserted that most of the students at the assembly didn't know what had happened. These two understandings of event participants and event knowledge were used to illustrate that the level of seriousness was lower as not many individuals were involved in the event. The deputies worked to reduce conceptions of the event as widespread and as problematic, rendering it as an isolated event where 'there was a group' that participated.

This 'group' was additionally depicted as consisting of those who were behaviourally undesirable or deviant; 'the boys involved at our school had a history of poor behaviour'. This portrayal disregards any wider sociocultural meanings and frames the behaviours from an essentialist or individualist perspective, pathologising boys' bullying behaviours and dislocating their responsibility for their acts. The behaviours of the boys are located within their direct spheres and understandings, and are produced as inherent, rather than referencing any wider social, gendered or cultural meanings in the school. It also dismisses any recognition of the power differentials that may impact upon minority groups within the school. Girls, those with non-white ethnicities, diverse sexualities or gender identities, or disabilities are not positioned as being at any kind of disadvantage within the school's social hierarchies. Equally, there is no interrogation of those who have stronger social positions as being those that are the agents of aggression or violence. As the perpetrators remain within these defined boundaries (of a particular 'type' of perpetrator that represented a low proportion of the school population), the level of seriousness is inferred to be decreasing. This functions to resist the power of the act, the language or the gendered boundaries and power structures that it illustrates.

This construction of a less harmful or serious event is furthered by David's description of the acts that occurred; 'It wasn't aggressive kicking either'; he affirms that it was more 'like a tap'. As he removes the concept of aggression he also reduces the understanding of violence. This functions to position aggressive physical violence as more serious on the

hierarchy of seriousness and additionally to locate that this incident did not approach that intensity.

David also extends the discourse of seriousness to effectively remove the concept of bullying in its entirety. His construction of the event as a 'one-off incident' that he didn't see 'as actually being bullying' immediately functions to withdraw discursive power from the event. In the current political and social climate that requires schools to effectively address 'bullying', framing the event as being entirely different from this term enables Wilson to show that bullying has not occurred, and therefore they are not falling short of their requirements. Rather it is framed as an 'inappropriate action' that required intervention and education, to allow the individuals to recognise that if it continued then it would become bullying. In this way he produces the understanding that the individuals that were perpetrating the violence were unaware that their actions were 'inappropriate' or unacceptable, as they haven't reached the stage where 'once somebody realises that they're doing it as bullying'. This production positions students as irresponsible and reactive, requiring constant boundaries as they are unable to regulate or hold awareness of their own performances. It also rejects the notion that the school could take any actions to address these incidents prior to their occurrence. This discourse is also relevant in terms of the subject positions that the deputies take up. They come to represent the position of an external responder; providers of the required judgement of the event. This asserts their power over the credibility of the incident or the participants. Practically it forces a reactive approach at all times for teachers but it also dismisses incidents that can be especially harmful (physically, emotionally or socially) as less valuable than others that hold essentialist values.

Joking – Students

Although 'joking' was recognised as a motivation for student participation in 'kick a slut in the head day' by all of the participant groups, student groups were the only ones to undertake its discursive deployment. The boys group invested in it initially by producing the context of the student 'days', for example, 'hug a tall person day', which were seen as something that occurs online 'and then at school it's a bit of a joke that comes up'. 'Kick a slut in the head day' was seen as the same idea; but 'somebody took that too far' by actually taking part in the

kicking in a violent way. This meant that the 'joke' was ruined; 'I hate it when you have a good joke and someone takes it too far'. This functioned to show that the day was never intended to be offensive and that a 'joke' that was harmless in its conception was ruined by 'a lot of people' who 'took it too far'.

In terms of the girls, they utilised the joking discourse differently and to more powerful effects in terms of position, practice and subjectivity. They defined the joke in terms of the boys' production, yet invested themselves in its constitution through as they 'laugh[ed] it off, cause you don't let it bother you'. When they got kicked they 'knew it was a joke', and therefore they didn't let it upset them, as only the 'girls that have a name for that got really upset by it'. Through this discourse they create two binary practical outcomes with attached identities. The initial positioning seeks to show that you are either a 'slut', or you are not. If you were not a slut, you 'knew it was a joke', and therefore could laugh it off. If you were a slut, that was when you 'got really upset by it'. In this way, the positioning is inherently linked to practical outcomes. It becomes practically impossible to hold a disruptive position for the aggression as the discursive position is loaded attributions of an unintelligible femininity. Through the girls' own constructions and discursive deployments, the joke discourse increased subjective boundaries and reduced practical options.

The only aspect that demonstrated a resistance to this understanding was that the girls did produce separate constructions of their discomfort, especially through Jennifer's later reflection of what she 'felt like turning around and just saying' to the boy who was dismissing the negative meanings or outcomes for the girls from the incident; 'you're not a girl, and you didn't get kicked in the head. You don't know what it feels like for someone to do that to you'. This quote, from a person who was kicked, recognised that there were real emotional consequences for the girls involved, even for one who just 'laughed it off' because she 'knew it was a joke'. It does show, however, that her practical possibilities were still restricted; she restrained herself from reacting towards him in that way, potentially because of the discursive 'slut' position that this behaviour would place her in. The only subjective positions that were made available through this discourse consisted of those that resided within an intelligible femininity that resisted conflict and remained docile in the face of these attacks.

Intelligible Femininity – Female Students and Teachers

This discourse was invested in by the girls and by the teachers in different ways. Both made ascriptions to socially normative versions of what a girl was and should be. For the girls, this took the form of understandings as to why one particular girl was targeted more violently than the others. The immediate reaction to the description of the most violent incident consisted of reasoning why this had occurred, and took the form of 'was it like a girl who actually had a name for herself though?' This statement served to mark the boundaries of what was an acceptable (and intelligible) form of femininity. The girls immediately sought to establish if the girl who was attacked had moved outside of this realm into the 'slut' identity, and perhaps therefore was deserving of the aggression.

