The violence of gender:  
Australian policy responses to violence

by

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Abstract

This thesis engages in critical policy analysis in order to examine the ways in which certain representations of violence are problematised in and through social policy. Underpinned by an understanding of policy as discourse based on the recognition that social, or policy, problems are created in and through discourse, particular attention is directed towards the ways in which discourses of violence rely upon and reproduce particular constructions of gender. Policy analysis, then, is used here to interrogate the presuppositions about gender and violence which shape the political/policy agenda, thereby limiting ‘what is talked about as possible or desirable, or as impossible or undesirable’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). Focusing on the key federal policy areas of violence against women and children, health, and education, this thesis highlights, both, the extent to which discourses of gender and violence overlap and interrelate in policy constructions of violence and the implications that this has for Australian government responses to ‘violence’.

The extent to which (policy) constructions of violence reflect, embed and reinforce gender(ed) discourses represents a key finding of this thesis. The thesis further highlights the ways in which the naming of some violence(s) as ‘problem violences’ enable other violences to be represented as ‘understandable’ or unremarkable and, therefore, unproblematic. As argued here, gender, difference and identity, whilst key contexts for the construction, explanation, and experience of violence, are largely unacknowledged and undertheorised in current Australian policy approaches to ‘problem violence’. Dominant discourses of violence, gender and power thus enable violences to be represented as the problem of (gendered, classed, raced) ‘others’, providing a crucial means by which certain groups and behaviours are responsibilised and targeted for intervention. Discourses, then, also produce subjectivity/ies and it is in this sense that violence can be understood as the ‘site at which genders are produced’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 249): the violence of gender.
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I feel very lucky to have been supervised by Professor Bob Pease whose work I had admired from afar long before he agreed to take me on as a student. His incisive responses to my drafts of work in progress have gently, but firmly, challenged me to stretch my thinking. In addition to his extensive knowledge and experience, I have particularly valued Bob’s enthusiasm and interest in my work as well as his egalitarian approach to the supervisory relationship.

I wish also to acknowledge my late sister, Joanna Seymour, whose absence, in the words of poet W. S. Merwin (2006), ‘has gone through me / Like thread through a needle. / Everything I do is stitched with its color’.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on constructions of violence, in particular the ways in which violence is constructed as a social problem in and through policy\(^1\) discourses. As observed by Stanko (2003, p. 12), ‘[n]ot all violence is condemned; not all forms of violence are punished; [and] not all forms of violence receive widespread disapproval’. Accordingly, this thesis represents an interrogation of the ways in which ‘violence’ is constructed and represented in and through government policy. In this respect, it is based upon the recognition that power, as the exercise of government, operates through the ways in which ‘certain persons, things or forms of conduct come to be seen as problematic’ (Rose, 1999, p. xi). In its focus on the ways in which the social problem of ‘violence/s’ are made ‘manifest, nameable, and desirable’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 41), the thesis raises fundamental questions regarding the ways in which ‘violence’ is constructed and thereby governed. Examining policy constructions of ‘violence’, the approach taken here, provides the opportunity to gain critical insights into the exercise of (gendered) power through knowledge. In this sense I am interested in the specific ways in which discourses of violence rely upon, and reproduce, particular gender constructions. The ways in which discourses of gender and violence overlap and interrelate in policy constructions of violence, and the implications for naming, conceptualising and responding to ‘violence’, are therefore the primary foci of this thesis.

This thesis has its beginnings in a 2006 exploratory study into the ways in which practitioners, engaged in work with men who are violent towards their female partners, construct and understand violence. In drawing attention to professional constructions of violence, this earlier study, as discussed in Chapter 2, highlighted discourses – and discourses of gender and violence in particular – as crucial to understanding societal responses

\(^1\) Social policy is the focus of this thesis, however, I use the shortened form ‘policy’ throughout this thesis for ease of expression.
to violence. Here, I treat the practitioner accounts from the 2006 study as ‘indications of the discourses at play’ (Alvesson, 2002, p. 14), rather than ‘just’ the personal beliefs of individuals. In this respect, I see these individual accounts as reflecting broader discourses, in particular the inseparability of discourses of gender and violence, functioning to ‘mask the power relations that determine what acts will qualify as “violence”’ (K. L. Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p. 367). Whilst this earlier study illustrated the extent to which societal and cultural beliefs regarding gender and violence are embedded in ‘expert’ knowledge(s) and practices, this thesis seeks to extend this earlier analysis through examination of relevant government policy. By focusing attention on the ways in which certain representations of violence are problematised in and through social policy, I aim to investigate the exercise of power through discourses, including the construction of knowledge and expertise, in shaping Australian government responses.

Violence / Gender

That ‘violence is gendered’, according to Schwartz (2005), is the ‘most important research finding of the past two decades’ (p. 8). In this context, however, the term ‘gender’ continues to be used in a way that equates it with women or to designate women’s interests and concerns. This is evident in much mainstream literature in which violence is conceptualised as ‘gendered’ when it is directed at women and children but, as claimed in a recent (feminist) criminology text, as otherwise offering ‘little basis for a consideration of gender’ (Wykes & Welsh, 2009, p. 5) when it is between men. At the same time, men’s capacity for violence is ubiquitous and, largely, unquestioned: the ‘natural’ association of masculinity with violence implies that to be a man is to be, or at least to have the potential to be, violent. Ideas about gender, then, are, not only, ‘violent in themselves’ but are also ‘productive of violence’ (Shepherd, 2009, p. 214). This highlights the imperative to question why certain violences ‘fall outside the traditional parameters of study’ (p. 214) and, hence, policy attention. Why, for example, do some (policy) accounts of violence refer to gender and gendered effects and not others? This thesis takes up this challenge in its
focus on the ways in which discourses of violence rely upon and reproduce particular gender constructions. In short, through its emphasis on the gendered nature of violence, rather than the violence of gender, this thesis seeks to unmask the ways in which understandings of violence reflect, embed, and reinforce gendered discourses.

**Discourse, policy and policy analysis**

Social problems are 'created' in and through discourse; particular solutions then, as highlighted by Foucault (1984), result from specific problematisations. As a key advocate for analysing policy as discourse, Bacchi (1999, 2000), drawing upon Foucault’s work, argues that paying ‘attention to the ways in which “social problems” or policy problems get “created” in discourse’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 48) is critical in order to expose, and thereby challenge, the ‘silences in problematizations’ (Bacchi, 1999, p. 50). Social ‘problems’, in Bacchi’s (2000, p. 48) view, are “created” or “given shape” in the very policy proposals that are offered as “responses”.

Engaging in critical policy analysis, as I do in this thesis, is thus crucial because policy provides a way to tap into discourses. My approach here, inspired by the work of Bacchi and others, is to examine policy as a means through which to explore the ways in which knowledge – or ‘presuppositions’ - about gender and violence are ‘implied or taken for granted in the problem representation[s]’ offered (Bacchi, 1999, p. 2).

An understanding of policy as discursive activity directs attention towards the issues that ‘make the political agenda’, specifically in terms of the ways in which their ‘construction or representation [...] limits what is talked about as possible or desirable, or as impossible or undesirable’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). An analytical approach such as this, focusing on ‘the discursive field in which the exercise of power is rationalized’ (McKee, 2009, p. 466), thus lends itself to reflection upon the naming of *some* violence(s) as ‘problem violences’ and the ways in which this enables the representation of other violences as ‘understandable’ or unremarkable. In exploring discursive constructions of the relationship/s between gender and violence, this thesis focuses, in particular, on the ways in which
gender and violence are conceptualised and, crucially, seeks to identify silences and gaps in this regard; that is, in Hearn and McKie’s (2010, p. 137) words, ‘what is said [...] as well as who is silenced and what is not considered’.

