Wounds and *re*inscriptions:

schools, sexualities and performative subjects

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Author biography

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Abstract

Boys in school, homophobia, and forms of masculinity are currently the focus of significant debate in and about education and schools. Much of this discussion takes as given the sexual orientation, and therefore sexual identity, of the students of whom it speaks and mobilizes equal rights discourses on behalf of gay and lesbian students. This paper offers an alternative view of the school level processes at work around these issues. The paper takes up Judith Butler's ongoing engagement with Foucault and her recent rearticulation of Althusser and Bourdieu to analyse data generated through school ethnography in Britain and Australia. This analysis details the processes through which gender and sexual identities are constituted inside schools; illustrates the mutually constitutive relationship between gender and sexuality in contemporary discursive frames; and demonstrates how students resist wounded homosexual identities and constitute legitimate Other selves through their day-to-day practices.

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Introduction

Boys in school, homophobia, and forms of masculinity are currently the focus of significant debate in and about education and schools. Much of this discussion takes as given the sexual orientation, and therefore sexual identity, of the students of whom it speaks. This paper aims to offer an alternative view of the school level processes at work around masculinity and sexuality. It aims to radically unsettle the prevailing acceptance that sexual orientation is a biological, psychological, or psychic pre-given that is synonymous with sexuality and which exists in a causal, linear relationship with sexual identity. Furthermore, it aims to show how the strategic rupture of gender and sexuality advocated by some queer and feminist theorists is not borne out in school level practices that are marked simultaneously by gender and sexuality. In addition, the paper aims to call into question the usefulness of the equal rights discourses inferred by the broad conception of the homosexual student as a victim of homophobic exclusion and abuse. From this starting point, the paper draws on empirical data generated in British and Australian schools in order to demonstrate how students resist wounded homosexual identities and constitute legitimate homosexual/not-heterosexual selves.

In examining these issues the paper takes up Butler's ongoing engagement with Foucault (1990, 1991, 1993, 1997a, 1997b & 1999) and recent rearticulation of Althusser and Bourdieu (1997a & 1997b). In particular, it takes up Butler's (1999) theorisation of the inseparability of gender and sexuality in the contemporary discursive frame. In this context of constraint, the paper explores the possibilities of Butler's (1997a) politics of performative resignification which suggests that discourses might take on non-ordinary meanings and function in contexts where they has not previously belonged. Using these tools the paper examines the possibilities for identities constituted through injurious performative practices to be remade. In the school context, the paper asks how, whether and under what circumstances such wounded identities might be circumnavigated, reappropriated or reinscribed. In responding to these questions the paper offers detailed examinations of school moments in which students who have been injuriously interpellated 'homosexual' refuse the (impossible) return to hetero-normativity and instead redeploy this wounded subject-hood to reinscribe themselves in ways that insist on the intelligibility and legitimacy of homosexual/non-heterosexual selves and pleasures.

Background

The sociology of education represents a critical tradition that has linked education scholarship in the UK and Australia for some time. This tradition has been underpinned by concerns about the role that schools play in the reproduction of inequitable social relations. Of particular significance here is that body of work within education sociology

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that has explored the links between school structures and practices, student identities, and social inequalities.

Early work in the new sociology of eduction in the UK showed how organisational strategies impacted to recreate social class divisions and posited the links between differentiation, polarisation, and anti-school cultures (Hargreaves 1967, Lacey 1970, Willis 1977, Ball 1981). Similarly, work in Australia demonstrated how schools were implicated in reproducing social class inequalities (Connell 1982). And classic studies in both countries have shown the educational significance of social class and gender for working class boys (Walker 1988, Willis 1977). A significant body of feminist work has been produced that has mapped the changing nature of the educational inequities faced by girls and contributed to the development of feminist pedagogies (Arnot & Weiner 1987, Delamont 1990, Griffin 1985, Kenway 1990, Luke & Gore 1992, Weiner 1985). Likewise, a significant body of work has examined issues of race and ethnicity in schools and developed a detailed picture of how schools are implicated in the continued inequities experienced by indigenous, Black and ethnic minority students (Gillborn 1990 & 1995, Mac an Ghaill 1988, Mirza 1992, Sewell 1997, Rizvi 1997).

