Reframing Violence, Power, and Education

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Abstract

In this paper we examine power as violence in K-12 US schooling. We argue that given the often-harsh realities of school and society, educators must reframe the ways they understand power and consequently violence if they hope to fulfill the promise of a just education. In examining power, we find violence in institutions, curriculum, epistemology, policy, and metaphysics is used to enforce race, class, and other social distinctions. We conclude that consciousness to power and the violence inherent to many normalized educational experiences and a commitment for self and social transformation are foundational to educating for justice.

Keywords: *Power, Violence, Teacher Consciousness, Social Relations, School Relations*

Introduction

The following data were collected from Author 1's in-service teaching journal working within a US public school. Participants in this example were well-intentioned, yet they could not see the symbolic violence in their use of power.

Similar examples were somewhat common at the school and represent how school stakeholders often positioned students when unconscious to the realities of power.

[*Cake purchased at a local supermarket for a birthday]. My student was excited since few persons in his life had, as he put it, cared about him. After letting the class know we would have cake during our morning break and negotiating who would go to the cafeteria for forks, the birthday boy ran off. As he was picking up the utensils a staff worker told him to stop and asked what he was doing, frightened at what might happen, he ran back to the classroom. Upon entering the staff worker caught up to him and stated, "come back here you little thief!" Though I explained the situation to the staff worker and the student was admitted back to class, the micro-aggression remained a fixed point of antagonism as I attempted to reel him back into the everyday of the curriculum. His attention was lost; he existed outside our classroom for the rest of the year. A similar instance occurred with this entire remedial class, full of minoritized students. A teacher who did not know the students screamed at them for stealing his lunch. We later learned it had been another teacher who thought the refrigerator was stocked with shared food. The teacher refused to apologize because, as he said, he knew "those kids" had done "much worse."*

In this article, we name and discuss how and why various symbolic and material forms of violence limit humanizing social relations in US public schooling. Moreover, we name the forms of violence we commonly observe in US schools and outline how educators might redress this manifestation of power in schools. We proceed by describing power as class distinction identifying how it manifests as violence in schools. We argue that given harsh realities of school and society, educators must reframe their understanding of power and violence if they are to

work for just educational experiences. We call for experience to understand relationships but suggest critical friendships and concomitant framings of justice are helpful for those who might not understand the articulation of violence vis a vis schooling. Consciousness to power and the violence inherent to many normalized educational experiences is foundational for teachers working toward educational justice. Understanding educational justice then will aid teachers in considering and attending to the oppressive realities that students' experience.

We acknowledge that the discussion of violence in this article is US centric and the schooling experiences of refugees, those living in areas of governmental transition, or other contexts will likely experience violence quite differently (Derber 2015; Weiss 2022). Further, our exploration of violence and its presentation are not intended to suggest that deterministic perceptions limit teacher agency. On the contrary, we claim that seeing violence as applications of power adds to the agency needed to support teachers to develop critical consciousness, political and ideological clarity, and engagement in more critical forms of reflexive teaching (Bartolomé 2004; Freire 2000; Scott 2012).

Violence is an oppressive manifestation of power that is often inflicted on students, especially those of minority populations and un-normed identities, which include people of color (Crenshaw 1990; Rugnetta and Brown 2016). In using the word violence, we are not necessarily referring to its commonly understood physical forms, but manifestations of power through symbolic and material violence that occurs within schools (Francis and Mills 2012; Shannon and Escamilla 1999). Our goal is to reframe some of the normalized and seemingly innocuous ways violence occurs in schooling, micro-aggressions, overt and covert racism, classism, or sexism as they inhibit the educational experiences of minoritized students. We will

problematize how these factors exist in education and must therefore define power and violence, how they manifest in schools, and how power might be contested. In addition, we explore how and why violence is used to limit human dignity and agency. Though power is not always violent, we argue that a natural relationship exists between power and violence. Furthermore, the normalized ritual of schooling includes the transmission of the violent forms of cultural expression (Bernstein, Elvin and Peters 1966; Dozono 2020; Galtung 2004; McLaren 2015; Taylor 2016). We suggest that power is consonant to schooling experiences and might be observed in everyday experiences. It might be observed in ways that promote the oppression of students, which Young (1990) notes are enacted through exploitation, marginalization, a culture of silence, cultural imperialism, and physical forms of violence. Teachers who uncritically accept the status quo often legitimize oppression by adopting cultural hegemony, and unconsciously asserting violent forms of power (Gramsci 1971; Vasquez 2021).

Understanding Power and the Monopoly on Violence

Violence is the act of forcibly physically or symbolically limiting another person's agency in their use of power (Galtung 2004; Taylor 2016). If this is the case then all politics, political decisions, and policy are the tools that control violence and power (Foucault 2003; Kriss 2016). Schooling is a means of monopolizing ideological control and legitimizing violence through symbolic and physically violent forms of power. The mediation of control frames how students are racialized and socialized in schooling (Anyon 1981).