**Research Questions**

The overriding focus of this thesis is the problematisation of certain representations of gender and violence in, and through, social policy. Encompassed within this broader concern, with the presumptions about gender and violence that frame and inform policy, are a range of questions, each drawing attention to different, though overlapping, dimensions of the construction of violence. Asking what ‘kinds’ of violence are constructed as social problem/s, for example, highlights issues relating to the separation of ‘acceptable’ (i.e. ‘normal’/understandable) and ‘unacceptable’ (problem) violences; of appropriate (‘boys will be boys’) and unfair (‘pick on someone your own size’) violences; as well as the demarcation of violences as public or private, legitimated/officially sanctioned or illegal/criminal, and so on. Moreover, critiquing the discursive resources, and significantly, the ‘knowledges’, drawn upon in constructing ‘problem/s’ of violence, focuses attention on expertise as a ‘mode of authority’ (Rose, 1999, p. xi), and the crucial exclusionary function that this performs in terms of determining who is able to speak authoritatively about an issue, within the broader context of the national and ‘supranational’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010). Similarly, this demands analysis of the power effects, in Foucauldian terms, of, or which are generated by, the prevailing discourses/knowledges of violence. Lastly, considering the subject positions created and/or reproduced by these discourses of, or knowledges about, violence, enables critical reflection on the mutually constitutive relationship between dominant understandings of gender and violence. These concerns, as both overriding themes and specific lines of enquiry, are indicative of those framing and running throughout this thesis and each of its chapters.
The key research questions guiding the work of this thesis are listed below. Following each of these the sub-questions, in italics, indicate the particular ways in which these broader themes may be ‘operationalised’ in the context of the various policy foci.

* How has ‘violence’ been constructed as a social problem in Australian policy discourse?

What is problematised as ‘violence’ in Australian policy?  
What is left unproblematic in this representation of violence?

What violences are named / unnamed, emphasised / deemphasised, and acknowledged / unacknowledged?

* What presuppositions about gender are implied or taken for granted in this representation of the problem of violence and with what effects?

How/in what ways are conventional understandings of gender (for example, in relation to sex/gender difference, gendered roles and responsibilities, etc) reinforced and/or challenged? To what extent is social change, and/or different social arrangements, presented as possible and/or desirable?

How/in what ways do the discourses of gender and violence intersect and overlap?

* What discursive resources, or ‘knowledges’, are drawn upon in Australian policy constructions of the problem/s of ‘violence’?

Which knowledges, and ‘ways of knowing’, are afforded truth status?
Which knowledges, and ‘ways of knowing’, are linked to the emergence and dominance of particular representations of the problem of ‘violence’?

- What effects are produced by this representation of the problem of ‘violence’?

Who is identified as ‘violent’ and with what effects?

How/In what ways are the ‘violent’ subject and the ‘non-violent’ subject differentiated?

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis consists broadly of two main sections. Chapters 2 – 4 cover the background as well as the epistemological, theoretical and conceptual origins of the thesis. Chapters 5 – 8 focus more specifically on violence-related policy in Australia, constituting the analytical ‘body’ and original contribution of the thesis.

Chapter 2 contextualises the thesis by providing a background to the project and, in particular, discussed the issues associated with the process of identifying the ‘research problem’. This involves situating myself – as person, professional and researcher – in the research, and reflecting on the knowledges and assumptions that I bring to this work. Much of Chapter 2 is taken up with discussion of the 2006 exploratory study which is an important precursor for this thesis. It was through this study that my interest in the centrality of dominant discourses in relation to gender, violence, ‘expertise’ and knowledge emerged. In this sense, the understanding that discourses make available subject positions – or ‘certain ways-of-seeing and certain ways-of-being’ (Willig, 2001, p. 107) – was a critical influence on the shift in my focus from the narratives of individual practitioners to a policy-as-discourse approach. Thus this
chapter provides, both, an important justification for the current research and a context for the discussions concerning the theoretical framework, research design and methods that follow in Chapters 3 and 4.

In Chapter 3 I outline the theoretical and conceptual framework for this thesis, setting the scene for the description of research methods in Chapter 4. Reflecting on the epistemological, ontological and theoretical standpoints guiding my work constitutes a substantial focus of this chapter. Here I discuss the theoretical perspectives of constructionism, postmodernism / poststructuralism, and feminism and consider each in terms of its fit with my methodological approach. This is followed by a more focused evaluation of the usefulness of a poststructural approach in relation to the central task of this thesis; that of exploring the ways in which violence is conceptualised, explained and, most importantly, problematised. To this end I review the works of Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose as two key influences on my thinking with regard to the construction of 'violence' as a contemporary social problem. Acknowledging some of the criticisms that have been made of Foucault's work in particular, I consider the ways in which this has been extended and built upon by other theorists in order to demonstrate its enduring utility as well as its specific relevance for my work. Chapter 3 provides the foundation for, and links directly with, the discussion of research methods in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 begins with a brief overview of those conventional approaches to policy analysis which treat policy as a response, or reaction, to a 'real', pre-existing problem. This discussion provides the background for the primary focus of this chapter; that of alternate perspectives for critiquing and analysing policy, specifically those proposed by Foucauldian inspired theorists James Scheurich and Carol Bacchi. Scheurich's (1997) 'policy archaeology' approach emphasises problems as socially constructed, advocating that particular attention be paid to the conditions that make possible the emergence and visibility of certain social practices and social problems. Similarly, Bacchi (2000, 2009) positions her approach to policy
within the broader context of seeking to understand how governing takes place. In this context, as explored in this chapter, she is specifically interested in analysing policy as discourse. In evaluating the utility of Scheurich’s and Bacchi’s policy analysis models for my own work, a particular focus of Chapter 4 is reviewing some of the ways in which other researchers have applied these in practice.

Chapter 5 explores the Australian policy framework as it relates, broadly, to violence responses, interventions and prevention. Structured in two parts, the chapter begins with an account of the policy process and structure in Australia. This is followed by an outline, or ‘map’, of the broad range of policies, programs and projects relating to violence throughout the states and territories of Australia. The aim of Chapter 5, then, is to ‘set the scene’ and orient the reader to the specific and in-depth policy analyses that follow. The policy review here is neither exhaustive nor definitive. Rather it is used to make observations about the broader framework of policy responses to violence in Australia, that is, to highlight common themes and assumptions, significant events, and so on. As illustrated in this chapter, the lack of a coordinated and overarching policy approach to violence prevention, combined with the inconsistency and partiality of responses to violence, provides critical context in terms of the ways in which the problem of violence has been constructed, and thereby governed, in Australia. The methodological decision to focus on analysis of federal policy, as discussed here, thus reflects the thesis emphasis on the overall – national - policy agenda, as established by the Commonwealth government and within which states and territories must function, providing the context for the ways in which social ‘problems’, such as violence, are created, produced and ‘given shape’.

Chapters 6 – 8, the policy analysis chapters, represent the heart and soul of this thesis. The three federal policies examined here are relatively recent introductions to the policy arena in Australia. Reflecting the dominance of neoliberal ideology in Australia, each embodies a clear focus on individualism, rational choice, risk and responsibilization. In this
context, violence is conceptualised as a behaviour that is both freely chosen and individually willed. As illustrated in this - the analysis - section of this thesis, by linking violence to particular ‘types’ of people, more difficult questions regarding gender, power relations, identity and difference are obscured and remain outside of the policy agenda. Chapter 6 examines Australia’s National Health Policy, with particular focus on the National Male Health Policy (NMHP), released in May 2010 and the first such (that is, male-specific) policy in Australia. Reference is also made to the National Women’s Health Policy (NWHP), released in December 2010, in order to highlight relevant complementarities and points of difference. Significantly, both policy documents are largely silent in relation to violence but, in the ways in which each of these position and subjectify men and women, provide an excellent opportunity to explore representations of gender, demonstrating the extent to which discourses of gender and violence are indivisible and intertwined. In this sense, the problematic of violence, as represented more directly in the policy accounts discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, is absolutely consistent – and follows logically – from the constructions of gender, with their implicit heterosexism, examined here.