This body of scholarship has provided the intellectual setting and tools to respond to political, policy, media and public concern with boys' schooling and the now persistent popular perception of boys' educational underachievement. Critical education sociology has shown how notions of boys' underachievement fail to recognise the nuanced intersections of social class, ethnicity, gender, and location (Collins *et al* 2001, Epstein *et*

al 1998, Gilborn & Mirza 2001). In Australia these approaches have led to the insistence that we ask 'which boys & which girls?' (Collins *et al* 2001). And in the UK race and social class have been shown to be far greater indicators of educational disadvantage than gender (Gillborn & Mirza 2001).

At the same time as responding to and enriching these popular debates, work within the sociology of education has begun to engage with post-structural theories to make sense of the school's impact on, and school experiences of, particular groups of students. Attention has turned from boys and girls to masculinities and femininities (Connell 1995, Hey 1997, Kenway *et al* 1997; Mac an Ghaill 1994, Mcleod 1999, Youdell 2000 & in press). Attention has also begun to turn towards sexualities and schooling. Schooling and sexuality sit in an uncomfortable relationship. It has been argued that schools and sexuality are constructed as fundamentally discrete and that the people who populate schools – students and teachers – are constructed as intrinsically non-sexual (Epstein & Johnson 1996).

Epstein & Johnson's (1996) work makes a significant contribution to a small, but expanding body of work that uses post-structural theorisations of the subject to examine the experiences of gay and lesbian students. Similarly, Nayak & Kehily (1996) make sophisticated use of these ideas to argue that homophobic practices in schools are central to the ongoing constitution of heterosexual masculinities. And Mac an Ghaill's (1994) work demonstrates the fluidity of young men's identity and sexual practices. Much of this work proceeds from a critical understanding of the reach of hetero-normativity in

schools. This has underpinned school research into the ways in which heterosexual identities are constructed as normal while lesbian, gay and bisexual identities are constructed as beyond the bounds of acceptability (Mills 1999 & Rhoads 1999). In Australia, Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli's (1996) work stresses the importance of understanding the intersections of sexual and ethnic identity markers. Wayne Martino (1999) explores the policing of hegemonic masculinity in high school. James Butler (1996) notes the connections between masculinities and sexuality as well as the apparent absence of lesbian identities in schools. And David McInnes and Murray Couch (2001) offer an analysis of working class sissy boys to provide a sophisticated exploration of the intersections between social class, masculinity and sexuality. There exists, then, a growing body of valuable work that engages with young people's sexual identities and locates research concerned with sexualities and schooling within the broader endeavour of the sociology of education.

Analytical framework

Queer theory and research is tightly bound to post-structural theorisations of power, discourse, and the subject. These theorisations have made significant contributions to understandings of inequities and exclusions in which sexual identities/sexualities are pivotal markers.

The analysis offered here owes much to my detailed exploration of these contributions in Youdell (2000). It also reflects the theoretical framework offered in Youdell (in press). This framework is underpinned by Foucault's understanding of power, discourse and

subjectivation. It engages extensively with Butler's theorisation of the performatively constituted subject, and builds on her rearticularion of Althusser's understanding of interpellation and Bourdieu's notions of habitus. In particular, this paper explores Butler's suggestion of a politics of performative resignification.

Foucault's understanding of productive power effected in and through discourse (1990 & 1991) offers an important departure from analyses which foreground oppression embedded in social structures. The multiple, discontinuous, unstable, and tactical nature of discourse and discursive practices insists that relations of power are contextually specific, mobile and potentially fragile. This suggests a subject who is subjectivated – formed and constrained, but not determined – through the productive power of discursive practices that render the 'world' and the 'self' knowable and known (Foucault 1990 & 1991).

These Foucauldian notions underpin Butler's theorisation of 'discursive performativity' (Butler 1993:13) in which the 'performative functions to produce that which it declares' (Butler 1993:107). Understood in this way, discursive practices that appear to *describe* (pre-existing) subjects are shown to be *productive*. According to Butler such performatives are citational, they cite prior discursive practices. They are steeped in historicity, their meanings become sedimented. They are equivocal, their meanings are 'non-necessary' (Butler 1997a:39). And they are subject to 'misfire' (Derrida 1988:72), they can have unexpected, or unwanted effects.