The teachers also engaged in a construction of intelligible femininity in the context of 'kick a slut in the head day'. Their construction of the alternate and potentially binary identities of 'delightful' or 'nice girls' functioned to demonstrate that it was impossible to be a 'nice' girl and a 'slut' at the same time. In this way, the discourse perpetuated the understanding of these deviant identities and functioned to locate specific performances of femininity as being more desirable than others. This has practical implications for girl performances as teachers convey discursive meanings about appearances or social performances. It also holds inferences of teacher interpretations regarding those who attract certain social treatments or interactions – perhaps to the extent of understanding that some girls are more likely (and deserving) to be targeted in negative ways than others.

CONCLUSION

Overall, 'kick a slut in the head day' held real significance as an illustration of the policing of gendered subjectivities. Its existence as a public 'event' on widely used social media functioned as a discursive reminder of the boundaries of intelligible femininity. The fact that 'sluts' were positioned alongside an acceptable (and promoted) form of violence acted to commensurate violence with a discursively rejected sexual identity. Those who are named within this identity were, and continue to be, marginalised simply through the existence of such an event.

By viewing 'kick a slut in the head day' as having three significant movements, its social media foundation, its physical enactment and its

discursive (re)construction, we can re-view its positioning within structures of gendered meanings. Rather than a random or unforeseen event, as voiced through teacher discourses, I argue that it was a representation of the gendered structures that maintained social hierarchies and orders at Wilson High. Indeed, it was an incident that had a reactive response in relation to the 'act', rather than the pre-determining conditions that facilitated the incident. The discourses that followed the event are evidence of this; the event in itself was not a site of change or of surprise, but was merely another ritual that reflected, communicated and reconstituted the boundaries of intelligible (and expected) feminine performances from girls. Each of the participants discursively contributed to its strength and resisted intervention in its deployment through using a number of strategies, including the reduction of seriousness, the understanding of 'joking' and the construction of intelligible femininity.

For this reason the 'intervention' of the assembly is unlikely to make any difference. The school assembly functioned as a one-off reprimand for the event, for the single act of 'kick a slut in the head day'. However, it is extremely unlikely that this one moment would result in a tangible shift in school culture in light of the continual dismissal of female student experiences, lack of recognition of broader situations of power and social rewards of normative forms of aggression along gendered lines. This leaves us with significant questions as to how we can prevent these events from happening, as to how we can disrupt dominant discourses in whole school contexts. At Wilson the discursive context erased the lived experience of girls by situating their problems as natural, their violence as laughable and their hurt as fleeting. Within these circumstances, and combined with the social benefits for boys who engage with misogyny, aggression against girls is almost certain.

Recognising Power, Privilege and Context

This chapter contains five brief sections with concluding messages from this research. The first details the main aims of the study and its research questions. The second section identifies the key research findings, specifically drawing links between the discourses that were produced by the teachers, principals and students and illustrating the discursive realities that they constructed in collaboration. These collaborative findings produced three overarching themes: 'gender regulation', 'institutional influence on social norms' and 'inevitability', which are outlined below. This is followed by a description of the study's contributions to the research field and some concluding thoughts.

Retracing Footsteps: Research Questions, Aims and Methods

At the beginning of this book, I argued that previous research that has examined 'bullying' predominantly utilised quantitative methods and drew upon psychologised, individualistic theoretical approaches. Although these conceptualisations of bullying provided simplicity and benefit at practical (institutional) levels, these 'essentialist' approaches failed to recognise the larger context from which bullying arises. The outcome of this shortfall is that anti-bullying policies and programs have been compromised, and those that utilise these foundations continue to

fail to meaningfully disrupt aggression and persecution in schools. In other words, anti-bullying initiatives are failing, and students continue to be unsafe and have their identities compromised in schooling environments. This is a crucial understanding going forward. Scholarship has demonstrated the need for research around school cultures (including those of conflict and 'bullying') to begin with a more flexible, dynamic and socially informed framework of analysis that acknowledges student and teacher positions, power and experiences in a broader context. Adopting these understandings, in this research, I aimed to re-frame 'bullying' as a social phenomenon that can involve any and all students, rather than a select pathologised few. Disrupting bullying that is based upon gender or sexuality is not only relevant for those who are sexually or gender diverse, but this kind of bullying affects the whole school community. From this understanding, I undertook a detailed social and discursive examination of the contexts at Wilson and Grove High to understand why certain violence emerges within schools. This approach to research also had the aim of reducing former concentrations of research on particular (privileged) notions of what bullying was; particularly that girls' experiences of bullying are marginalised and promoted as 'psychological', 'not a problem', 'invisible', 'internalised' and 'neglected' (Ringrose 2008, p. 510). While research in the past has neglected to address the inequalities that girls face in schools and the social and cultural processes that inform these inequalities (Blaise 2005b; Duncan 2004; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005; Renold 2003, 2006; Ringrose 2008; Youdell 2005), in this research I attempted to redress these shortfalls.

Specifically, I aimed to explore the roles that schools (and the individuals within them) play in the reproduction of institutional, gendered and social inequities and aggressions. Through examining focus group data, the ways in which discourses at each of these strata functioned as 'stylised acts' began to illustrate how power was perceived, achieved and maintained. Similarly, the ways in which individuals could utilise particular discourses for strategic purposes in either institutional or social settings represented broader, pervasive and significant collective understandings.

Research Findings

In its initial conception, this research was designed to investigate teacher and student constructions of bullying, school processes and social hierarchies. However, as the study progressed, it became clear that the discursive

productions of participants held several levels of meaning that transgressed, complicated and complemented understandings within these products. Discursive productions were each interrelated; what teachers produced as knowledge of bullying could impact upon their relationships with boys or girls as collective groups or as individuals. What students conceptualised as acceptable social interactions resulted in disciplinary acts and the depletion of performative diversity in their schools. Grove and Wilson produced exceptionally detailed and dramatic accounts of what it meant to be an individual with investments in these schools. Teachers and students alike produced discourses that held direct or indirect implications for many other settings or individuals.

The epistemological frame of these findings again references its theoretical underpinnings of Foucault and Butler, and in its intended form:

> . . . does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based . . . [It seeks to show] that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy.