Chapter 7 focuses on the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children released in February 2011 as well as, to a lesser extent, its precursor report Time for Action, prepared by the government appointed National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children. Reflecting Bacchi’s (2009) emphasis on the central role of problematisations in governing processes, this chapter considers the ways in which violence is conceptualised, as a social problem, in the National Plan. Here, particular attention is paid to the place of gender discourses, specifically those that emphasise gender difference, in shaping the understandings and theorisations of violence which underpin the Plan. The identification – and problematisation - of some violences, and not others, is highlighted as a crucial means by which certain groups and behaviours are responsibilised and, thus, targeted for intervention. Building upon Chapter 6, the subject positions made
available to men and women in the *National Plan*, including the normalisation of men’s agency and women’s vulnerability, are critical themes running throughout this chapter.

Chapter 8 examines the (revised) *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF), launched by the Federal government in March 2011. Whilst presented as a more generic ‘safe schools’ initiative, the primary concern of the policy is school bullying, framed here as the precursor to adult ‘problem behaviours’ such as domestic violence and violent offending. Focusing again on the ways in which violence is problematised, this chapter highlights the space devoted in the NSSF to precise delineation of the nature, parameters and extent of the ‘school bullying’ problem, illustrating the ways in which definitions can be used to circumscribe, not only, policy responses (or lack thereof) but also, and more critically, ascriptions of blame, pathology, moral worth, and so on. The ‘dividing practices’ associated with narratives of bullying and school violence, as evident in the NSSF, rely upon, and work through, discourses of gender, difference and identity. In this sense, Chapter 8 demonstrates the extent to which discourses of violence, whether in the context of schools or broader society, enable violences to be represented as the problem of (gendered, classed, raced) ‘others’, rather than indicative of a fundamentally divided and unequal society. In arguing that violence might be more accurately conceptualised as violence against difference, this chapter considers the ways in which violence both mirrors and (re)produces existing hierarchies of privilege, dominance and entitlement.

Linking the three specific policy analysis chapters, Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by highlighting key findings, common issues, dilemmas and implications. Here I revisit the key research questions, as outlined in this Introduction, in order to reflect upon the ways in which discourses of gender and violence overlap and interrelate in Australian policy constructions of violence and, as such, impact upon governmental responses to violence. It is, of course, impossible to challenge dominant constructions of violence without also paying attention to the broader
understandings of gender, difference and identity that shape – and to a large extent determine - cultural expectations and societal relations. Gendered and other constructed ‘truths’, as argued throughout this thesis, entrench, and render comprehensible, the hierarchical relations associated with markers of difference and identity. Thus, in bringing the thesis to a close, Chapter 9 raises crucial questions regarding the violence of gender itself.
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Introduction

This thesis has its genesis in a 2006 exploratory study regarding the beliefs, attitudes and professional practice of practitioners who are engaged in domestic violence intervention. Aspects of this work, including discussion of the findings, have been presented in other forums (see Seymour, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). Whilst not an initial focus of the study, I was particularly struck by the understandings of violence expressed in the individual narratives of the participating practitioners. It was this dimension that provided the catalyst for my interest in the dominance of certain ways of knowing in relation to the ‘facts’ about violence. This thesis builds upon, yet substantially extends, this earlier study through an analysis of government policy as the discursive context for individual accounts.

Prior to moving into an academic role I worked for approximately ten years in the areas of social work practice and management. Specifically, I worked extensively with adult male offenders including those accused or convicted of domestic violence offences. Hence I embarked upon this earlier (2006) study as a relatively new academic with a background in direct (social work) practice and an ongoing identification with this profession. Revisiting the early stages of this project now, it is clear that my ideas – and interest – have since evolved considerably. To a large extent this reflects firstly, my initial exploratory focus in seeking to gain a deeper understanding of relevant issues and, secondly, my own professional enculturation and, in particular, (gendered) subjectivity. Throughout the course of this exploratory process, as discussed in this chapter, I was, and in many ways continue to be, confronted with my own embeddedness in the gendered ‘status quo’; with my own complicity in the maintenance of damaging gender assumptions and practices. Knowledge and experience are inevitably subjective, contingent and value laden; layers of meaning and subjectivity are embedded in the everyday of
‘ordinary’ existence. This recognition forms the basis for my chosen methodological approach, as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4, acknowledging that, as subjects, we are all constituted - and implicated – in discourse/s. As argued by Bacchi (2009), however, whilst (dominant) discourses are undoubtedly constraining, the conscious adoption of a critical and reflexive positioning ‘makes it possible to theorise the space for challenge’ (p. 237).

This chapter provides both, an important justification for the current research and a context for the discussions concerning theoretical framework and research design and methods which follow in Chapters 3 and 4. I present an overview of the 2006 exploratory study, its key findings and themes, and review the impact that this has had on my own ways of thinking about violence. In this context, my investigation of the issues associated with the ‘problematic’, as I now see it, with which this thesis is concerned, requires that I situate my ‘self’ in the research process. This recognises that critically reflecting on ‘how each of us [has] internalised the dominant discourses’ of gender, violence and knowledge, provides the opportunity to ‘actively challenge [their] specific manifestations’ (Morley & Macfarlane, 2008, p. 36); it is to this task that I now turn.

‘Intellectual autobiography’

Qualitative research, as observed by Frankel and Devers (2000, p. 254), is ‘often developmental, beginning with exploratory study and moving toward more structured research design as knowledge increases’. I embarked upon the exploratory stage of this work with a strong, albeit broad, interest and conceptualisation of my intended research focus. My aim at this early stage was to learn as much as possible about the issues as I then conceived them. In discussing Schön’s (1983) distinction between the ‘high hard ground’ of research and theory and the ‘swampy lowland’ of human services practice, Darlington and Scott (2002) argue for an approach to research that seeks to connect ‘these two parts of the landscape’ (p. 1). Acknowledging the tendency to separate research and practice, they observe that ‘multiple questions’ are generated by
practitioners working in the human services fields. Such questions are not generally thought of, or linked to, research, in part because of their ‘often tacit nature’ and the related tendency to dismiss professional knowledge as intuitive and, hence, ‘unresearchable’ (p. 4). I approached this research endeavour with my feet firmly in the ‘swampy’ ground of direct practice, motivated by the questions that had niggled at me in that context. Indeed it was the lack of an appropriate scholarly forum within which to pursue these questions that led me to the, so-called, ‘high ground’ of academia. This thesis thus represents an effort to (re)connect the ‘low’ and the ‘high’ grounds that make up the ‘dynamic and complex social world of the human services’ (Darlington & Scott, 2002, p. 1).

A reflexive approach to research, as emphasised by Pini (2004, p. 171), ‘requires acknowledging one’s own “intellectual autobiography” in order to ‘critique and unpack how this may have influenced the construction of knowledge’. For Pini, this involved revisiting her ‘much younger past which had preceded both paid work and academic study’ (p. 171). For me, this means reflecting on the ‘multiple and shifting positions’ (Pini, 2004, p. 172) from which I speak. Thus even though I do not currently practice in the field of social work, the identities associated with both social work and direct practice remain core aspects of my sense of ‘who I am’. Gender and class are also, of course, fundamental, as is my ‘deeply racialised’ (Moore, 1994 p. 61) experience of these. My gendered, classed (aged, able-bodied, white/Anglo, etc) subjectivity means that, to a large extent, I must abandon ‘claims to epistemological authority’ (Pini, 2004, p. 172) and neutrality. This is especially critical given that it is clear that my identity as social worker / practitioner benefitted the 2006 research in terms of facilitating access to research participants and, in affording me legitimacy, ‘increased access to [participants’] views and experiences’. Hence, it would be disingenuous to fail to acknowledge the ways in which my subjectivity has influenced, both, my ‘access to data’ (Pini, 2004, p. 174) and the knowledge ‘produced’. In addition, the data gathered, questions asked and interpretations made have all been ‘mediated by the different identities [I] inhabit’ (p. 176). Thus the ‘modest’ accounts presented here
must be recognised as inherently ‘situated, partial, [and] developmental’ (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 424).