Butler's more recent refinements of her understanding of the performatively constituted subject takes up Bourdieu's notion of bodily habitus (Bourdieu 1990). Taking bodily activity to be formed by and *formative of* ritual and convention, she argues that the bodily habitus can be seen as 'a citational chain lived and believed at the level of the body' (Butler 1997a:155). She suggests that this might be understood as a 'tacit performative' which gives the body 'a practical sense' (Butler 1997a:159-60), a tacit awareness of its potential performative force as well as its limits. Butler also makes use of Althusser's notion of interpellation (Althusser 1971) suggesting that being interpellated – named – is a prerequisite for being '*recognizable*' (Butler 1997a:5, original emphasis) as a subject. Reflecting Althusser's notion of subjection and Foucault's understanding of subjectivation, Butler suggests that such naming may well be injurious, it may wound, but in so doing it also constitutes an intelligible subject (Butler 1997b).

The subject who has been so named is able to name another – he/she has what Butler calls 'linguistic agency' (Butler 1997:15) or 'discursive agency' (Butler 1997a:127). This latter notion allows us to take account of the range of discursive practices that are non-linguistic, for instance representations, non-verbal utterances, or performative habitus.

With this understanding of discursive agency, the performatively constituted subject retains intent and can seek to realise this through the deployment of discursive practices but the efficacy of these discursive deployments is never guaranteed. Butler suggests that such a subject might practice resistance through a *politics of performative resignification*[i] (Butler 1997a). By tying together a notion of misfire and discursive agency, Butler

preserves the possibility for a contextual politics that intervenes in the meaning and legitimacy of discourse:

> 'the possibility for the speech act *to take on a non-ordinary meaning, to function in contexts where it has not belonged, is precisely the political promise of the performative*, one that positions the performative at the center of a politics of hegemony, one that offers an unanticipated political future for deconstructive thinking' (Butler 1997a:161 my emphasis).

The theoretical framework that I am using, then, suggests identity categories, including those of gender and sexuality, *constitute* subjects. These categorical names are central to the performative interpellation of the subject who is unintelligible, if not unimaginable, without these. To be called, for example, 'fag' is to be simultaneously interpellated as subject and as a particular (but equivocal) type of subject. Such a naming joins a citational chain that inevitably inscribes hierarchical binary relations (Derrida 1988). These citational chains not only act to constitute the identity named, they also constitute the identity that is the silent partner in the dichotomy: the identity 'fag' silently constitutes hetero-masculinity.

That identity categories are at once subjectivating and equivocal does not imply that these categories should be, or even could be, abandoned. It is these identities, performatively interpellated, that constitute the subject. And it is their constitutive force and equivocacy which open up the possibility for the subject's discursive agency. Understanding these

performative names as bearing equivocal meanings offers both possibilities and limitations. As Butler has argued, it means that they are open to strategic reinscription, they can take on non-ordinary meanings and they can function in contexts where that have not belonged. This suggests that a given identity is not *either* wounded *or* privileged, inert *or* capable of resistance. Rather, the possibility of both injury and resistance is intrinsic to performative constitutions. Indeed, a discursive moment of injury may simultaneously open up particular possibilities for resistance.

While Foucault and Butler have been taken up across a range of disciplines, the possibilities offered by their work for the generation and analysis of empirical data have not been fully developed. In the remainder of this paper I will examine the discursive practices that students deploy in order to resist performatively constituted wounded identities and (potentially) *re*inscribe themselves *again differently[ii]*. That is, I will seek to identify how the subject-hood inscribed through injurious performatives is taken up and reinscribed. In doing this I will explore the possibilities and limits for a politics of performative reinscription. I proceed from the understanding that school practices are permeated by enduring hetero-normative discourses that inscribe a linear relationship between sex, gender and (hetero-)sexuality within the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990 & 1993). Indeed, the school is a key site for the proliferation, modification and incessant inscription of these discourses (Youdell 2000). I also work with a provisional acceptance of Butler's (1999) assertion that the call to sever this gender-sexuality link, while theoretically valid, is of limited usefulness in a discursive context that continues to tie gender and sexuality together.