Who possesses the legal control of violence demonstrates how violence is normalized or legitimized. For example, governments have legal monopoly on most forms of violence, which begins with the direct physical force imposed on

bodies in the police state and the armed services, what Foucault (2018) calls punitive state apparatuses. Consider that even when one disobeys an unjust law, the police, as an arm of the state, possess the means to put down dissent.

These actions sometimes take the form of less than lethal bullets and pepper balls or tear gas. Perpetuated violent means may also include police shootings, justified murder, incarceration, or ostracization of those operating outside governmentally defined structures. Historically, those who exist outside of the social structures are those individuals that do not fit hegemonic cultural norms such as people of color, immigrants, and others of marginalized identities and their situation in schools (Rugnetta and Brown 2016; Shannon and Escamilla 1999). Beyond physical violence, social systems ensure non-physical forms of violence provide additional layers of exploitation ensuring the maintenance of existing power relations. Systemic power manifests in various forms across contexts depending on what people come to accept. Legitimizing violence occurs when community thought and the interest of dominant groups align. This collective conscience allows for community participation in the identification and apprehension of those deemed rule violators (Holmes 2000). Historically this can be observed in slave and colonized societies and when bestowing symbolic whiteness (i.e. Fanon 2008; Reichel 1988; Roediger 2017). Schools condition this as a nexus to the broader society through surveillance as students are taught to adopt school doctrine. Surveillance of difference and internalization of deficit views from formative socialization can cause teachers to police students and students to police each other (Jaime-Diaz 2019).

Under existing schooling conditions, teachers and many school stakeholders have power over students, but their enforcement of power within social systems can be

unwittingly violent. The subtle and unconscious move from power to violent power can be difficult for some to see or understand. For this reason, we must note power as a thing in itself (Heidegger 2010) is not inherently good or evil. However, a negation of power might affect a life outcome when students refuse to take on or live out the existing power paradigm (Authors 2017). For example, power can be used for facilitating the conditions, contexts, or environments for creative exploration, social transformation, and intercultural experience. Compare the preceding to a more value neutral use of power where a teacher intends their actions to be in the best interests of their students. A teacher operating under perceived value neutral power might require that a student sit up straight, accept the formal curriculum, and adopt a perspective or existing social systems. However, teachers sometimes unknowingly use violent power to limit the agency of their students reproducing violent forms of power (Jaime-Diaz 2020). We argue, then, that the way an event or experience is perceived plays a vital role in a person's interpretation of power and violence. Therefore, violence inflicted on students is not always conscious or malicious (though this does occur) and even well-intentioned teachers can and do inflict violence on students. Framing the relationship between power and violence then is part of a greater effort to support a criticality reflexive praxis of teachers, which might help them situate as agents of change.

Media and Private Power

What then is power? As mentioned above, we understand power to be the ability to alter a person's possibilities or limit their range of options (Taylor 2016). But how does power function? As Lukes (2004) suggests, power can be understood to unfold as part of three categories. First, power exists as decision-making that is established by policy and preference. Second, power exists as non-decision

making, which reflects who can set the scope of political conversations. Third, ideological power is the ability to influence another's thoughts and tastes. These forms of power establish the dialectical relationships between cultural objects (Gottdiener 1985). To understand how these manifestations of power function as a system, let us look at some examples.

United States media or presidential rhetoric is an example of combining non-decision making and ideological power. The media and president establish the scope of what is discussed in everyday politics. Their framings establish how people without experience with, or knowledge of, social issues will come to understand them. For example, a white individual cannot experience the material implications of race as that of a person of color, but when the non-decision making and ideological power of rhetoric frames immigrants as illegals or rapists, racism becomes a legitimized political position, and one which captures the attention of those who disagree. Racialized messages are projected against groups where the dehumanizing language legitimizes a violently oppressive social position. Some media outlets sanction these oppressive positions while others establish the leftmost iteration of what is acceptable political thought (Chomsky 2017). Ideological and non-decision-making power then provides legitimation for decision-making power. Or, power is applied through policies that establish physical violence, much like trade routes and borders that are enforced via threat of violence of arrest. Other forms of power become violent through their symbolic and rhetorical relationships. Politicians like Donald Trump enact oppressive policies that separate children from their families in the name of scapegoating people for the economic hardships caused by the socio-political system. Common people then come to see immigrants, rather than corporations and political greed as the internal enemy.

The federal government then monopolizes violence by establishing the realities that the masses must accept if they do not take control of their own freedom, however private systems also play a role in establishing the power of wealthy decision-makers (Authors 2015; Foucault 2003). Consider the ways privatization has proved violent for vulnerable people in the US and internationally, particularly over the last twenty-five years (cf. Buras 2011; Chang 2003; Alexander 2010). Privatization restricts access to social welfare and the legal recourse to file suit against those who own social systems like healthcare. Those with means access healthcare, while others must sacrifice everything to pay medical bills. Privatization then can be a form of violence in that it limits human agency, dignity, and possibility. In the next sections we will describe the challenge teachers face in understanding violence and the forms of violence that are often associated with the system of education that are commonly unaddressed in schools.