Having worked extensively with male ‘offenders’, both more generally as well as within the domestic violence field, I was – am – alarmed at my own failure to ‘see’ the range of issues that became apparent to me over the course of this phase of the research. The ‘researcher – researched’ relationship turned out to be considerably more complex than I had expected in that, in talking with the participants, I became aware of my own ‘blind spots’ and assumptions. It was, thus, in a very real sense that the research, and researcher, evolved, this involving a reflective process of (self) awareness and refinement of ideas, both intellectually and personally. For example, I had not set out to explore participants’ experience of the workplace, although recognition of the gendered nature of the workplace and its impacts had certainly been implicit in my conceptualisation of the context for the initial study. The specific impact and implications of this work, as discussed by the female participants, nonetheless took me by surprise, unaccountably so given my own background within this area. In particular, whilst both the male and female participants talked about the challenges of working with men who are violent, the extent to which the demands, implications and related effects were gendered – not just incidentally but profoundly so, became clear, with women bearing the brunt of these pressures (see Seymour, 2009c). Indeed issues of gender, power and the specifically gendered structure, nature and effects of power were continuous throughout the study, demonstrating the connections between everyday activities and broader social structural conditions and, critically, the interconnections between gender and power at both the individual and the institutional level (Bosworth & Carrabine, 2001, p. 512).

There surely cannot be a starker contrast between the ‘action-packed’ world of direct practice - of days filled with people, ‘crises’, contingencies and unpredictabilities, and the (relative) detachment and overriding autonomy of academic research. Involvement in direct client practice
requires a dynamic and acute level of engagement in the ‘here and now’; the ability to simultaneously respond to people, whether colleagues or clients, issues/problems, theoretical principles, and institutional policies and procedures. It is work that is both exhilarating and, at times, profoundly wearying – but it is, above all, a state of connection and connectedness. Since moving into an academic role I have, at times, railed against the hierarchies, the claimed objectivity and distancing associated with academic knowing and struggled with the separation of minds and bodies, of knowledge and practice. It is nonetheless clear that being able to step outside of the hurly-burly of the practice setting has allowed me to reflect critically on these ‘taken-for-granted’ knowledges. As has been observed by Mauthner and Doucet (2003, p. 415), there is a ‘limit to how reflexive we can be and how far we can know and understand’ the range of factors influencing our actions whilst we are in the ‘thick of it’. It may only be when we have, in a sense, ‘moved on’ that we are able to access the clarity – the ‘emotional and intellectual distance’ (p. 425) - required to reflect more critically on our experiences. The relationship between ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ is symbiotic: knowledge is a living and breathing thing. ‘Knowing’ and ‘doing’ cannot be separated, however, moving away from the practitioner role has provided me with the breathing space - and distance from ‘institutional and pragmatic’ (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 415) imperatives - to reflect upon matters epistemological and ontological and, in doing so, to ask questions that I had not previously realised needed to be asked.

The study

The qualitative study from which this thesis originates was relatively small in scale; its aim was to investigate the beliefs, attitudes and professional practice of male and female practitioners engaged in work with men who are violent towards their female partners. Based on an understanding of gendered power as critical to men’s use of violence, the study had as its primary focus the gendered subjectivity of practitioners, specifically with regard to the potential for reinforcement of ‘pro-offending’ beliefs and
behaviours. ‘Pro-offending’, in this context, referred to the relationship between gendered difference, power and structural inequality and, specifically, the ways in which dominant forms of socially constructed masculinity are linked to violence, and to violent offending in particular. That the evaluation of the beliefs, values, and practices of professional workers involved in violence intervention programs has been relatively neglected as a research interest was also an important motivation. The decision to focus the study on the gender(ed) identity of practitioners was made on the basis that efforts to intervene in violence are increasingly shaped by recognition of the cultural association between violence and masculinity (Flood, 2003).

The goal of the 2006 study was to explore the ways in which gender impacts upon workers in the violence intervention field, both in terms of their practice – the ways that they ‘do’ their work - and their personal/professional identity. At the outset the aim was to incorporate two main strands of investigation:

- the interaction/s between the worker and the client/offender throughout the course of violence intervention work, focussing in particular on the effects that the gender(ed) identity of the worker might have upon the work itself; and

- the impact/s for workers, particularly in terms of their gender identity, of their involvement in this particular area of practice including consideration of the issues and implications for both the professional (work-related), and personal (non-work related) aspects of their lives.

Each of the participants were trained and accredited facilitators of the Stopping Violence (SV) program, a practice model of group work for ‘men who wish to stop violent and abusive behaviour towards their women partners and family’ (NMCHS, 1997). The Stopping Violence Groups (SVG) model of best practice was developed in 1997 by the Northern
Metropolitan Community Health Service in South Australia (S.A.). The model was subsequently adopted as an ‘accredited offender development program’ - the ‘core program’ for domestic violence offenders - by the Department for Correctional Services (S.A.). Stopping Violence groups also form the basis of the interagency Violence Intervention Programs (VIPs), attached to the Family Violence Courts in Central and Northern Adelaide (S.A.). The SVG model, as set out in the manual (NMCHS, 1997), takes as its starting point the recognition that domestic violence occurs ‘within a context of abuse of power’ (p. 19). On this basis, it is proposed that ‘[s]teps taken to address the issue of domestic violence must address the issue of the power imbalance between genders and the practices which perpetuate this’ (p. 10). Thus this is a field of practice in which gender – or rather, a particular understanding of gender, as discussed later in this chapter - is foregrounded as both the target, and primary context, for intervention.

The Stopping Violence Groups model places particular emphasis on ‘who runs the groups and the processes the group leaders engage in’ (NMCHS, 1997, p. 56). Hence worker training, support and supervision are prioritised, including individual and group supervision and ‘reflecting teams’ (pp. 63-66). Further it is asserted that SVG workers ‘must have lives that are congruent’ with the program goals; that is, they must ‘have a commitment to non abusive ways of living’ and ‘be alert to the influence of gender roles on their lives and those they relate to’ (p. 56). Notably, the work is positioned as more than just a job, requiring ‘not only congruency between the personal and the political’ (p. 60) but also a broader commitment to gender equality. Violence intervention work, in the SVG model, is thus clearly positioned as requiring an explicit orientation towards engagement with the gendered subjectivities of both workers and clients. As such, the ‘preferred position’ is that SV groups be co-facilitated by ‘male and female leaders’ on the basis that this enables gender ‘accountability’ and ‘offers the opportunity to demonstrate ways of relating between genders that are based on equity and respect’ (NMCHS, 1997, p. 57). In this respect SVG work, as a field of practice, is somewhat unique in
that gender is acknowledged and seen as central, rather than incidental, to the work process.

**Method**

The sample for this study consisted of 10 practitioners involved in domestic violence work, specifically the *Stopping Violence Groups* model of practice, and employed in a range of South Australian organisations within the government (the Department for Correctional Services) and non-government sectors (such as community health and related agencies). Each participant, with the exception of two who held relevant vocational certificates, was a qualified social worker. The age range of the participants, all Anglo-Australian, was broad, from 25 to 46-plus years of age, as was the employment experience represented within the sample, ranging from 2 years to over 15 years. The names of participants, as referred to throughout this chapter, have been changed and any identifying information removed in order to ensure anonymity.