In the discursive frame outlined, it is unsurprising that constitutions of gender and/or sexuality that are beyond the bounds of these hetero-normative discourses are sites of both injury and reinscription. It is the minutia of the day-to-day discursive practices that constitute these injuries and reinscriptions in the school context that form the focus of analysis that follows. Rather than offer an (inevitably partial) typology of the gender and sexual identities performatively constituted inside schools, I will offer a reading of two Episodes of ethnographic data in order to illustrate and better understand the processes through which these constitutions and reinscriptions occur.

Methodology

In this exploration I am bringing together data generated through two distinct school ethnographies, one undertaken in the UK, one undertaken in Australia. Reflecting the broad post-structural framework underpinning this work, these studies brought together research approaches developed within the tradition of school ethnography (see Delamont & Atkinson1995 and Hammersley & Atkinson 1995) and more recent adaptations of qualitative methods informed by post-structural theory (see Silverman 1997). This has notable methodological implications – by approaching ethnographic methods from a Foucauldian concern for productive power and discourse, research methods cease to be tools for eliciting facts and become moments in which selves and knowledges are provisionally generated (Silverman 1997). This may not change practices in the field, but it does impact significantly on analysis that proceeds from a concern with discourses and discursive practices.

The UK study drawn on here focused on Year 11 students (age 15-16) and was carried out during the1997/8 school year in a south London secondary school, 'Taylor Comprehensive'. The school is co-educational, multi-ethnic, with a large working class population alongside a notable middle class minority. The Australian study focused on Year 9 students (age 14-15) and was conducted during the 2001 school year in a western Sydney high school, 'Plains High'. The school is co-educational, multi-ethnic, and located in a working class community with relatively high levels of poverty and low social and geographic mobility. In an attempt to best illuminate the students' discursive practices, data are presented here as 'Episodes' that combine the conventions of sociological transcription and scriptwriting. This makes evident the complex, contextual, interactive and ongoing nature of discursive practice; facilitates detailed analyses of the deployment of multiple discourses; and leaves the data open, as far as possible, to further, alternative analyses. The Episodes discussed focus on two boys – Scott, from Taylor Comprehensive, and Ian, from Plains High.

Scott, South London

Scott is 16 years old, White and from a middle class background. The head of year identifies Scott as being in danger of 'underachieving' academically[iii], however, he publicly celebrates Scott's significant achievement in ballet outside school. Scott is tall with a slender muscular body, his posture and gait are erect and elegant. Like many of his peers, Scott regularly deviates from formal school uniform. The nature of these deviations, however, is unusual – he replaces grey trousers with metallic hi-tech fabric track pants and obscures his regulation blue school sweatshirt with a contrasting white

jumper worn over his shoulders or around his waist. Scott has limited social contact with other boys in the year group but has close friendships with range of girls, including a number of high-status, popular girls. These friendships are tactile, affectionate and include much verbal mutual admiration – citing and inscribing the gay man and straight woman (injuriously 'fag-hag') relationship of popular and gay discourse. Scott's school diary is covered in the iconography of gay culture: rainbow, red ribbon, and World Aids Day stickers, alongside monochrome photographs of demure young men and dramatic landscapes.

Ian, Western Sydney

Ian is 15 years old, White, and from a working class background. Ian's teachers identify him as being of high 'ability' relative to his classmates. He is tall relative to many of the boys in the year group and has neither the archetypal 'hard body' of the Australian man nor the 'soft body' of the 'working class sissy-boy' (McInnes & Couch 2001). Ian conforms to school uniform regulations to a greater degree than many of his peers. While like many of boys he wears a regulation white sports shirt, he also wears grey heavy cotton long shorts that are only rarely worn by other bys in the year group. A similar incongruity is evident in Ian's footwear – his big brand trainers are the same make as those of other boys, but the particular style of hi-tech stretch fabric running shoes is not worn by other boys. Ian does not appear to have an integral place in any of the student sub-cultures in the school. He has a close friendship with Josh and also spends time on the periphery of groups of popular, unruly 'anti-school' boys.