<div align="right">(Foucault 2000, pp. 456–457)</div>

In other words, I have resisted in arbitrating on the discursive frames of the participants and their acts as being either positive or negative. Rather, I have attempted to explore the performances of participants in terms of their discursive implications – the positional, practical and subjective outcomes that the discourses conclude in. This promotes the understanding that acts are not necessarily meaningful in their initial production, or as isolated performances, but as they are constructed through discourse they become embedded with power and practical meanings, closing down or opening up particular subjective positions or possibilities. The overarching themes that developed from the analysis of these discourses within these schools were 'gender regulation', 'institutional influence on social norms' and 'inevitability'.

Gender Regulation

One of the key findings of this research was the understanding of 'gender regulation', which permeated most of the discourses that were produced by participants in some way. 'Gender regulation' is as a way of viewing

bullying as a system of ordered performances, centred on complex inclusions and exclusions related to dominant gendered subjectivities (Benjamin et al. 2003). The literature review described that gender regulation holds Foucauldian concepts of discipline, power and surveillance, and facilitates or restricts realities through particular discourses. This additionally informed hierarchical positioning of individuals depending on their (hetero)performative success. This process was a constant feature of participant discourses in this study.

In the previous two chapters, two levels of discourse were examined– those of teachers (and principals) and those of students. Their discourses, informed by power and knowledge, made particular subjective positions available and hence informed 'realities' that the individuals and groups resided within. Although these two discursive levels were different, they possessed one inter-related theme, that of the expected and accepted performances of others within the school.

These discourses took many forms. Within the institutional body (of head teachers, deputy principals and principals) they could be viewed as those that detailed the phenomenon of bullying including the discourses of 'essentialism', the 'bully/victim binary' and 'normative cruelties'. Each of these assigned gendered definitions of success in social worlds, including those of conflict and its resolution. Each of these discourses assumed that when individuals ascribed to particular (gendered) subjective norms, their differences would be negated and they would begin to 'fit in'. Indeed, each discourse referenced understandings of the constitutive outside and abject identities and ascribed the identities of those who resided in these as problematic and requiring change if they wanted to receive equitable social treatment.

The underlying knowledge within these constructions was also present in each of the student constructions of 'boys', 'girls', 'bullying', 'homophobia and homophobic bullying' and 'kick a slut in the head day' (Chapter 6). Although these constructions covered a wealth of themes and discursive knowledge, there remained a common thread that 'if you're different, you're gonna get teased' (Grove HS: Male student focus group). This illustrated the threat of the abject identities that were constantly looming. Students were not only forced to perform particular identities to resist their labelling, but also to engage in the consistent marginalisation and repudiation of difference to assert that they could not be linked to it.

A particularly important aspect the subject/abject divide was that of 'joking', which was complex in its interactional functions as well as its

potential to attribute individuals positively or negatively. Through dislocating blame and responsibility while still communicating performative requirements, its deployment evaded teacher intervention and revoked power of individuals to respond negatively, lest they be labelled as socially incompetent. Joking in this research represented many different social and discursive functions, and will be an important aspect of future research in this area.

In each of the subjective outcomes of student discourses, there existed understandings of gender regulation where individuals were surveilled and judged on their gendered performances and therefore altered these to avoid movement into the 'constitutive outside'. Indeed, each of their discourses referenced their continuous awareness and involvement with their social hierarchies and that gender was an integral aspect of these. As intelligible genders held particular (s)expectations and performative constraints, their subjective experiences required continual management and review. Girls and boys each experienced (and contributed to) prohibitive and constrictive social realities that had a heavy emphasis on heteronormative gendered performances. These were evidenced by the continual refusal of abject gendered identities such as 'gay' and 'slut', epithets that through their continual invocation marked and policed the boundaries of intelligibility. It became clear that rather than a common sense, understanding of homophobia as operating in a way that indicated a 'heterosexual us/homosexual them' binary (Ferfolja 2007), there were significant implications for all individuals who were subject to regulation and policing through these discursive iterations. These epithets demonstrated that the social sphere was capable in consistently identifying 'othered' sexual identities and working to stigmatise and punish these (Sedgwick 1990). Indeed, the data directly refuted that the discourse of 'slut' is not an issue of young people's safety, despite some students' and teachers' claims.

'Scrub' was also utilised at Wilson High to demonstrate classed (and possibly racial) boundaries of intelligible (and desirable) femininity. When either 'slut' or 'scrub' was invoked, the consequences of the label were significant and led to social exclusion and abjection, demonstrating the tenuous hold that girls had on social capital and their position on the gendered social hierarchy. Indeed, it was understood that girls lost their popularity far more quickly than boys did, and the collective construction of their lack of relational cohesiveness (or 'sisterhood') continually showed that normative femininity was signified by 'behind the back', 'bitchiness'.

Despite these discourses constructing a bleak and precarious social landscape for females, their bullying or conflictive performances were continually demoted on the 'hierarchy of seriousness' by teachers. As institutional discourses combined with that of the productions of students' social realities, it became clear that each of these held gendered values and contributed to school cultures where gendered inequity (and regulation) was present and promoted at both student and institutional levels.

Institutional Influence on Social Norms

Educational research is often concerned with the link between institutional (or school) policies or practices and how these shape the lived experiences and performances of students. This research was concerned with identifying the ways in which discourses from school leadership held implications for student performances or understandings in the area of bullying or broader social landscapes. It became apparent that Grove and Wilson were both institutions that produced socio-cultural meanings around bullying, gender and social norms.

Although the two previous chapters outlined the discursive distance between student and teacher realities, the discourses themselves were not necessarily isolated in their reach or influence. The discourses of those with institutional power (head teachers and principals) had implications for the subjective positions of the students in their respective schools. Although some of these have been outlined above within the concept of 'gender regulation', others represent less explicitly gendered focuses and instead influence the establishment of social normalcy or success. Others still impact on the performances of students as they encourage or discourage certain acts in other settings.