Violent Realities Teachers Often Miss

Important research has explored manifestations of symbolic violence on bodies (Bourdieu 2003). Scholars have identified how the tools of power in school function, how symbolic violence occurs to those with marginalized identities, and how these factors result in violent approaches to the classroom. The breadth of this research can help us see many ways violence is legitimized within the educational ecology. Broadly, scholars have considered oppression within the constitution of schooling structures (cf. Author 2 2008; Harber 2004), ideologies (Kelsh and Hill 2006; Leonardo and Manning 2017; Hearn and Parkin 2001; Therborn 1999), and institutional organization (Sleeter 2018). These sources of hegemonic power situate the tools of schooling including the curriculum (Apple 2018; Giroux 2014), standardized testing (Au 2011), and how we teach pedagogical approaches (Author 1). Scholarship has also explored how certain identities are neglected in schooling

based on their social construction. For example, scholars have noted how the situation of gender and sex has resulted in sexism and forms of relational violence (Andrus Jacobs and Kuriloff 2018; Blair and Deckman 2020; Harris and Kruger 2020). Others have examined how unconscious ideologies lead to symbolic violence based on raced (Coles 2016), abled (Collins and Ferri 2016; Simplican 2015), and sexualized perceptions of identity (White et. al. 2018). Intersectional aspects of identity are also a source of violence against identity that establishes the epistemological and ontological realities students experience (Crenshaw 1990).

Educational researchers have named how relational factors perpetuate symbolic violence. Things like microaggressions (Solorzano, Ceja and Yosso 2000), stereotype threat (Steele 2011), subjective application of rules and punishment (and social class rules) (Cookson 2015; Pavlakis and Roegman 2018), and the symbolic and material construction of space (Schmidt 2013) all ensure the reproduction of particular cultural forms (Apple 2018), the constitution of the realities of classroom experience, and particular oppressive realities like the school-to-prison pipeline (Orozco 2013).

In a classroom these broader factors become symbolic forms of violence in how teachers understand classroom interactions. Research has examined how this occurs in the ways literacy is understood (Freire and Macedo, 2018), how language is honored (Flores 2019), and how the pedagogical disposition of teachers mirrors broader social relations (Author 1 2019; Cariaga 2019; Jones and Vagle 2013; Pérez and Trujillo-Barbadillo 2020). Some have demonstrated how schooling can neglect the traumatic realities of students and make issues worse. Scholarship has demonstrated how closer attention to mental health, including PTSD and responses to events like the pandemic can perpetuate violence when ill-considered (Author

forthcoming; Astor and Benbenishty 2018; Duncan-Andrade 2009; Perry and Szalavitz 2006). This research is only a small sample of some of the ways violence exists, is legitimized, and goes unaddressed in schools.

Re-framing Violence, Power, and Justice: Teacher Identity

Teachers are often overworked and placed in challenging contexts asserting their allegiance to institutional norms and making it easier to adhere to and uphold state sanctioned ideologies and curriculum (Author 2 and Anonymous 2011, Authors 2015; Spring 2018). Such schooling doctrines ensure teachers do not realize the scope of oppressive social relations experienced by students whose cultural backgrounds do not correlate to those of the institutions. When teachers do not see or name oppression, they can't work with their students to transform the negative framings that situate material reality.

However, a major challenge to helping teachers witness violence in classrooms is they do not recognize dehumanization or their political position under certain conditions (Dunn, Sondel, and Baggett, 2019; Legette, Rodgers and Warren, 2020). The social distance that often occurs during socialization can affect the ways a teacher's views the other (Levine-Rasky 2000). For example, white teachers do not experience dehumanization in the same ways as their minority students and students of color and may not internalize how poverty or policing might affect their students' reality (Author 2021; Duffy and Powers 2018). This is not to say teachers are ignorant or mean spirited, but they may not have experienced these antagonisms as their students have. Identity and experience are therefore important precursors to understanding normalized institutional violence.

Thus, the foundation of teacher identity, which often includes a privileged subject position relative to students and is often understood within white, hetero-normative, or middle-class norms. The disposition is one that has been learned, cultivated, and experienced over many years. Even non-white, non-middle-class individuals are often shaped by the institutional power of the subject position (Author 2019). The resultant privileged position allows for oppressive narratives and framing of student identity to persist. However, subsequent political and ideological clarity can emerge from intercultural experience; or conceptual frames of reference for understanding the ways violence exists in schooling. The preceding shift is teachers internalizing education, justice, and freedom as understood by their students, thereby apprehending the interactional antagonisms normalized in schooling.