-- EPISODE 1 HERE --

The two scenes of Episode 1 can be understood as instances of injurious performatives. With such an understanding, these scenes can be examined to identify how injurious performatives provisionally constitute particular, denigrated, *wounded* identities through momentary and apparently insignificant discursive practices within the classroom. Through this analysis I suggest that Daniel's incomplete assertion that Scott is 'getting ready', and Ohan's refusal of proximity to and exclusion of Ian, are, respectively, linguistic and bodily performatives. These provisionally constitute Scott and Ian as denigrated, Other homosexual and, in so doing, simultaneously and implicitly constitute the hetero-masculinities of Daniel and Ohan.

Scott's bodily practices might be understood, in part, as the dispositions of a particular bodily habitus. I am not suggesting here that these are the dispositions of a habitus inculcated primarily within the home during early childhood as Bourdieu's (1990 & 1991) work might suggest. Rather, I am suggesting that the dispositions of this *performative* habitus are constituted and constituting on an *ongoing* basis (Butler 1997a). Such dispositions might be unknowingly inculcated through the images and representations of popular gay icons, the discourses of gay sub-culture(s), and the practices of the ballet school. The constituting and constitutive dispositions of such a performative habitus might be deployed as an unintentional (tacit) citation *and* an intentional mimicry of a particular and popularly recognised modality of gayness and/or the dancer.

As Scott leans over and talks to Vici, his practices cite and inscribe his gay identity – he constitutes and displays publicly an identity that is disavowed by the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality that permeates the school. In so doing, Scott potentially reinscribes homosexuality as intelligible and legitimate. This potential reinscription of the disavowed Other exposes the inextricable link between the Same and the Other of the heterosexual/homosexual hierarchical binary. It also exposes the constitutedness of this binary and its concomitant masculinities and femininities (Butler 1991). It is this reinscription of the disavowed homosexual Other and the exposures which it effects that inspires, or even compels, Daniel's censure and attempted restoration of normative meaning.

When Daniel announces 'He's getting ready' he does not address Scott directly, nor does his comment make any explicit reference to homosexuality. Indeed the comment does not make explicit *what* Scott might be getting ready for. I suggest that the comment is a (verbally incomplete) citation of the insistence within (popular) homophobic discourse that if a man or boy who is constituted as homosexual bends over, then he is preparing for/inviting anal penetration. To complete Daniel's colloquialism, 'He's getting ready' 'to take it up the arse'. The oblique/incomplete nature of the comment does not negate its potential to performatively constitute Scott as a particular wounded subject. Indeed, that it is unnecessary to utter the entire assertion highlights the enduring historicity of a wounded homosexuality within authorised (hetero-normative/homophobic) discourses. The comment, then, cites the homosexual who receives anal penetration; inscribes

receptive anal penetration as synonymous with homosexual (un)masculinity/femininity (the mystery of the penetrator remains unresolved); provisionally constitutes Scott as this wounded homosexual; and inscribes homosexuality as the poor imitation of the (illusory) heterosexual original (Butler 1991).

Daniel is not potentially interpellating the denigrated homosexuality of a boy whose bodily dispositions have somehow unwittingly failed to cite heterosexual masculinity. Scott's bodily practices cite the legitimate homosexual identity that he seeks to constitute. Daniel's discursive practices cite a wounded homosexual identity – his comment is an injurious interpellation that potentially constitutes Scott in these terms. In this sense, the mundane moment of leaning over a desk and a comment being passed can be seen as skirmish over the limits of intelligible masculinity, homosexuality and gay identity.

In contrast, Ian's practices in the second scene of the Episode do not immediately appear to inscribe a sexuality or gender identity that breaches the confines of compulsory heterosexuality and hetero-masculinity. Nevertheless, Ian is constituted as the denigrated, Other homosexual through a series of intentional and tacit bodily and linguistic performatives. This is not to suggest that Ohan arbitrarily selects Ian as the focus of his injurious performatives. On the contrary, the moment represented here is one moment in a complex chain of constituting practices, the echoes of which undoubtedly resonate in this scene. Ian's perceived high 'ability'; his ambiguous (un)physicality; his adherence to aspects of uniform rejected by other boys; and his primary relationship with a single boy are all practices which seep beyond the bounds of legitimate hetero-masculinity in this

context. As such, chains of prior constitutions of un-masculinity, whose performative force and endurance is reflected in their citation in the scene, are suggested.