An example of this is the pervasive discourse of the 'hierarchy of seriousness' and the staff at both schools' consistent referral to the understanding of this scale. 'Seriousness' was a concept that recurred across a range of discourses and worked to demarcate acts that required intervention from those that did not. In doing so, this production delineated a scale of value that referenced social strata and violence as well as gendered norms. This scale resulted in the teachers discarding certain (non-serious) acts as being harmless or a waste of time, where others (that were serious) were disrupted decisively and collaboratively.

This theme also contained embedded understandings of the 'bully/victim binary', where knowledge of individual identities was utilised to

situate their experiences along the hierarchy and determine the next course of action. Although this discourse and its inter-discursive relationships were complex, it held significant messages for students about teacher responses. Constructions that drew from this discourse assumed that some acts and individuals were more valuable than others, and that their voices would be prioritised regardless of the personal experiences of harm or distress. It was also assumed that girl violence was more 'difficult', petty and 'minor' than that of boys, and that there was little point in intervening as it was time consuming and frequently didn't result in a satisfactory outcome. These values, communicated through discourse that was unchallenged and naturalised, situated students in a complex web of meaning that qualified their experiences against shifting and inequitable criteria. As teachers imposed values that they drew from the hierarchy of seriousness, some acts became acceptable and normalised, such as the usage of 'slut' or 'gay', affirming to students that these performances were not problematic and not 'serious'. Boy and girl students were positioned differently and knowledge about their gendered lives went unquestioned, fortifying expected behaviours along biological lines.

Therefore, a major finding from this research is that discourses that are utilised within schools by staff, or especially by leadership groups, lead to the establishment of collective knowledge that is cemented within response protocols. This knowledge feeds from 'common sense' understandings about student characteristics. A student's gender, sexuality, social class, ethnicity and abilities determine how they are positioned by the institution, and the subsequent inclusions or exclusions that they face. This was indeed the case at Grove and Wilson, where teachers and students alike invested in knowing who was 'the kid most likely' (Saltmarsh 2012) to behave in particular ways. The pathologisation, naming and attributions that occurred at the schools produced powerful discursive realities in which individuals could only move within particular subjective boundaries. Although these procedures may not have been formal or entrenched in explicit policies, they were enacted in discourse and practice, representing a more realistic portrayal of school culture and priorities than any written words. As students moved within these discursive realities, they were impacted by the collective understandings of what it was to be a boy or a girl in relation to any social performances – particularly around conflict and bullying. They were also placed upon a hierarchy of seriousness that continuously

assigned them with appropriate teacher responses according to their subjective position.

Although this is a particularly gendered focus of this discourse, it also has applications in terms of the wider understanding promoted by teachers and students of 'fitting in'. As 'fitting in' was continually constructed as a social goal and standard, so were the performances that were illustrated as being conducive to this outcome. Teachers were implicated in their understandings of what led to bullying in that they constructed the victim as being at fault, or a 'serial victim' who continually demonstrated their inability to conduct successful social interactions. 'Fitting in' became a discursive production that had embedded performative measures; staff and students alike espoused that those who fit in possessed social safety, capital and aptitude to negotiate current and future social worlds. Those who were 'victims' were dichotomously positioned as socially deviant, abject or failures. The label of 'serial victim' was affixed to those individuals, ensuring that their experiences declined in significance as the frequencies of incidents increased. Teachers and students alike conveyed discourses that suggested that if they simply altered their performances to 'fit in' they would not experience these negative outcomes, continually attenuating the responsibility of change onto the victim. This adds to the dearth of formal findings regarding victim-blaming discourses by teachers and again reiterates the need for further research in this area. It also, however, affirms the calls that 'teacher preparation and professional development need to provide models of practice that represent a decisive shift away from pathologising discourses of student behaviour' (Robinson et al. 2012a, p. 187). This pathologisation was prevalent in this research; the labels and attributes that teachers affixed to various students restricted their ability to transgress subjective positions.

I must also iterate that this research does not assume that teachers and principals in these schools are operating in isolation or apart from the institutional norms of schools. Indeed, their situation within their schools, and their schools' situation within broader educational matrices, recommends that their discourses operate within socially and culturally understood terms of reference. The gender inequality, heterosexism, misogyny and homophobia that emerged during this study mirrors a multitude of other sociological works that note the ways that those lacking status and power in society also experience marginalisation and exclusion in schooling systems. The (lack of) reference from teachers to larger, endorsed policies and practices in these areas reflect a silence that continues to normalise and

conceal gender-based violence and homophobia. Indeed, the educational system continues to constitute and perpetuate discrimination, reinforcing it through covert and overt discriminatory practices (Robinson et al. 2002). The addition of essentialist bullying policies in New South Wales, Australia and other western educational settings further the 'muddying' of these waters through transforming incidents into a reactive personality problem, rather than recognising the social, cultural, political and historical power differentials that emerge in these contexts. What this book contends throughout is that the socio-cultural productions of discourse continually draw power away from particular individuals and particular events. While this occurs, teachers, as well as students, may be left with subjective outcomes of inevitability, hopelessness and invisibility.

Inevitability

In both of the above main findings, there was one discursive theme that was persistently common – 'inevitability'. This was a concluding subjective outcome in almost all of the discourses that were offered from teachers (and some from the students). Although it was potentially a discursive inference in that its presence was implicit (rather than explicit) most of the time, it represents an important finding of the research.

As teachers constructed inevitability in the discourses of 'the bully/victim binary', 'normative cruelties', 'external influences' of bullying, 'gender-based bullying' and 'slut', it proved to be a dominant subjective position. Its production indicated that participants felt that particular acts or performances were unavoidable and impossible to prevent. Equally, it meant that their discourses were situated in an apathetic acceptance of this certainty; there was no potential course of action that could disrupt its occurrence. This meant that participants were often located in a position where they may identify that an object or incident is negative, but are unwilling to confront it or attempt to change it. Their discourses became preoccupied with justifying their inaction through investments in 'inevitability'.