Snowball sampling, a method of non-random sampling in which ‘the sample is compiled as the research progresses’ (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006, p. 205), was used to identify and solicit participants for the study. As noted by Yegidis and Weinbach (2006, pp. 203-205) snowball sampling is often used in exploratory studies in which the aim is to learn more about the ‘nature and impact’ of an issue from the perspective of those who have an ‘in-depth understanding’ of it. Potential participants, initially identified through my own connections within the Department for Correctional Services in South Australia, were contacted and asked to suggest other possible contributors to the research. In this way, use was made of professional networks to gain access to ‘information-rich’ (Patton, 1990) participants. Participants were sought on the basis of their past or current involvement in (domestic) violence intervention; hence the relatively small sample size is indicative of the specialised nature of this area of practice.
Interviews

Qualitative data was collected via in-depth, semi-structured, interviews using open-ended questions. Participants were provided with an explanatory statement outlining the aims and process of the project including an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Each interview was audio-taped. Transcribed interview data was coded inductively, using NVIVO computer software, with a focus on identifying emergent ‘analytical categories’ (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000, p. 114). Thematic analysis, closely aligned with a grounded theory approach, was used to identify key themes and patterns as these ‘emerge[d] from within the data’ (Willis, 2010, p. 418), the aim being to generate, rather than test, hypotheses. Participants were invited to reflect upon and discuss various aspects of their work, with particular attention to their professional and personal identity as gendered beings. Participants were specifically asked to discuss the beliefs and assumptions underlying their practice and reflect upon the extent to which the nature of this work was consistent with, or challenged, their gender(ed) identity. Questions focused on the participants’ attitudes and beliefs regarding gender, gender roles, and gender relations, within the context of the SVG model of practice.

Various concerns have been raised regarding the use of qualitative interviews to generate data, most notably in relation to issues of validity and reliability. Perhaps the most frequently raised issue relates to the ‘problem of interviewer influence’, that is, the risk that research findings will be ‘shaped or produced by the interviewer’ (Travers, 2010, p. 309). Closely related is the concern that interviewees might ‘self-censor’ their responses in order to give a particular impression about themselves or others. It is argued that interviews are ‘complex social interactions’ in which participants seek to ‘produce a particular order’ by ‘drawing upon cultural knowledge to structure the situation’, thereby minimizing potential embarrassment and moderating feelings associated with ‘asymmetrical relations of status and power’ (Alvesson, 2002, p. 114). Because interviewing relies on the ‘interplay’ between interviewer and interviewee, it
is inevitable that gender, age, class, ethnicity, professional background, appearance and so on will make a ‘deep imprint on the accounts produced’ (p. 115). Thus, as discussed earlier, there can be little doubt that multiple aspects of my identity, including my status as (past) social worker and (current) academic / researcher, impacted on the research process, both facilitating and constraining the data generated and interpretations made. Asking participants to explain their understanding of concepts and terms in ‘plain language’ (non-jargon) and revisiting themes ‘using different vocabularies (points of entry)’ (Alvesson, 2002, pp. 118-119), throughout the interview are examples of techniques that I used in an effort to minimise bias and uncover assumptions. Whilst the impact of ‘interviewer influence’ must be acknowledged in making sense of the interview accounts, for the purposes of this preliminary study - and given its exploratory focus - the rich data produced is nonetheless worthy of close, though critical, attention.

**Study themes**

Though exploratory and relatively small scale, the 2006 study yielded rich and multi-layered interview data, offering a depth of insight into the gendered meanings, impacts and implications of work with men who use violence, and in particular the lived experience of gender-power relations. As a way of understanding and exploring professional discourses in particular, each interview was seen as ‘mirroring larger structures and not just as giving words to individual positions’ (Edin, Lalos, Högberg, & Dahlgren, 2008, p. 229). As is consistent with a grounded theory, iterative, approach to qualitative research, a range of intriguing, and unexpected, strands and themes were identified as a preliminary basis for the refinement of ideas and concepts and the development of further research. In addition to those more directly relevant to this thesis, as discussed next, issues regarding practitioners’ understandings and personal/professional identification with feminism, as the basis of the *Stopping Violence* program, emerged as a particularly strong theme. For instance, men’s and women’s different understandings, experiences, and ‘ways of doing’ feminism served to highlight the complex interplay of
gendered individuals, in the gendered workplace, in relation to a specifically gendered activity, that is, men’s violence.

‘What violence means …’

Despite an ‘assumed, almost self-evident core’ (Stanko, 2003, p. 2), the concept of violence is profoundly ambiguous; ‘what violence means is and will always be fluid, not fixed’ (p. 3, emphasis in original). In this study the ways in which the participants talked about violence emerged as a pivotal theme, particularly in terms of the broader implications for explaining, addressing and responding to male violence (see Seymour, 2009b). Participants were initially invited to talk about their understandings of violence in a general sense. Here I was interested in exploring the participants’ ‘working definitions’ of violence, thus at this initial stage I did not specify parameters - such as men’s violence or interpersonal violence - to limit the scope of this conversation. Alvesson (2002, p. 111) emphasises the need to pay attention to ‘the meanings and views of the subjects’, rather than ‘what the expert decides to be “objective properties”’. Hence this line of questioning, originally intended as an introductory lead-in to a more direct focus on the issues associated with working in the area, turned out to be crucial in terms of my own understanding and, hence, the overall shape and direction of my research. Because I had not reflected on my own understandings and assumptions about violence, I approached the interviews as if ‘violence’, as a term and as a concept, was self-evident. I had not, in Bacchi’s (2009, p. 277) terms, reflected critically on ‘the deep-seated assumptions and preconceptions’ within my own ‘problem representations’. It was not until the participants expressed their perspective, and I heard my own assumptions spoken aloud, that the need to question – and rethink – these became apparent to me.

The ‘rules of engagement’ for violence, as discussed by Stanko (2003, p. 11), take their ‘parameters from social knowledge, cultural legacies or institutional support’, and thus impact on the meanings attributed to violence and, critically, whether it is ‘legitimised or condemned’. In particular, the ‘everyday bracketing’ of the terms ‘masculinity’ and
‘violence’, as discussed by Morgan (1987, p. 180), is related to a construction of masculinity based on ‘widely held dominant and persuasive notions about what men are and, by implication, what women are’. Hence it is clear that the discourses of gender, gender difference, and violence are closely connected; it seems impossible, as I have found here, to discuss one without invoking the other. Liebling and Stanko (2001, p. 428), observe that because we all carry images regarding the legitimate and illegitimate uses of violence, this imagery is likely to ‘come out’ in the way that we talk about violence. It is therefore important that I be very clear here that it was not the case that I ‘discovered’ the flaws in participants’ accounts, but rather that, through the interview encounter, I became acutely aware of the dominant discourses – of gender, of violence, of ‘expertise’ and knowledge – and subject positions offered. This realisation represented a crucial turning point in my research journey, in the shift of my attention from practitioner accounts, in and of themselves, to discourses as making available ‘certain ways-of-seeing and certain ways-of-being’ which are inextricably connected to ‘wider social processes of legitimation and power’ (Willig, 2001, p. 107).