Ohan's physical exclusion of Ian from the group and Ian's silent acquiescence to this suggest the citational chains through which valorised hetero-masculinities and disavowed (un)masculinities are repeatedly inscribed. The bodily nature of Ohan's practices inscribe his own masculinity and the physicality of this. Ian's acquiesces further inscribe this not-hetero-masculine. And as hetero-masculinity is *the* legitimate maleness in this context, this is a not-hetero-masculinity which constitutes an impossible (not)male subject. At this moment Ian has no place at the table and *no place in discourse* (Butler 1997a).

Ohan's bodily practices do not simply exclude Ian, they also refuse proximity to him. The spectre of contagion by and/or threat of the not-hetero-masculine (and therefore homo-(un)masculine/feminine) is evident here, citing enduring homophobic discourses.
The implicit possibility of contagion and threat to hetero-masculinity, however, also suggests (un)masculine/feminine weakness, thereby exposing as at risk the essential, valorised hetero-masculine body that Ohan's practices constitute and defend. This is a risk that is fundamentally at odds with the hetero-masculinity that prevails in this context.

Mark's intervention 'Yeah, sit next to your boyfriend' arguably blunts the performative constitution of 'no place' discussed above. It does this by ascribing Ian a subject position, albeit one that is denigrated – the wounded homosexual is an intelligible, if subjugated, subject (Foucault 1990, Butler 1997a & 1997b). This wound allows/demands the

teacher's intervention. Her single 'enough!' deploys an equal rights discourse that attempts to (impossibly) guard against the wounded subject that Mark's remark constitutes. Yet in its deployment, it inadvertently reinscribes the very wound that it aims to protect against – the (real, imagined or otherwise) homosexual student must be defended because in prevailing discourse a public assertion of his homosexuality is necessarily an *injurious* performative.

Scott and Vici's silent exchange suggests at least a partial understanding of the performative force of Daniel's injurious performative. Indeed, it may be taken as a forerunner to/promise of future resistance and reinscription. On the other hand, Ian's adherence to Ohan's exclusions and his coloured cheeks and bowed head are tacit, bodily performatives that inscribe again the wounded identity – Ian's body acts its/his place in discourse (Butler 1997a).

-- EPISODE 2 HERE --

Scott's practices in Scene 1 of Episode 2 can be understood as a hyperbolic masquerade (Butler 1990) of the subjugated homosexual (the terms in which he was provisionally constituted by Daniel) and as an intentional, potentially constituting, mimicry of a particular gay identity. This is a moment in which the physicality of the skilled and controlled (un)masculine ballet dancer troubles the bounds of the hetero-masculine body. As such, these practices expose as discursively constituted this subjugated homosexuality, have the potential to unsettle Daniel's constitution, and reinscribe gay.

The participation of the girls is significant. Through their watching, appreciation, and questions the girls assure the immediate discursive frame through which Scott's practices are made meaningful. In so doing they collaborate with his reinscription of the intelligibility, legitimacy, and desirability of (a/his) gay identity. Scott has the 'girls' and the 'gifts' that McInnes and Couch (2001) suggest contribute to an acceptable (un)masculinity in school contexts.

Scott's practices, then, potentially interrupt the wounded homosexual which Daniel's comment cited and inscribed as well as provisionally reinscribing gay *again differently*. Yet Scott's practices cite the well-rehearsed gay *artiste*, the excess and theatricality of a particular mode of homosexuality. This is a mode of homosexual Otherness that is embraced by popular and broader culture. And yet this embrace is also an act of containment, constraining the possibilities for further homosexual identities. Further, ballet confirms the lack of masculinity implicit in Daniel's injurious performative, and in turn inscribes once again Daniel's hetero-masculinity. As such, this is a fragile reinscription.