This was a troubling outcome, especially coming from teachers, traditionally conceptualised as agents of change or those who enact policy and practice in schools. While Ryan and Morgan's (2011) research detailed participant productions of inevitability, these originated from student participants who were invested in the 'covering up' of bullying due to difficult discursive positions. Here, the consistent teacher investments in it could point to something far more troubling that they have indeed 'given

up' on the possibility of change or betterment in their schools. Indeed, the discourses (and silences) of inevitability 'effectively override accepted knowledge about pedagogic practice, professional responsibilities and institutional accountabilities' (Saltmarsh 2012, p. 36). In light of this, I echo Sue Saltmarsh in suggesting that this research calls 'for closer examinations of the complicity of professional discourses and institutional structures in the production of symbolic and material violence' (Saltmarsh 2012, p. 36), and attempt to engage teachers in re-framing their perspectives of bullying to invigorate their potential to forge change.

Enacting any meaningful change is only possible if two aspects are acknowledged and meaningfully interwoven into anti-bullying strategies. First, that each individual teacher and school's context and narrative is unique and that this must be understood in order to embed meaningful outcomes. Second, that the institution of education generally espouses particular values, norms and beliefs that result in the marginalisation and exclusion of various groups and individuals. Through combining these two understandings, it is possible to address what may be seen to many as an 'inevitable' outcome.

Disrupting Inevitability: Interrupting Heteronormativity

At the crux of the issues faced by each of the schools – including the subjective conclusion of inevitability – was the powerful presence of heteronormativity. As the overt and covert social rules that define 'normal' gender, sexuality, appearance and behaviour (Heffernan 2010), heteronormativity relentlessly impressed itself on the school protocols and on the social lives of the students. It asserted the presence of two strictly dichotomous gender possibilities with particular sexuality alignments, and as such, teachers and students implicitly enforced the boundaries of these binary options. Not only were these gender possibilities tied to sexualities, but they worked in complex constellations that linked with performative, institutional and interactional options (Youdell 2005). For example, as 'female forms' of conflict were seen as bound to their sex/gender, they were equally positioned as inevitable, and therefore no intervention was required, regardless of the hurt or consequences involved. In this way heteronormative expectations and norms around sex, gender and sexuality were integral in producing teacher (and student) violence and non-interventions. At the same time, students were expected to perform their gender 'correctly' through their subject choices, extra-curricular

activities, their social and familial interactions, how they wore their hair, clothes, make up and even how they spoke. Each of these attributes was continuously measured and surveilled, resulting in a constrictive, determining and sometimes erasing force on their subjective potentials. It was not surprising, in light of beliefs that the 'problems' were linked with what they perceived to be fixed elements (gender), that many of the participants felt that change was unlikely or impossible.

Recognising and interrupting this omnipotent force is difficult yet crucial work in contemporary schools. If they are able to loosen the grip of gender and sexuality expectations upon and from young people, schools become more productive places – academically, emotionally and socially. Research from California (Russell et al. 2006) has shown that including LGBT issues in the curriculum, and as such promoting conversations around gender and sexual diversity, results in both LGBT and straight/cisgender students feeling safer at schools. This research also showed that school climates at these schools are better, with levels of harassment (including the spreading of mean rumours or lies, teasing about appearance and bullying about gender or sexuality) significantly decreasing.

For heteronormativity to be disrupted, introducing content that illustrates LGBTIQ identities into the curriculum cannot be the only approach – however it is a good start. The first steps to loosening the grips of a constructed yet ubiquitous binary must be to illustrate the existence of other possibilities – producing continuums of sexualities and gender through their introduction and presence in the realities of young people. DePalma and Atkinson argue that to disrupt heteronormativity in schools, there can be no more passive complicity in its existence. Indeed, a 'quiet acceptance', or even an unawareness of heteronormativity that tolerates difference and may produce general anti-bullying discourses (as was the case at both Wilson and Grove), merely enables heteronormativity to continue and expand its functions over the school community. Their recommendation is to actively combat heteronormativity within school environments; disrupting silences and invisibilities by including (and emphasising) lesbian and gay histories while simultaneously attacking heterogender stereotypes, or 'by troubling the binaries implicit in the very categories of lesbian/gay, boy/girl' (DePalma and Atkinson 2009, p. 4).

At Wilson and Grove, it was interesting to see that the students, in many ways, had very little knowledge of people with diverse genders or sexualities. Indeed, the heteronorm was so privileged that it was scandalous when anyone transgressed its boundaries (either actually or

purportedly). Perhaps increased discussions in the classrooms of the distinct regular-ness of LGBTIQ identities would be helpful for them to be able to resist the tendency to perform in this way. However, equally important is the possibility for students and teachers to produce a more critical way of addressing sex, gender and sexuality in their everyday lives. The gendered restrictions that operated on all participants were both unknown and extreme. The sexualisation of the female students and dismissal of their social and sexual agency significantly impacted on the everyday lives (and safety). Simultaneously, the homophobic policing of boys' masculinity impacted on their potential to pursue particular interests and gendered performances, with any transgression similarly threatened with physical violence.

From these clear examples of heteronormativity in action, it is again crucial to emphasise that disrupting this force is not a 'minority issue', nor a minority 'agenda'. Indeed, heteronormativity impacts upon everyone in the school community – regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. As such, any approach to disrupting abuse that is related to gender must be produced as a whole school approach. It is not enough to target 'those at risk', as identifying them is not possible, ethical nor sustainable. It is also inappropriate to try to identify and target those who may be likely to engage in these acts as an aggressor. Both these notions again rely on problematic typologies of 'bully' and 'victim', and fail to address the broader productive force of heteronormativity that rewards these behaviours while simultaneously constraining all student options. Rather than reverting to these failing foundations of essentialist anti-bullying ideologies, future initiatives need to re-think ways of up-ending common sense understandings about gender (girls and boys), sexuality (and its ties to gender) and relationships within schools.