Class-consciousness and social antagonisms as frames of reference then unmask systemic and historic oppression, in a reframing of the material conditions of schooling. How then do we rearticulate justice and violence as they relate to human social relations or social policy? It is particularly difficult for those with a privileged identity to accept injustice occurs in legally protected systems, since all people have access to social systems, and they have been differently affected by these systems (Bowls and Gintis 2011; Cole 2017; Illich 1971; Shue 1996). Furthermore, US freedom, meritocracy, and justice counterbalance class distinctions and perpetuate mythological equitable access to opportunities the foil of ideological power or antipode of social justice (Derrida 2016).

Reframing justice in policy and practice is a barometer for the health of the society. If we acknowledge the cooptation of labor of African, Indigenous, Latino, Asian, Female, and other Americans (Moore 2020), and if we believe that theft of labor is

unjust *and* has led to inequitable structures existent in society, then we can infer reparations a *just* response. Given the above framework reparations needs include more than materiality or the material relations of a society.

Violence and Power in Schooling

If power is the ability to alter the range of someone's options (Taylor 2016), it might be applied to schooling as it is to society in general. A teacher sometimes facilitates the conditions for creative exploration, social transformation, or cultural experience. They work to transcend what is expected of them via state mandated curricula and instead establish meaningful relationships with students. In this case power is utilized to develop positive experiences because a teacher knows and is conscious of their own cultural work with students, is in the students' best interests. However, a teacher can also access their privilege to enforce more value neutral markers of expression when the teacher also believes their actions to be in the best interest of students, believing they offer students social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 2007; Yosso 2005). For example, as mentioned above, a teacher may require students sit up straight, accept the formal curriculum, and/or adopt narratives of experience articulated as racially biased or class based social systems. Each instance may prove positive or negative depending on teacher and student interpretation, disposition, and purpose. In this case the result of sitting up straight may be to support the student's posture, provide cultural capital, or ensure compliance to dominant social systems.

Schooling as a state apparatus of control then is a function of power. Teachers, administrators, and policymakers are tied to ideas about what learning, schooling, and acting are and should be within the matrix of power (Francis and Mills 2012; Therborn 1999). The agency of students is ensconced in the power of the

classroom and promotes or limits the social capital of students depending on adherence to hegemonic norms or structures like speaking English or appearing more white. This becomes violence as a teacher's ideological and ontological perceptions of students lead them to reject student identity, culture, experience, and intellectual creativity (Bartolomé and Trueba 2000, DeLissovoy 2018; Author 2019). Schooling determines the parameters that govern the learning experience, or what is discussed, and how discussions and identity will be considered and understood. These considerations will indirectly define students in that their culture, language, and understandings of the world are framed via these interactions.

Often schooling serves as maintenance of power, institutional structures, norms, policies, socio-cultural knowledge, and development (Hill 2012). These factors impact student ontology, if the identities of the students are honored or understood by teachers and educational stakeholders or rejected (Authors 2014; Author and Anonymous 2019). Though physical violence does occur in US schooling, violence most often enforced via structures, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, and in the ideological rigidity of schooling norms. Most often teachers and school staff seem to understand their identity and relationship to students, first through the maintenance of the social order, which leads them to enforce the hierarchical power structures. Teacher identity as whiteness, often takes primacy to human identity. While the enforcement of structures is perhaps a necessary perception, to a degree, teachers commonly interpret this assertion of power as a force that must lead the students towards pre-determined learned and acculturated end. Violent markers that determine the experiential scope of the classroom often enforce this structural relationship and this form of epistemological violence is enforced in the

rightness and wrongness of student ontology- cultural and lived experience (Author 2 2007) epistemology, in relation to cannon, and hegemonic society.

The following is an example that demonstrates how the relationships of power and the monopoly of violence affect certain students. One of Author 1's Latina students attended Plano East High School in the wake of Donald Trump's Election. Posters were strewn around the campus proclaiming, "Build That Wall" (Mansoor 2016). Boxes were set up around campus to resemble border walls with hateful messages. Latino students were thus being bullied. Many in the campus understood these actions as legitimate "political positions" and not as acts of violence against students. One white student, who was wearing a Make America Great Again hat, began physically bumping a Latina student. She took off his hat and threw it into a pond adjacent to campus. For this, the Latina student received a week suspension, and the bully was given one day of detention. The schooling response ensured that responding to hate would be less tolerable than hate itself; this is not to say the situation is hopeless; the above student also described many teachers, "of different ethnicities that were supportive of Latino students both in and out of the classroom." However, the overt acts of students who bully are layered expressions of the violent encounters that other students face within schools. The school's reactions legitimize and perpetuate violence in the school and the broader society.

Framework for Analysis

In this research essay, we first developed a framework for understanding what we refer to as under considered forms of violence in schooling and, second, we offered lived examples to illustrate how violence occurs. The examples will not be used as traditional empirical data as other interpretations of the events may be valid given a differing frame of analysis. Our position is an ontological framework in which we

consider the function of power in schools: through decision-making (policy and preference), non-decision making (who sets the scope of the conversation) and ideology (influence over another's thoughts and self-interests) (Lukes 2004). Our inquiry revealed three forms of violent power. We categorized these types as: *institutional violence*, *epistemic violence*, and *metaphysical or relational violence*.