**Gender, power and violence**

Issues of power, control and entitlement featured strongly throughout the practitioners’ accounts of violence. Whilst this is not surprising given their common training and work context, the extent to which individual practitioner understandings, as well as the assumptions underlying these, reflected broader societal/cultural beliefs about violence was unexpected. This is particularly so given the theoretical context of the Stopping Violence model - of violence as a gendered phenomenon - and its explicitly feminist underpinnings. The participants’ tendency to de-gender power was especially surprising; that is, whilst they saw violence and power as linked, the participants generally failed to emphasise violence as an expression of gendered power. Joan and Simon’s responses, most significantly in their use of gender-neutral language (‘people’, ‘you’, ‘human beings’), exemplify this tendency:
Violence for me is about exerting power and control to get something that you want. It’s making somebody feel scared and like they have no power and taking away their rights as an individual and making them powerless. (Joan)

I guess normal violence is something that everybody is capable of and some people have more control over that than others … I think that it is something that human beings have done since we were on the planet and we may not ever change. It’s [also] a power thing at times and sometimes it can be about having no power at all and perhaps that’s a way a person may feel that they can get power or be powerful. Some people feel they get respect from it because they don’t get it any other way. (Simon)

Interestingly, despite their specific work focus on interpersonal violence, the participants also clearly acknowledged violence in its group, collective and global/political forms, thus countering a more ‘narrow psychological’ (Hearn & Whitehead, 2006, p. 40) approach to understanding violence. Ron and Robert, for example, focused on a broader notion of power, as beyond the individual level:

[Violence is] around entitlement for a start – I’ve got a right to do this, somehow, whether it’s a country on the receiving end of it or an individual. It’s about disrespecting them, putting them down, putting them in a position where it’s okay [to] go ahead and be violent. (Ron)

Most, probably all of it, comes back to power and control issues, .. for one group to maintain or asset
power and control over another, or one person to
assert their position over another. (Robert)

The participants were subsequently asked to refine their focus by talking
about men’s violence in particular. Consistently the participants expressed
surprise, indicating that it was men’s use of violence that they had in mind
when responding to the earlier - general - violence question. For example:

All the stuff I was talking about was related to men ...
(Joan)

Well, it’s the same sort of stuff … It’s the male sense of
entitlement, rights and entitlements to certain privileges
in society. (Robert)

Well I tend to think of male, rather than female,
violence. (Peter)

Thus it became clear that participants’ understandings of violence were
predicated on a blurring together of violence and men’s violence, revealing
foundational, yet implicit, assumptions about gender, the nature of
violence and its equation with men’s behaviour; as something that men do.
Some went further than this, making a connection between men’s
physiology – their bodies - and the use of violence. Robert, for example,
invoked an evolutionary, or socio-biological, perspective:

[There’s] a perception that it’s men’s role and
responsibility to be the protector and the provider, all
that sort of stuff, better able to beat off the wild beast
because they’re in most cases physically stronger. I
haven’t made a great study of that but I think there are
roots in that area, obviously way back that are carried
over … I believe there’s a strong connection to the very
physical power of the male. I think the physical
While the tendency to conflate masculinity and violence has been widely discussed (see, for example, D. H. J. Morgan, 1987), I was surprised that it came through so strongly here, in the accounts of professionals - 'experts' in the SVG model of intervention. In particular, I was struck by, what seemed to me to be, a disconnect between participants' understandings of men's use of violence in 'domestic' situations and men's use of violence in other (non-'domestic') arenas, especially that directed towards other men. Also significant was the tendency to associate gender with women, or rather with men's relations with women. Over the course of the interview discussions, participants used the term 'gender', almost exclusively, to refer to, or in the context of, women's lack of power relative to men. As indicated earlier, this emphasis on power and 'power imbalances' is consistent with the feminist body of literature that underpins the SVG model and is, to that extent, unsurprising. It nonetheless represents a largely uncritical and, to my mind, unsatisfactory explanation. Rather, the 'doing and continuation' of violence, as observed by Hearn and Whitehead (2006, p. 40), is 'deeply connected with the taken-for-grantedness of what it is to be a man' and, in this respect, relations between men are of central concern.

In challenging the common assumption that the sole function of patriarchy is 'subordinating women to men', Hearn and Whitehead (2006) argue that patriarchy may instead be understood as a 'system that also subordinates men to other men within society, using women as a commodity to do so' (p. 45, emphasis in original). That is, discourses of gender identity structure men's relations with other men as well as those with women (Moore, 1994 p. 68). Nevertheless, as observed by Matthews (2000, p. 312), in 'general discussions of violence in the popular press, the public health literature, and violence prevention programs' – and as evident in the study described here – 'feminist analyses of violence against women
occupy a corner that is isolated from analyses of violence in general’. In
countering this, there is a need to re-think conventional approaches to the
problem of violence, especially those based upon a sharp distinction
between generic violence and gendered (‘domestic’) violence. I explore
this further in the next section.

Men’s violence: ‘ordinary’ or ‘domestic’?

The participants’ explanations of domestic violence reflected a clear and
nuanced understanding of gender as fundamental to conceptualising and
intervening in men’s violence towards women. This did not, however, carry
across into their thinking about men’s violence in a more general sense.
This was apparent at two levels: firstly, in the participants’ understandings
of the term ‘violence’, in the tendency to dichotomise male violence into
two ‘types’ - that directed towards other men and that directed at women;
and, secondly, in the associated categorisation of violence as either
‘normal’/unremarkable (male-to-male violence) or gendered (‘domestic’, or
‘family’, violence) and, as such, unacceptable. That is, associated with the
conflation of maleness and violence, was the tendency to dichotomise
male violence as either ‘generic’, directed towards other men, or
‘domestic’, directed at women. In this perspective ‘generic’ violence is
something that men do to other men and is, to a large extent, ‘normal’ or,
at least, inevitable and unremarkable (for men). Joan, for example, explains that:

If you were out at a pub and there was some guys
defighting, some people might be more appalled by that
than others, but as a general rule people say oh okay
it’s just another fight. [...] To a certain extent society
either expects or considers it okay for men to be violent.

In contrast, ‘domestic’ violence was regarded as something that (some)
men do to women and as, unequivocally, unacceptable and ‘unfair’, as
exemplified here by Robert:
At a very crude level, if you’ve got these two blokes out in the street that want to thump the crap out of each other and both have this distorted perception of life and their sense of power and stuff, well go and do it. But what you’re talking about here is women that are much less powerful in today’s society, that are the real victims.

Further reflecting this emphasis on women as the ‘real victims’, Simon explains that, of the forty clients with whom he was working at that time:

_I’d say that 30 of them [have] violence issues either now or in the past or whatever, but out of that there’s probably 10 of those that have got domestic violence issues, um, so it’s a, it’s a smaller group but I just feel that it’s a more, for me, it’s a more important area to work in._

This ‘splitting up’ of violence reflects the bulk of domestic violence literature, particularly that in the feminist tradition, in which ‘domestic’ violence is associated with gender and gendered power with an emphasis on imbalances in, or abuse of, power. ‘Generic’ violence, however, is conceptualised as non-gendered, or not specifically gendered, with the implication that violence between men is ‘fair game’. Thus it seemed that in this work setting, as in wider society, men, unlike women, are granted a special status as ‘un-gendered’ beings except when their behaviour involves women. Gender, then, is associated with women\(^2\) who ‘bring it into’ their encounters with men. In this perspective, gender matters when women are the victims of violence but is not acknowledged or seen as significant when violence is between men.

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\(^2\) Whilst not directed raised in the interviews, this could also be applied to, so-called, homophobic and other forms of violence which, in the context of subordinated and marginalised masculinities, are predicated on the ‘feminisation’ of some men/masculinities (Connell, 2000).
The enmeshed relationship between masculinity and crime/violence, to the extent that this has come to be seen as natural and inevitable or, at the least, unremarkable (Naffine, 1997, p. 6), has been widely observed. I had expected practitioners in this particular work setting, however, to be more critical of such a view. Given that masculinity is the ‘one, definitive, common factor amongst men who commit violence’ (Whitehead, 2005, p. 419), it is difficult to account for the continued insistence on domestic violence as gendered whilst men’s other uses of violence are positioned as, somehow, having nothing to do with gender. For instance, whilst it is important to acknowledge the specific issues and risks associated with violence against women and children in continuing relationships, the participants in this study struggled to otherwise articulate a rationale for their differentiation of domestic and other ‘generic’ violence, other than to say that it was so. Simon, for example, was confident in his assertion that:

*it’s a different type of control and it’s a different type of violence. [...] there are stacks of different ways that a person can control another person that they’re in a relationship with, completely different from a guy who might go down the pub on a Friday night and bash somebody’s brains in.*

One effect of such thinking is the tendency to overlook or disregard violence between men, thus sacrificing an opportunity to challenge the link between ‘everyday’ masculinity and violence. In this sense, just as gender tends to be associated with women and women’s issues/interests, masculinity tends to be seen exclusively in terms of male and female relations, rather than recognising that ‘men demonstrate masculinity in relation to other men’ (Whitehead, 2005, p. 412).