Some studies have detailed the multitudinous barriers that teachers face when making a concerted effort to 'queer' the curriculum (DePalma and Atkinson 2009), thereby disrupting heteronormativity. To begin this process with schooling cultures that resist an acknowledgement of a 'problem' is even more challenging. As we have seen, the teachers at Wilson and Grove actively produced discourses that suggested that gender-based persecution was 'not a problem' at their schools. The first step to confronting this pervasive discourse is to provide schools with a tool that allows them to meaningfully measure their school climate. Enabling schools to engage in a 'whole school audit' that is anonymous, comprehensive and meaningful would allow schools to better understand their

particular contexts and as such, their needs. Such an audit would need to explore the quantity and type of bullying events that occur in schools, for example, how often students and teachers hear the word 'gay' used in a negative sense, as well as how harmful they felt it was. It might be helpful to compare this with other gendered language and with other systems of oppression like racism, classism and sexism. Recognising how race, class and gender function together inter-sectionally would additionally provide schools with understanding about the social hierarchies that are operating. This is the first evaluation step that could enable strategic interventions based on its outcomes.

The difficulty of promoting an approach that re-frames bullying, and that attempts to disrupt heteronormativity, has never been more apparent in Australia than during the recent controversy surrounding the work of the Safe Schools Coalition. I want to take some time to describe this programme and its responses here to illustrate some considerations of interventions in schools in the future.

The Safe Schools Coalition was originally set up in the state of Victoria, Australia, in 2010. Its purpose was to create 'safe and inclusive learning environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families' (Radcliffe et al. 2013). Indeed, this programme, provided a range of strategies that may have significantly impacted the school cultures reviewed in this book. While in the cases at Wilson and Grove, individual differences between students were eroded through social and institutional pressures, the Safe Schools programme aims to 'build safe school communities where diversity is valued' (Safe Schools Coalition Australia 2016).

In 2013, with increased funding, it expanded to go Australia-wide. While membership of the coalition was voluntary, its membership grew to 543 schools throughout the country. It was in late February of 2016 when, suddenly, conservative members of the Liberal-National government raised concerns about the program, with Liberal Senator Eric Abetz labelling it 'a program of social engineering' (The Drum 2016), Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi claiming that the programme encouraged children to experiment sexually and suggested that the programme provided links to sadomasochism sites (Norman 2016), and Liberal MP George Christensen using parliamentary privilege to link the programme to a 'paedophilia advocate' (Keany 2016). This sustained, governmental campaign to discredit the programme and promote opposition through fear-mongering and moral panic led to a review of the program, and a

subsequent loss of federal funding. Its scope has also been significantly reduced; it is restricted to high schools only, and parents now must provide permission for students to take part, making it an 'opt in' programme rather than an 'opt out'. This restricts the programme from being a whole-school initiative, disabling conversations throughout various peer communities about the extent and damage of gender- and sexuality-based bullying. It also suggests that this kind of knowledge is dangerous, abnormal or unsuitable for young people to encounter – and subsequently that disparaging diverse genders or sexualities is acceptable (Rhodes et al. 2016). Finally, the amendments to the programme significantly restrict the resources and support that are available to LGBTIQ students in participating schools, some of the most vulnerable people in society. The resistance to this programme was not restricted to the government. The conservative media, particularly the Murdoch press, led a sustained campaign against the Safe Schools Coalition. Throughout this coverage, it was not overtly disputed that homophobic bullying should be disrupted; however what was attacked were notions that gender could be non-binary, and that 'children' were not capable of receiving this information without being tarnished in some way. This shows that while homophobic bullying has become speakable and political, its narrow framing simultaneously silences other needs and experiences (Monk 2011). As many of the teachers at Wilson and Grove felt that a specific approach to homophobic bullying was not needed at their schools because there were 'no gay kids' there, broader society equally tends to associate homophobia with those who are sexually diverse, rather than a policing force that impacts everyone. Although the public perception may now recognise that homophobic bullying exists and is problematic, it fails to recognise the nature, extent and source of this outcome – the privileging of heterosexuality and cisgender, and the derision and erasure of all other gender-sexuality-configurations.

The reason that reflection about the Safe Schools initiative is relevant here is that this programme represents a practical intervention into the common and sustained reality of violence in schools around gender and sexuality. In its original form, the Safe Schools programme provided participating schools with professional learning opportunities, guidance and consultation, as well as teaching and learning resources to use in classroom settings. As I have mentioned above, it is impossible for any school to disrupt their own moments of violence without first understanding and accepting that this violence is occurring. Teachers need

to have practical tools to recognise that their schools do have moments of gendered violence that require confrontation. The Safe Schools programme offered this opportunity through providing resources and support for schools to undertake a 'whole school audit', as well as providing critical support for curricular and school climate approaches to positively adapt.

This program, however, is not only relevant in its possibility for providing practical support. It is notable for us to review how it was received and rejected politically and popularly. Despite significant protests from the LGBTIQ community and allies, and a lack of any evidence suggesting that the programme was inappropriate, the Australian government decisively abolished it. From this we can see that while homophobic bullying has discursive worth in some settings, meaningful interventions to disrupt the heterosexual privilege that upholds it and that informs broader gendered persecution are more contentious and difficult acts. While schools and governmental institutions may superficially suggest that they are confronting these matters, they remain steadfastly against disrupting the foundations of oppression.

To have any success in disrupting persecution in schools, it is critical that we move away from discourses that suggest that anti-bullying approaches are useful when addressing misogynist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic behaviours in schools. While schools may suggest that eliminating particular words from their spaces is a positive approach, this strategy only counters outcomes of gendered abuse, rather than its root causes and motivations. Simply telling students not to use 'gay' or 'slut' in the classroom will not successfully confront the attitudes that predicate these behaviours. Instead, students, teachers and the broader school community require a critical or even a poststructural knowledge about how these behaviours actively function to negatively change their environments.