Method of Inquiry: A Deconstruction of Violence and the Power of Schooling

> The following question guided our inquiry:
> What prevents school stakeholders from understanding a student's perspective or ontology and acting to limit the violence students' experience?

We have interrogated these issues since 2018 including examination of media, education policy, and structures related to violence. We first analyzed the relationship between violence and power in schooling including Lukes' (2004) framework related to the functions of power in societies. We then considered examples representing forms of power, how they relate to violence, and as presentation of maintenance of hegemonic systems or violent forms of power. Our inquiry began with reflections on our secondary teaching experiences and on our work with student teachers. We considered the ways teachers experienced and interpreted knowledge, beliefs, or ideologies and how they related to power in schooling. We then collected data with teachers, which illustrated these forms of violence. Our interactions and analyses of data supported our categorizations of violence in schools (Wolcott 2005). In short, we examined a broad range of schooling, violence, and maintenance of oppressive social relations in schools.

Data Analysis and Participants

We began our analysis by examining data, a constant comparative approach, noting categories, concepts, similarities, differences, and ideas, related to our examination of violence. We attempted to present the patterns we observed, the patterns informed themes and findings (Creswell 2002; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2013; Stake 2005). We developed codes, which became more specific themes based on their relationship to our definitions of violence; violence categories emerged from each of the sources we examined.

We examined data from the following sources: our own observations, the ways political contests play out within schooling experiences and are politicized in the media, our research in student teaching, observations of ways teachers, administrators, and stakeholders position students, from prevailing schooling policies, pressures, and ideological realities, from an interview with a student who experienced and observed many of these forms of violence, and other structural realities that contextualize social relations of power. In short, we explored unconsidered examples of schooling violence as they related to the ways they perform to maintain oppressive social relations in schools as they unfold.

We interviewed Maria (pseudonym), a sophomore education major at a Southwestern University on four occasions using a semi-structured format. She identified as Chicana who was, “passionate about social justice in teaching.” Maria identified with Author 1’s presentation of this framework for understanding power and violence in schooling in their Social Issues in Education course.

Findings

In what follows, we provide three categories of violence in schooling they include: normed institutional violence, epistemic violence, and metaphysical/relational violence. We proceed by describing the relationship between power and violence in schooling and outlining how violence is overlooked, as a social issue to address, by those in power. And we offer examples of violence and concordant analyses to discuss how institutions, ideologies, and practices legitimize scholastic violence thereby affirming and buttressing the oppressive social relations of power in schooling. We note that our analysis is grounded in our lived experience in schools and as mentioned above, others might interpret the examples differently.

Institutional Violence

Violence is imposed in schooling through physical, psychological, and sociological means (hooks 2013; Love 2016). For example, teacher discourse related to minority populations of students describes their classroom management in urban contexts as a "war they must win." The approach establishes an antagonistic relationship between teachers and students in which the teacher escalates the assertion of their power until it changes the behavior of students (i.e. Boutte and Bryan 2021). The teacher may believe they're helping students, but this view misunderstands the ontological nature of student experience and the ways knowledge, culture, learning, and identity emerge as a byproduct of human experience (cf. Author 2019; Delpit 2003). A teacher or educational stakeholder's approach represents the symptoms of institutional violence and adds to the ideology associated with the school to prison pipeline. Author 1 observed an African American high school student with a history of anxiety come into the principal's office suite. She was distraught and admittedly a bit rude because she was having an anxiety attack. The Student Resource Officer (SRO) began

intimidating the student for the, in his words, “rude behavior,” causing the student’s anxiety attack to increase. Similar examples exist across the nation where physical violence occurs because of its institutional sanctioning (Allen 2018; Ardrey 2021). Normalized, but violent perceptions of power harm students. Key to understanding these interactions within the schooling institution then are the identities and ideologies that permeate schools, which allow stakeholders such as officers, teachers, and those administering detention to understand their jobs as behaviorist interventions, such as slamming or jailing, of students who are trying to escape non-physical forms of schooling violence.

Curricular Violence

Institutional schooling is not always such a visceral experience, in classrooms, the curriculum is a form of violence against students when it devalues their cultural knowledge, experience, and is not culturally relevant, sustaining, or revitalizing (Ladson-Billings 1995; McCarty and Lee 2014; Paris 2012). Furthermore, curriculum often omits cultural group identity or only depicts minority students as existing without agency (Brown and Brown 2010). In this way, violence is inflicted on students when they are fed a world or history counter to their perception, when they don’t see themselves represented, and when they are unable to understand the curriculum’s relationship to their personal development. As a result, curriculum becomes a tool for reproducing historically limited ideologies like gender bias, whiteness, neoliberalism, and hetero normativity, in addition to limiting social mobility and access to intellectual solidarity (Authors 2021; Federici 2004; Osler 2006; Roediger 2017).