In Scene 2 of Episode 2, The exchange between Ian and Josh appears to effect a provisional shift from the injurious inscription of denigrated homosexual seen in Episode 1, to the inscription of a legitimate gay identity. It is noteworthy that the exchange proceeds from a joke shared with a broader group of students about the alleged heterosexual relationship between two teachers. That hetero-sex provides a point of

departure for discursive practices of homo-sex in the classroom underscores the ever-present spectre of the Other within the Same.

When Josh calls Ian 'Drama Queen' and 'Pricilla' he cite simultaneously the denigrated, camp, cross dressing, emotionally excessive (and therefore feminine) homosexual *and* a globalised and commercialised (and therefore legitimate) gay culture and identity epitomised by the film *Pricilla Queen of the Desert*. Josh does not call Ian 'fag' or 'poof', rather, conversant with gay discourse he interpellates a legitimate (if particular) homosexual – and Ian's laughter recognises and acknowledges these discursive markers.

Josh's namings of Ian, then, have the potential to both injure and legitimate – they occupy two discursive frames simultaneously, at once features of a hetero-normative discourse and a popular gay discourse. Likewise, they have the potential to constitute Josh as both critical of homosexuality (and therefore as heterosexual and masculine) and inside this legitimate gay culture (and therefore homosexual). It is the simultaneous potential for injury and legitimation that creates the possibility for Josh and Ian to constitute legitimate pop-gay identity in this context without sanction or censure. In this sense, Josh and Ian are deploying a pop-gay discourse with a tacit or even explicit knowledge that Ohan will understand this through/as hetero-normative discourse. Josh's discursive practices have produced a moment in which gay name-calling is simultaneously injurious *and* takes on a non-ordinary meaning (Butler 1997a). And these practices function in a context – a school classroom – where they have not previously belonged. This is the discursive agency of Butler's performative resignification. The

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injury of this double discursive framing may limit the reinscription effected here, however, the moment is undoubtedly one of pleasure for Josh and Ian.

The moment is ruptured, however, by Ian's 'Baby kitten soft dick'; Ohan must intervene to defend/reassert his hetero-masculinity, to act his place in discourse. Ian's retort can be understood as a series of discursive manoeuvres. 'Baby kitten soft dick' is a performative interpellation that has the potential to constitute Josh as infantile, impotent, feminised, and passive – as the vilified homosexual Other of hetero-normative discourse. Yet the enduring gay identity ascribed to Ian, and his laughing delight in the naming, complicate this discursive frame. The passive femininity ascribed to Josh also alludes silently to Ian's active masculinity, the 'soft dick' ascribed alludes silently to Ian's 'hard dick'. Frequently vilified for being/constituted as the denigrated homosexual, these implicit constitutions should be impossible within the hetero-masculine regime of the school. And yet, active and pleasurable, if illegitimate, homosexuality is rendered intelligible here. Quiet simply, a boy who is frequently vilified as/for being homosexual creates, in tacit or silent collaboration with his friend, a discursive moment in the classroom in which pop-gay icons are named; performatives that constitute legitimate homosexual subjects are exchanged; reference to implicitly homosexual penises and pleasures is made; and heterosexual boys are seduced and/or tricked into a momentary intimacy with a legitimate homosexual Other.

While Ohan did not recognise the pop-gay discourse cited by Josh, or its performative implications, he does not miss Ian's constitutions. Hetero-masculinity is threatened, even

if only momentarily, by Ian's performative and so Ohan must respond. Ohan's disgusted objection and, as in Episode 1, refusal of proximity attempt to interrupt Josh and Ian's constitutions of legitimate homosexuality and inscribe once again hetero-masculinity as the only repository of active sexuality and masculinity. Unlike Episode 1, however, Ohan cannot exclude Ian, rather he is forced to exclude himself in order to quite literally distance himself from the conversation and its performative implications. His quick return to the table may suggest a tacit sense of the imperative for continued policing of gender and sexual identities. And in the well rehearsed discursive practices through which hetero-masculinity is constituted and homo-(un)masculinity/femininity is disavowed, the part taken by Ohan is fulfilled. Furthermore, like the two boys who have looked on quietly smiling and the multitudes who tune in to TV shows hosted by/about drag queens and fairies, Ohan may return to observe the freak show, the curio of the Other that is deployed, albeit inconclusively, in the further inscription of the Same.