In terms of practical strategies that are grounded in these theories, Davies and McInnes (2012) provide helpful descriptions and commentary around 'circuits of recognition'; a theoretical and pedagogical approach that is grounded in feminist and queer poststructuralism and discourse analysis. In this approach, various 'circuits' provide power and meaning to form and enact subjectivities. Through analysing these circuits, as well as the speaker or reader's position in relation to them, it becomes possible to conduct an analysis of how social subjects speak and are spoken to by discourse. Included in using this method is the concept of 'circuit

breakers', 'methods that encourage students to learn about and explore different positionalities, as well as utilise deconstruction as a method for teaching students to interrogate their own and other subject position within particular discursive regimes' (C. Davies and McInnes 2012, p. 146). This has been achieved through writing, performance and arts-based enquiry. Approaches such as these are helpful as they centralise discourse, power and subjectivity. By highlighting these aspects, students and teachers may begin to understand the causes and functions of discrimination and persecution, and how these can be undermined.

Broader Findings

This study has detailed that 'gender regulation' has both institutional and social modes of production and reiteration. The understanding of 'gender regulation' synthesised work from Meyer (2008b), Ringrose and Renold (2010), Blaise (2005b), Butler (1990), Foucault (1991) and Pascoe (2007) to show that contemporary schools are sites of gendered and social discipline, which continually iterate norms through the social productions of students and the institutional performances of teachers. At Grove and Wilson, intelligible forms of masculinity and femininity were sites of continual negotiation, arbitration and contestation that produced hierarchical structures to position individuals in reference to their performative success. As some forms of recent research have focused on this phenomenon mainly from student perspectives, in this study I integrated the perspectives from head teachers and principals in order to gauge and assess the influence of institutional productions of meaning. The understanding of 'institutional influence on social norms' gained from the research contributes to the understanding of conflict, social structures and bullying as being a whole school production, where teachers and students are equally (yet disparately) involved in generating discourses that support school practices and cultures.

In response to the lack of literature that explicitly focuses on girls experiences of bullying while resisting pathologisation of this area (Ringrose 2008), I have sought to resist a 'gender blind' approach (Carrera et al. 2011) and to instead attempted to question the particular discourses that construct and typify female student subjectivities. In other words, I aimed to meet demands of projects to 'be informed by an interrogation of how girls are positioned as speaking subjects'

(Currie et al. 2007, p. 23). Through the analysis of girls' voices and the constructions of girls' by those around them, I have shown that the experiences of girls in the two schools are highly regulated, precarious and persecuted. This finding rejects other research into bullying that marginalises and neglects girls' experiences as being lesser than those of boys bullying. The sexist and often misogynist knowledge and discourses that were utilised against them were produced by boys, teachers and the girls themselves, resulting in a significant effect on their subjective positions, and importantly held weight when they were based in gendered frames. As girls were positioned in a way that required a particular performance of heteronormative femininity, their appearance, sexuality and desirability were also utilised as key mechanisms for punishment and control. Girls were at a distinct disadvantage in their quest for social recognition and capital at both Wilson and Grove, and the discursive context around them re-affirmed that their subjectivities were lesser than boys in social aptitude in all cases. A major finding of this study is, therefore, that problems remain in the conceptualisation of gender, sexuality and bullying that are still present in much of the psychological literature of school bullying. Data indicated that the persecution of girls was standard practice at both of the schools, and that this aggression was not conceptualised as problematic by the institutions. Rather, violence against girls in particular was facilitated through framing aggression as 'joking' or not as 'serious' as other forms of bullying, such as physical violence between boys. As a result, the lived experiences and hurt of girls were commonly dismissed, restricting or eliminating their capabilities for redress. These findings show that students' aggressions can be enabled or supported by the attitudes of those in positions of authority in school. Without recognising the ways in which discourses interact with gender and promote gendered hierarchies and violence, anti-bullying initiatives will continue to resist the knowledge of broader, powerful structures that hierarchise boys and girls in schools. The repetition of the discourses that facilitate these behaviours establish normative processes that become supported by school cultures and resist questioning or criticism. This research approach, therefore, demonstrates strength in its examination of a whole school culture, contributed to on each level and supported by a myriad of intertwining discourses. Any anti-bullying initiative that seeks to disrupt these processes would need to do the same.

Finally I hope to have demonstrated the importance of research in contesting common sense or accepted understandings about bullying (including gendered, homophobic and racial bullying) to explore the meanings that individuals, groups and institutions embed within their understandings. These meanings inherently contain power and knowledge that impact on-going performances and fortify collective understandings of normative practice. Through undertaking research that focused on the voices of participants and how these constituted their settings, I have sought to deconstruct taken-for-granted assumptions about bullying and social worlds and followed these assumptions to their subjective outcomes. This type of research structure acknowledges that participant voices are invaluable and are able to provide accounts of their worlds that may not be predictable or common, offering this study and potential future research the capability to enter and explore novel realities.

Methodological Contributions

Throughout this study, I have attempted to demonstrate that Foucauldian discourse analysis is an effective method of research to utilise in school settings to explore the ways in which knowledge is constructed and distributed to become powerful. Each of the discursive objects was produced by particular discourses that had significant positional, practical and subjective outcomes for those who invested in them, and those that were subjected to them. It became clear that utilising this methodology presented a way of viewing how language constituted social and psychological realities. More specifically, using FDA assisted in the recognition of how the participant discourses functioned to 'facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when' (Willig 2008b, p. 112). In the reflection of Ryan and Morgan's (2011) study, the discourses produced at Wilson and Grove high schools were often situated within 'common sense' understandings about bullying, homophobia and 'joking'. Indeed, in each of these constructions there lay discursive rationales to resist intervention and reasons to allow abjection and marginalisation to occur. These took various forms, such as linguistically empowering the invocation of 'bullying', and then reducing the events that it applied to, negating their relevance or the need for intervention. Discursive 'blocking' was especially revealed in teachers' constitutions of homophobia that produced two simplistic discourses that either homophobia was 'not a problem' or it was 'out of our control', each concluding

with the outcome of non-intervention and institutional silence. These discourses were also present in teachers' accounts of 'slut' and 'gay', epithets that were naturalised in their contexts as being extensive, indiscriminate, indirect and inevitable. FDA further demonstrated the ways in which teachers positioned bullies as products of their circumstances who were unlikely to change but also who resided within social norms. Teachers and students produced accounts of 'victims' as socially inadequate and abnormal individuals, responsible for their own difference and therefore their own persecution. This production again held practical implications; teachers aligned with a discourse that effectively reduced interventional responsibilities in the light of an understanding of inevitability.