In a university lesson, Author 1’s students are shocked by his presentation historicizing power relations in ways that obscure a more complete picture of the

social relations of production. He explains that Federici's (2004) historical materialist inquiry demonstrates that "woman's" labor was stolen in Europe during the Middle Ages in response to two major factors: the Black Plague and the fall of feudalism when labor was decimated during the plague. In need of replenishing the workforce, societies turned to women. Feudalism gave way to capitalism establishing new gender norms, those with wealth and privilege then claimed women's labor. Women's labor in the home would go unpaid, which would tie them to a husband. Part of this ideological framing asserted that women are sexual objects meant to replenish the population (Federici 2004). Similarly, the Western creation of the homosexual discouraged emotional relationships among men and further encourage procreation for populating the workforce (Federici 2004). These ideas were reinforced within political and religious framings as they defied their so called natural condition. Here we see how decision-making power has shaped society and promotes curricular decisions. Curricular stories like these are unexplored in attempts to perpetuate particular social relations and relations of production. Furthermore, policy responsible for formalized curriculum ensures students looking for identity affirming stories are instead presented with homogenizing narratives that restrict expression or any other possibilities (Apple 2018; Giroux 2014; Hill 2019).

When Author 1 shared this research with his students they stated the following, "that makes so much sense," and "I had no idea." They began to critique other ways that narratives create social perception. Author 1 then asked students to go home and look for areas of unexamined privilege and omissions that might intend hegemonic ends. One student came to class after this lesson and said, "I was shocked…I noticed that the webpage Refinery29…I go to it a lot…it is making me feel like what I buy makes me an advocate for social justice…but it tries to sell

things and makes us feel good about buying." A critical reflection of the curriculum in our everyday lives can help us see how curriculum functions as a particular form of power, often normalizes forms of violence, and distorts or cultivates our ideological intentions (Žižek 2008).

Similarly, in current curricular practice, slavery is taught as an injustice, however history curriculum rarely discusses agency of marginalized peoples. Civic rights examples fit with the passive forms of citizenship that fit dominant perspectives. Consider this, when teachers make arguments that ideas and innovations are based on western knowledge, any ideas counter to this narrative are excluded from the conversation. This has been observed within US history curriculum when students are unable to write and learn from their own cultural standpoint as a critical response to white supremacy (Dozono 2020).

Violent Policy

Policy and its ideological underpinnings form institutional violence. Some of the paradoxes inherent to violent policy and their implications for practice are often misunderstood by teachers and stakeholders (Hughes 2020). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was developed to protect the health of Americans who are most vulnerable, but currently, the organization is attempting to pass legislation allowing doctors to opt out of caring for some persons on religious grounds. These groups include the children of homosexual couples or Transgender persons. In other words, the government is ensuring religious belief supersedes the rights of marginalized populations to receive care (Simmons-Duffin 2020).

Similarly, during the Obama Presidency, the Department of Education investigated why Black children were four times more likely to be suspended from school in Bryan Texas. Betsy DuVos of the Trump administration called off these and any other civil rights investigations. Subsequently, 13-year-old Trah'Vaeziah Jackson accidentally burned her classmate with hot glue. She was arrested, had her braids cut, and was suspended, even though the parents of the classmate refused to file charges in the Bryan school district (Waldman 2019). The other student's parents recognized that Trah'Vaeziah hurt their daughter by accident. One must consider if a white child would have been treated similarly. The example demonstrates a system focused on legal, but not substantive human rights, one in which violent policy supersedes the well-being of children.

In another example of violent policy, a student in Portland posted on Snapchat that she was scared because she knew there was a rapist at her school and this individual's friend told her that she had been raped by the subject of the Snapchat post. The student who posted the picture was suspended for bullying (Farzan 2019). The parents sued the school, who removed the disciplinary action from her record (Associated Press 2020). Despite the reversal of the violent policy that led to this student's suspension, in real time, institutional policy norms and the perception of the school took precedence over the material wellbeing of the students in the school.

Institutional policy and curriculum can form oppressive schooling structures for many students when they are focused on control and perception rather than the wellbeing of students. Often these policies become violent or unresponsive for vulnerable populations that are not adequately protected by them. Legally, policies may appear to support students, however in many cases, those who are othered and

those that name violence face retribution from the system itself. However, exposure to the forms of policy violence, might ensure we support victims instead of systems.

Epistemic Violence

Epistemic injustice is a theory related to unfairness in knowledge that suggests certain individuals are not believed, seen, and understood due to their identity or social position. Similarly, epistemic violence can be related to the inability of individuals to be understood as knowers of their own experience (Fricker 2007). Fricker (2007) suggests this injustice might be understood by two primary means, testimonial injustice, and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice refers to *who* is believed because society offers lesser credibility to them as a speaker, for example Tom in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Hermeneutical injustice refers to a lack in collective interpretation. An example Fricker (2007) gives is the concept of post-partum depression, which male doctors marginalized as female hysteria until female doctors entered the field and groups of women with the condition recounted their stories. Another example, a white person may have an inability to understand racism because they have not experienced it, do not believe it exists, and subsequently marginalize those who claim its existence.