The dichotomised construction of violence, as evident here, has important implications for understanding and intervening in violent behaviour. Firstly, it highlights a particular conceptualisation of gender and violence, reflecting widely held, culturally dominant, beliefs regarding men and
masculinity and women and femininity, most notably the ‘cultural fact’ (Eardley, 1995, p. 136) of women’s victimisation. Mahoney (1994, p. 64) refers to this tendency, in a broader sense, as the ‘all-agent or all-victim dichotomy’, observing that in western society, ‘you are an agent if you are not a victim, and you are not a victim if you are in anyway an agent’. In the current context this association of masculinity with power and femininity with passivity is a critical concern given that it constitutes and reinforces a view of gender relations which positions man as aggressor and woman as, invariably, his victim (Naffine, 1997, p. 102). As expressed by study participant Joan, this is reflected in the commonly held view that:

any offence against children and elderly people is not okay and [similarly] a lot of people think that hitting women isn’t okay as women are seen as being weak.

Secondly, it positions men’s violence as, in itself, unremarkable and to a large extent inevitable, leaving untouched the ‘natural’ association of masculinity and violence. Understandings of violence in western cultures are, for example, largely based on the notion of violence as lack of control (Jenkins, 2003); hence the notion of self-control, in relation to violence, is central to the pursuit of ‘corrected’ (that is, ‘non-violent’) behaviour. In this context, men’s violence is not positioned as a problem in itself but rather is framed as a fundamental, and ‘innate’, aspect of masculinity which men should strive to control. The association of masculinity with competitiveness, control, aggression or violence is not regarded as a problem, so it is not challenged. Accordingly efforts to control violence are prioritised; that is, limiting it to particular contexts and victims: men are ‘fair game’; women are ‘off limits’. In this sense what distinguishes the violent man from the normal man, or acceptable from unacceptable violence, is the sex3 of the victim, as well as, to a lesser extent, the ‘degree’ or severity of the violence. From this perspective, men convicted of violent offences, for example, are ‘criminals’ only because they have transgressed these

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3 The relative age of the victim is also relevant here in so far as stage of life (childhood, old age) serves to signify weakness and vulnerability.
limits, allowing their ‘normal’ aggression to escalate into the realm of the unacceptable, that is, into the criminal domain.

**Power, knowledge and expertise**

It should, by now, be clear that the accounts provided by the study participants contained a number of ‘blind spots’, most notably in relation to the links between ‘domestic’ violence and men’s broader uses of violence. Minimisation of the significance and impact of men’s use of violence towards other men was further apparent in, both, what the participants did and did not say. This reflects broader societal/cultural discourses of gender and violence, and not, I argue, the shortcomings of these individual practitioners. The condemnation of some but not other forms/manifestations of violence, as evident here in the construction of violence as either gendered (that perpetrated by men against women) or ‘generic’/non-gendered (such as that between men), has crucial implications for 1) the ways in which violence is, or is not, identified, explained and addressed; and 2) the ways in which gender and gender roles are conceptualised in terms of the reinforcement of dominant gender discourses. At this point it would not be unreasonable for the reader to say ‘hang on a minute, all this on the basis of 10 individual accounts?’. Whilst this may be a fair point, I propose that these accounts should be understood as ‘indications of the discourses at play’ (Alvesson, 2002, p. 116) and not ‘just’ the personal beliefs of individuals. For example, whilst the participants clearly position ‘generic’ violence and ‘domestic’ violence as different phenomena, requiring different responses, some had begun to question this as a rigid distinction and explore the interrelationships between masculinity and violence:

*General violence in the community, most is male based violence. [Men] have the greatest power base so [men are] steering what happens anyway. So it’s probably all inter-related and to do with enculturation of males and their attitudes and territorial attitudes and sense of ownership and all that sort of stuff. (Robert).*
More recently I’ve thought that these ideas are surely just as relevant in those [both domestic violence and generic violence] contexts – if it’s about having a brawl with a bloke in the front bar, a lot of those ideas [and] beliefs are still going to be there. For me it kind of makes sense (Ron).

When you think about violence it’s about power and control and I think that that’s across the board, so in that sense I don’t think that [domestic violence and generic violence] are any different. (Joan)

The participants were nonetheless reticent when discussing ‘generic’ violence, qualifying their tentative comments with statements such as: ‘I just haven’t put in enough study into the area of violence …’ (Robert); ‘I haven’t done a lot of reading in that area …’ (Ron); and ‘I don’t feel that I’m as experienced or that my knowledge and skills in that area is as good …’ (Joan). Significant here are the ways in which generic violence ('that area') is positioned as distinct from ‘domestic’ violence and as an area that warrants particular, in this case psychological, expertise. A plethora of academic/research literature exists which supports (and arguably, shapes) this position. In asserting that ‘all violence is not alike’, Eliasson (2002), for example, claims that ‘male-to-female violence differs from male-to-male violence primarily by showing who is boss and preserving male authority’ (p. 393), thereby dismissing the possibility that the two might be linked. It is nonetheless clear that this ‘splitting off’ of domains of expertise, whilst created and reinforced institutionally, academically and professionally, is not solely imposed ‘from above’ but, rather, is a feature of how this practitioner group had come to ‘see’ itself and its professional role. As observed by Michel Foucault, disciplines play a crucial role in producing the subjects (and objects) of knowledge. Disciplinary training, as evident here, ‘not only provides [...] a professional identity, a title, and academic status, but also shapes [professional] subject positions’ (Merwin, 1993, p.
433). That violence is thought about, positioned and dealt with in different ways by different disciplinary and professional groups, therefore, highlights issues associated with the construction and demarcation of expert knowledges.

Closely connected to the dichotomisation of violence then, is the creation of particular realms of intervention, divided along disciplinary lines, each associated with distinct domains of knowledge, authority and expertise. Thus, certain behaviours are ‘claimed’ as the ‘territory’ of a professional group. As discussed in Chapter 3, Rose’s (1996, 1999) critique of ‘psy’ knowledges, those ‘heterogenous knowledges, forms of authority and practical techniques that constitute psychological expertise’ (Rose, 1999, p. ii), is instructive here. Building upon the work of Foucault in relation to the social and political role of (social) scientific knowledge, Rose (1999, p. xi) focuses on ‘the authorities who define phenomena as problems’ and the criteria through which ‘certain persons, things or forms of conduct come to be seen as problematic’. As argued by Grenier (2007, p. 426), by uncovering the discourses that have come to be accepted as ‘truth’ and enable ‘the division of subjects and processes of objectification’, it becomes possible ‘to expose classification as a powerful act, and to reveal underlying assumptions that operate when such powerful concepts are adopted’. Thus it appears that the dichotomisation of violence, as evident in this study, is aligned with the demarcation of areas of expertise and authority, both institutionally and in everyday practice. Clearly this has critical implications for the ways in which violence is conceptualised, named and addressed, however it also illustrates the exercise of power, through knowledge and expertise, in shaping Australian government/agency responses and initiatives. Further, in partitioning off certain behaviours as representing particular ‘types’ of problem and particular types of people (‘violent men’, ‘violent offenders’), and the ‘territory’ of some professional groups and not others, vital opportunities for discussion, debate, and knowledge-sharing are lost.
From ‘then’ to ‘now’

Researching violence, according to Liebling and Stanko (2001, p. 424), means always ‘walking on shaky (i.e. socially and politically constructed) ground’. I have attempted here to demonstrate the ways in which my conversations with practitioners both challenged and inspired me to rethink my own understandings of violence. The appearance of cracks in this foundation has inevitably impacted on other areas, dislodging and unsettling the constructions implicit within broader discourses of violence.