In each of these aspects Foucauldian discourse analysis allowed the investigation of the ways in which teachers and students were positioned and how the opportunities for various practices were facilitated or disabled. Participants were complicit in discourses that affirmed and reproduced these processes, concealing the structures and rules that in another setting may seem definitively discriminate. The entrenchment of these discourses within the schools required examination and to 'do criticism . . . to make harder those acts which are now too easy' (Foucault 2000, p. 457).

Both the methodology and the data that it produced, therefore, demonstrated the ways in which traditional bullying understandings and interventions are incapable of conceptualising or addressing conflict in contemporary school settings. Indeed, as many schools adopt programs that reference the understandings of Olweus' 'bullying prevention program' (Brown et al. 2007), it has become clear that at Wilson and Grove, these bullying understandings did not reflect the student knowledge or experience within the schools. While the programs assume that bullying has identical motivations, characteristics and across all schools, they erode 'difference that make a difference in children's lives' (Brown et al. 2007, p. 1263), like the production of 'slut' or 'scrub' or 'gay'. These epithets and identities present their own challenges, power situations and frames of meaning, yet are resisted and at times ignored by institutions in the face of 'treat it the same way' (Wilson HS: Head Teacher focus group 2) attitudes all types of bullying. A ubiquitous approach to recognising pejoratives functions to reaffirm the power inequities that constitute the terms. Positioning some terms as part of the youth linguistic culture and, therefore, unproblematic is equally

damaging. The strategies that were undertaken to disrupt bullying at Grove and at Wilson failed to interrupt social and institutional frameworks that support their lines of marginalisation. This finding demonstrates that it is imperative for anti-bullying initiatives to focus on the local conditions and the items that are of social significance (that is of offence, power or damage) for students, as well as the broader social, cultural, political and historical frames that oppression emerges from. The ways in which teachers contribute to these structures through their discourse (either consciously or inadvertently) also hold significance in this field, as they can contribute to and fortify existing inequalities.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The contributions of this research to the landscape of studies around bullying will hopefully encourage further initiatives that extend post-structural and feminist investigations of bullying and social hierarchies in schools. Research that moves in this direction encourages localised studies that have the potential to inspire new perspectives of and within schools about the ways individuals achieve and deploy social capital and power. The next logical step for these findings may be to introduce strategies within schools that seek to re-frame bullying and aggression through emphasising the ways that discourses contribute to discrimination and abjection of particular subjectivities in schools. While some of these have been discussed above (see 'disrupting inevitability: interrupting heteronormativity'), intervention strategies may also include school-based focus group sessions to explore the ways students and teachers communicate various meanings or the deconstruction of current school values and cultures through building a critical awareness amongst the school community. There is also a definite avenue for future research regarding the role of students and teachers divergent attitudes towards emerging social networking sites and the use of ICT. Teachers in this study overtly fantasised about 'abolishing technology' and continually saw Facebook and other technologies as threats to the fabric of the schools. Future studies could explore if the detailed teacher resistance is widespread and the foundational ideologies behind these concerns. They may also explore ways of integrating Facebook into classroom practice and engaging students in critical awareness of its impact on their social realities.

Research that foregrounds these focus areas would reflect this study's findings that affirm that there is a requirement for a wider frame of

reference than that of traditional or essentialist definitions of bullying. Understandings that promote these perspectives minimise the spectrum of student experiences and restrict the abilities of research to acknowledge wider systems of power and meaning that impinge on the rights of students and teachers. Focusing on the mode of acts and assessing their prominence is only one aspect of a complex field.

Additional research could also be taken to explore how the themes generated in this research are experienced in other schools. In considering this possibility, it still seems imperative that in this field the individual voice of participants within the schools is not silenced by quantitative methodologies that seek to simplify and reduce participant accounts. The strength of this study was the interweaving, detailed and complex individual and group constructions that rendered the whole school cultures of Wilson and Grove. I could not have anticipated nor effectively examined the discourses of 'kick a slut in the head day' or 'hierarchy of seriousness' without hearing the collective constructions of the groups as they unfolded. It became increasingly clear during the course of this research that the methodology utilised resulted in incomparable access to participant realities. In future, methodologies that continue to highlight the participant voice and perspective will provide insight into the contemporary pressures that schools both face and create.

Concluding Thoughts

This study began in reflection of my own primary, secondary and tertiary educational experiences. As someone who had not experienced a wealth of 'direct' homophobia, I was concerned about why I remained uneasy through high school and university about performing particular aspects of my identity that were 'out of the box'. Through acknowledging that performative repression is not always 'overt' or 'direct', I hope that I have in some way contributed to the discussion about what homophobia, heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality is. Indeed, the environments at Wilson and Grove were embedded with so much discursive resistance to difference and diversity that many like me may not have been capable of emerging from them unscarred. The discourses of head teachers, students and principals were constantly working to define individuals by their subjective performances in an attempt to position them within a social hierarchy that held gendered, classed and racial values.

Those that transgressed intelligible social or cultural performances were policed through physical or symbolic violence and this outcome was supported by common sense discourses that allocated responsibility away from perpetrators and onto receptors. Into the future, perhaps we all need to think more about our discursive choices, our 'stylised acts', and the realities that they create.

Although this study was (only) representative of two public, co-educational schools in one part of Australia, its findings hold value and concern for any other sites where language illustrates, demarcates and marginalises particular individuals or groups. I hope that it has illustrated that simple utterances or collective descriptions contain and deploy power, and that these deployments produce significant experiential impacts, especially when discourses operate in conjunction with a series of others that compound and intensify their effects. Whether intentional or unintentional, 'joking' or 'serious', each discursive projection holds knowledge and power, and these function to produce particular positions, practices and subjectivities across institutional, geographical and social boundaries. It is only through the continual challenge, criticism and awareness of dominant discourses that these implications will be realised and considered in regards to the realities that we wish to construct.

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