Author 1 often observed testimonial injustice in the schools where he taught. In the opening example to this paper, he asked one of his Latino students to go to the cafeteria to bring a class a set of sporks. The student returned, forcibly escorted by the campus police, who stated they caught him stealing in the cafeteria. The student had informed them that Author 1, the teacher, asked him to grab them however they did not believe him. The student described the trauma that resulted from not being believed, saying, “school sucks, they don’t even help us…and make

us feel like criminals… nobody ever believes me! Fuck these people!" We suggest the testimonial injustice forced on this student was a form of violence that went unseen by others at the school. The authors have never seen a similar incident happen to a white student, affluent student, or student whose cultural markers represented those in power.

Students are rarely involved in making the decisions that affect their schooling experiences. When students name their experiences as oppressive, they are not always understood as legitimate, nor do they often receive the attention of those with the power to change how they are understood at the school. In these cases, the students are facing hermeneutical violence. In one example, Author 1 worked with a student who described facing experienced testimonial and hermeneutical injustice on a regular basis. The student's father had been arrested for trying to kill the entire family all had subsequently been diagnosed with PTSD. Furthermore, the student identified as gay and Latinx, was classified as low income and was homeless during his senior year because of the experience. Part of his schooling accommodations allowed him to use quiet space to work and to talk to the 504 coordinator or social worker when he had anxiety. His legal documentation (IEP and 504) mandated that he was allowed to wear headphones to do his work without distractions. However, teachers would often yell at him for having headphones on, suggesting that he was faking to, in their words, "listen to music" or to "get out of work." When asked why they did not believe this student, one teacher suggested "all the kids try and do that…they try and get away with whatever they can…they will lie to you."

The above example is an epistemic, testimonial, and hermeneutical injustice, a form of violence that emerges from attempts to maintain authoritative power. It

became clear from Author 1's observations and conversations that certain teachers were unwilling or unable to comprehend the trauma the student experienced, nor could they make sense of the intersectional layers associated with this student's identity (e.g. Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013). They instead understood their legal obligation as a challenge to power. In observing other students, we have certainly seen students who have tried to wear headphones when it would, perhaps, have been inappropriate. However, because most people did not have a shared interpretation for the challenges this student faced, it is difficult for them to believe that the 504 documents made his accommodations necessary. Even when the accommodations were explained, teachers proved unwilling to provide this student with adequate support. The epistemological and ethical considerations suggest that certain persons in schools do not have the power to know, name, and own one's identity, history, and agency, and are more likely to experience violence. The shallow multiculturalism in much of US public schooling often legitimizes epistemic and hermeneutical violence by creating the perception of equity when what students know is actively disregarded (Ryoo and McLaren 2010).

The power over epistemology in schooling often becomes violent because it represents that which is fundamentally human, the ability to speak, recognize and be recognized, and the ability to act. The pressures resisting these realities are insurmountable for many students who face institutional, philosophical, and community barriers to becoming knower, creator, and agent. Minimal interactions restrict what can be discussed, what is valued as knowledge, and what is possible. Students feel as if they must become the psychologically damaging mythical norm that has been created and presented to them. Many in schools name their experiences as delinquent, inadequate, or deficient. Rather, it is the privileged

unwillingness to value experience, other than their own, that do not offer social capital or other forms of capital (Author 2 2008).

When epistemological violence occurs, students are likely to find other means of self-expression. Rather than validating, honoring, and internalizing realities that are often different from their own teachers tend to superficially applaud any attempt to engage, or worse, reject one's capacity as a knower and interpreter of human experience. When students feel they have little agency as knower they will take agency in other ways. Students may naturally engage in forms of civil disobedience or test the virtues of a teacher within the mixed messages they experience.

Discussion: Alternatives to Violence and the Relationships of Power

The purpose of this paper has been to discuss some of the ways that power becomes violent in schools, rather than to blame, perhaps, well-intentioned teachers for doing their best in difficult contexts. It seems clear then, sometimes individuals working in schools consciously and unconsciously support existing power structures that allow violence to persist. Given our data and analyses we found that these violent acts function as means to deprive certain populations of substantive human rights (Shue 1996). Furthermore, early socialization within hegemonic discourses appears to result in the legitimation of symbolic forms of violence in schooling which often result in adopting ideologies thinking that results in the colonization of the classroom (Jaime-Diaz, Ramos and Mendez 2020; Fanon 2008; Rodríguez 2018; Valdez 2020). In theory, students have access to schooling though many face particular forms of violence that limit their access to educational experiences that might otherwise function to transform power to and with students and disentangle the violent appendages that constitute schooling (Robinson 2015;

Youdell 2015). When people learn oppressive ideologies, it acts as a blinder for thinking about what is appropriate when enacting power over students, which can result in power becoming violent. Violent power is framed in support of the common good to make it appear justified. Those in power tend to suggest these violent forms of power are used to save culture and protect society when it is in maintenance of unequal social relations of power (Agamben 2017). Ideological structures are difficult to transform in schooling given the realities that teachers are expected to accept as institutional, political, and relational norms. Leaders, educationists, policy makers, and privileged students are given the god-like function of defending ideology, maintaining violent power and ways of being, learning, and interacting.