Despite these attempted and partial restorations of normative meaning, pop-gay discourse has, at least partially and momentarily, been constituted as legitimate and constituted legitimate gay subjects in this classroom context. This, then, is a moment of performative reinscription. Denigrated homosexual identities take on non-ordinary, that is, legitimate, meanings. And pop-gay discourse and implicit same-sex eroticism, and the identities constituted through these, have functioned, albeit briefly, in this classroom context, a context where they have not previously belonged.

Implications

This paper draws on empirical data generated in British and Australian schools, demonstrating the capacity of the methodological and theoretical tools used to access and analyse these processes across these two settings. In the contexts of globalisation and the interlocking histories of the two nations, it is perhaps unsurprising that while significant contextual specificities are evident, enduring hetero-masculinities and the oppositional constitution of the denigrated, homosexual Other are common across the two settings.

The analysis offered in this paper demonstrates how identities are inscribed and reinscribed in the day-to-day practice of students inside schools. It at once shows the functioning of chains of enduring discourses and how students tacitly and knowingly refuse the wounded and denigrated identities ascribed to them. These students can be seen to read, remake, and exceed the limits of normative discourse – they are causing sex-gender-sexuality trouble, they are *practicing a politics of performative resignification.* Reinscribing identities that are constituted through the citation of enduring discourses, themselves steeped in historicity, is not straight forward. With multiple discourses in play within single moments of practice, the possibility for performative reinscriptions exists alongside the threat of normative meanings being restored and newly legitimised identities being rendered once again injured or unintelligible.

Performative resignification, then, is a constitutive process through which students' identities can be constituted *again differently* in the school context. Butler's (1997a)

assertion that discourses can be made to function in contexts where they have not

belonged and to take on non-ordinary meanings is demonstrated here. As such, mundane

school practices are shown to be sites of a deconstructive politics of hegemony (Butler

1997a). That the threat of restoration of normative meanings – as seen in the episodes

discussed – is intrinsic to such a politics does not negate its significance. Rather, it

underscores the altered perametres for (discursive) agency suggested by this conceptual

framework.

The analysis within this paper also illustrates the impossibility, in the current discursive

context, of separating gender and sexuality. As Butler (1999) has noted, Foucault's call to

replace sex-desire with bodies and pleasures in ways that loosen this connection remains

an important theoretical and political vision. Yet reflecting Butler's theoretical assertion,

the Episodes analysed here demonstrate the intimacy, the mutual constitution, of gender

and sexuality in contemporary school life. Understanding this intimate connection

between gender and sexuality offers a significant contribution to current discussions of

boys and schooling by revealing how particular hetero-masculinities might come to be

constituted as incommensurate with the ideal, or even acceptable, learner. (See Youdell

(in press) for a discussion of these processes in relation to Black boys).

Finally, the work offered here highlights the limits of equal rights and anti-discrimination

based policies and interventions. It does this by indicating the mundane, day-to-day

constitutive practices that oppositional and structural politics and policy reform are

unable to penetrate. Understanding these complex performatives suggests that the

mundane and day-to-day is crucial to education scholarship concerned to explain why social justice policies and programmes have not shifted radically, in the ways hoped for, the inequalities with which they have been concerned. This underscores the importance of understanding and making use of post-structural theories not as replacements for structural theories and concerns, but as necessary supplements that offer additional tools with which to approach a reconfigured, deconstructive politics of hegemony.

Endnotes

[i] Butler variously describes this performative politics of resignification as operating through appropriations, misappropriations, reappropriations and expropriations of authorised performative interpellations. She also refers to practices of inscription and reinscription. While these latter terms are often taken to refer specifically to writing, I give preference to this Derridean terminology to avoid the inference of proper ownership.

ii Given that the notion of citationality takes all inscription to be a repetition, a saying or doing 'again', I restrict my use of the term reinscription to instances where the suggestion of a saying or doing *again differently* is inferred.

iii See Gillborn & Youdell (2000) for a full discussion of the notion of underachievement and its implications.