But what are the alternatives or more humanizing forms of education and interaction? Freire (2000) famously argues that the process of education is to become more fully human. For this to occur, ideological transformation in teachers, administrators, and stakeholders can shift the ways we understand students, justice, humanity, social organization, community power, and ourselves. Teachers might focus on fostering intellectual creativity rather than technocratic and systematized knowledge, this might allow for opportunities for exchange across difference and the further creation of supportive communities. Administrators can support teacher creativity and help them become authentic stakeholders in the school community. Educators can reframe the ways power functions to ensure that substantive rights and not violent power are the focus of those working in institutions like schools. Moreover, we might understand institutions as means for people to connect more fully to others and to what they require to flourish, rather than as tools that will produce particular social relations. Students can be supported to advocate for themselves and struggle through

complex ideas without threat of structural violence. These interactions might help people see and understand how decision-making power, non-decision making power and ideological power exist, more democratic conversations might then occur for personal and social transformation. Ultimately, we can look to the power relationship that orders social life and schooling and continually ask if they are in service to communities of people or are designed to maintain violent relations of power (Ashford 2018; Authors 2021; Bowles and Gintis 2011; Bettcher 2014; Crenshaw 2002; Freire 2000; Fricker 2007; Galtung 2004; Giroux 2014; Gramsci 1971; Hegel 1977; Pohlhaus 2011; Taylor 2016).

Conclusion: Teachers Reframing Violence

In this paper, we found that violence most often occurs when a teacher or community member rejects a student's identity, culture, experience, and/or their intellectual creativity; though the teacher or community member is perhaps often unaware they are asserting this form of violence (Galtung 2004). Teachers often adopt an open-minded view of culture and relation while continuing to enforce hegemony, allowing those with privilege to maintain the ideologies they have come to internalize, understanding themselves as beneficent as they tout a social justice-oriented approach (Ashford 2018).

A teacher interprets the social world from a subjective position. If they have not experienced or understood the ways oppression, neglect, and violence are enacted on students it is exceedingly difficult to see how students are affected by the teacher's actions. Understanding a concept like oppression that can come from violence from a subjective position, necessarily requires conceptualizing it in one of three ways. First, a teacher might live the violent oppression with their students. In this case the firsthand experience allows a teacher to understand the ways power

can become violent and how that violence might affect others. Of course, this is not always a possibility, as is the case when a privileged group cannot adapt identity, culture, or ethnicity of another. In this case the privileged individual may need to experience a second means of conceptualization that is, observing and contextualizing violent oppression with help from someone who has experienced violence. Of course, the privileged individual would need to come to the interaction. However, for most teachers, understanding the violence presented in this paper must be considered through an alternative frame for analysis. Framings often become a proxy for teacher experiences that people tend to understand as objective truth. Ultimately, respectful study of violence through critical friendships are most helpful in coming to understand oppressive relations. In other words, teachers can be supported to understand violence as frames of reference, they can have experiences with victims of violence to better understand how it functions, that they might develop solidarity with those in communities that are affected by violence (Authors 2021).

To support their students, teachers must be willing and able to name, acknowledge, and help transform the sometimes-unseen damage that violence foments though not everyone can fully experience oppression across difference. For example, a "white" teacher cannot experience racism in the material ways as their students of color. However, self-reflexive and critically aware teachers play an important role in stopping violence by deconstructing whiteness and working as allies in solidarity with those affected (i.e. Authors 2021; Linley 2017; Lynch 2018).

Though these understandings are beyond their experience their genuine interest can help them better understand the complexity of oppressive relationships that inform the identities and lived realities of their students. Critical schema then allows

teachers to see ideologies as functions of power in society. Teachers who take a justice perspective reframe the ways they understand forms of violence in the classroom and world, this is being aware of internalized prejudices, self-reflexive of the social reproduction, and addressing the wrongs that limit the agency of our students. This perspective suggests it is part of a teacher's work to help make whole those that have been marginalized in our world. At minimum, we must conclude that people deserve control over means of production, (Marx and Engels 1975) personal transformation, and access to knowledge, information, and democratic power. For teachers, this includes understanding the often-complacent role we have played in perpetuating the current social system that has allowed violence to continue. We must also help teachers understand that they must not simply be beneficent, as they categorize and position students as those poor kids who need saving or incapable of intellectual creativity.

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