Violence – all violence - is ‘engendered in its representation’ (Moore, 1994 p. 70). Accordingly, in working through and seeking to expand upon the findings of the 2006 study, my focus has moved to representations of violence, in particular the ways in which violence is represented in the public context of social policy. As highlighted by Hume (2007, p. 151), when violence ‘becomes public’ and, hence, ‘open to scrutiny and interpretation’, it is ‘ascribed a whole new range of meanings’, including ‘individually and socially approved rationalisations’. Crucially, discourses of gender, violence and (power/)knowledge are inseparable because representations of gender difference ‘mask the power relations that determine what acts will qualify as “violence”’, thereby naturalising the belief that ‘violence is the exclusive province of men’ (K. L. Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p. 367). Hence, had I sought to extend this preliminary study, as was my original intention, by incorporating more participants and conducting further interviews, it seems unlikely that this would have led to a ‘better’ understanding of, or new knowledge about, violence. Rather it is important to explore ‘how knowledge is constructed as well as what is considered to be violence’ (Hume, 2007, p. 155) in order to ‘enable a more complex and thoughtful engagement’ with both gender and with ‘violence per se’ (FitzRoy, 2001, p. 28). In this context it is not my intention to engage in a ‘battle “on behalf” of the truth’ (Foucault, 1972, cited in Graham, 2005) about violence but rather, through this thesis, to problematise ‘taken-for-granted practices and assumptions by looking at
them differently’ (L. J. Graham, 2005, p. 2). In focusing on the discourses of and surrounding violence, I aim to put ‘its truth status into question’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 35) by paying attention to ‘the ways in which particular representations’ of violence as a social problem, with specific reference to Australian policy, ‘play a central role in how we are governed’

Conclusion

It has been a central purpose of this chapter to make visible the development of my thinking, understanding and theorising. Of course, retrospectively transforming experience into narrative form renders a linearity that is largely artificial, implying a ‘from-here-to-there’ trajectory of progress which, though appealing, does not reflect the disorderly ‘twists and turns’ of how things actually were (and are). I have shifted position many times and I expect this to continue; I do not anticipate an end-point where ‘all will become clear’. Whilst Creswell (1998, p. 19) has warned against assuming an ‘expert researcher’ role, observing that it is to be expected that questions will ‘change during the course of the research process to reflect an increased understanding of the problem’, I continue to be surprised at my own ‘blind spots’, in particular those, as laid bare here, concerning my understanding of violence. Looking back, I can see that, in Smith’s (2003, p. 154) terms, I had ‘remained entirely within the discourse’. It was only in exploring the notion of violence with the participants that this became clear to me: in questioning their beliefs, I was forced also to question my own. It was as though in hearing these spoken aloud, as an ‘outsider’ and no longer in the thick of things, the proverbial light bulb came on. As noted by Archer (2007, p. 9), it often takes a marked change in our circumstances for us to become aware of the ways in which we take for granted, ‘as embodied knowledge’, the social practices with which we engage.

Because violence is such a “slippery” concept’, with so many ‘meanings and definitions’, Hume (2007, p. 149) asks ‘whether it is possible or even desirable to separate ontology and epistemology’ in seeking to understand
violence. As a research topic, violence is 'potentially powerful' because, as highlighted by Hearn (1998, p. 56), 'it connects with other powerful experiences in researchers own lives'. Hence, as I have found, in the doing of research it is difficult, if not impossible, to keep oneself 'out of the way'. Indeed it seems clear to me that 'objectivity', as a research stance, is an inappropriate, not to mention unrealistic, goal in this respect, given the gendered values and assumptions inevitably held by the researcher. To the extent that objectivity is attainable, or desirable, in any field of research, it certainly isn't here! Thus my aim, both in this chapter and throughout this thesis, is to 'reveal the lines of fracture and ambiguity in my own thinking' (Moore, 1994 p. 7), thereby acknowledging that it is the disentangling of discourses of gender and violence that lies at the heart of this work. In the following two chapters, I set out the 'hows' and 'whys' for this task. Chapter 3 focuses on the conceptual underpinnings, as alluded to here, of this thesis and sets the scene for the evaluation of policy analysis methods, and justification for my chosen approach, in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter explicates the conceptual framework underpinning this thesis, with particular reference to the way that this has been informed by my epistemological, ontological and theoretical standpoints. This chapter thus constitutes the methodological approach, understood as the ‘theoretical and worldview lens’ (Walter, 2010, p. 12), guiding my work. Core elements of methodology, as highlighted by Walter (2010), include one’s standpoint (see Chapter 2), theoretical conceptual framework, and method/s (the subject of Chapter 4). Here I focus on the conceptual framework by reviewing the ‘macro’ perspectives or paradigms of constructionism, postmodernism / poststructuralism, and feminism which guide my analysis and interpretation. Specifically, I extend the discussion begun in Chapter 2 to consider the ways in which I ‘translate’ the points of interest identified there into my research approach. Whilst, conventionally, methodological principles are understood as emerging from the literature review (Walter, 2010), I position the former as the essential scaffolding for the latter, this providing a focus for the policy analyses, specifically the identification and critical consideration of key literature, theoretical ideas and insights, discussed in Chapters 5 – 8. To this end, I consider here the works of Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose as two key influences on my thinking with regard to the construction of ‘violence’ as a contemporary social problem. This chapter also sets the scene for, and links directly with, the discussion of methods in Chapter 4.

Methodology, according to Schwandt (2001, p. 162), can be understood as a ‘particular social scientific discourse’, occupying a ‘middle ground between discussions of method and discussions of issues in the philosophy of social science’. ‘Issues’ in this context refer to ontological and epistemological concerns, such as those regarding the nature of meaning, structure/agency, value neutrality, and so on, which provide the foundation for methodological choices and justification (p. 71). In the
simplest terms, this thesis is based on the ontological assumption that reality is socially created and, as such, encompasses an epistemological understanding of knowledge as socially constructed, conditional and contextual. Paradigms, elsewhere referred to as ‘theoretical orientations’, ‘perspectives’ (Schwandt, 2001) or ‘models’ (Silverman, 2010), are said to represent the sum of one’s ontological, epistemological and methodological principles (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 31). As overall frameworks, paradigms shape how ‘reality’ is viewed, telling us ‘what reality is like, the basic elements it contains and what is the nature and status of knowledge’ (Silverman, 2010, p. 109). Different interpretations and uses of terminology are characteristic of the research literature: constructionism, for example, is variously referred to as a paradigm (Holliday, 2007), an ontology (Sarantakos, 2005) and epistemology (Flick, 2006); feminism as, both, paradigm (Holliday, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005) and epistemology (Schwandt, 2001); and qualitative approaches as both paradigm (Brannen, 2004) and methodology (Flick, 2006; Sarantakos, 2005; Silverman, 2010). Leaving these classificatory differences aside, in this chapter I focus, firstly, on constructionism, postmodernism / poststructuralism and feminism and consider each in terms of its fit with my methodological approach. In the second part of the chapter I explore the works of Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose, two key influences on my thinking, and discuss the links between these and my chosen research method.

**Constructionism**

Constructionism and constructivism, according to Schwandt (2001, p. 30), are both ‘particularly elusive’ terms in that they are used differently, and with different meanings, depending on the context. The key difference between the two, as explained by Bacchi (2009), is the emphasis of constructionism on understandings of the world as the ‘product of social forces’ (p. 33). Constructivism, in contrast, focuses on the active engagement of individuals in the ‘creation of their own phenomenal world’ (Burr 2003, cited in Bacchi, 2009, p. 33). Broadly, constructionism, or
social constructionism’ as it also known, refers, collectively, to those anti-essentialist perspectives which focus on categories and phenomena as ‘culturally and historically specific social creation[s]’ (Barker, 2008, p. 475). In emphasising the ‘provisional character of social life’ and, hence, its ‘fragility or impermanence’, (Clarke & Cochrane, 1998, p. 39), constructionism provides a critical framework for this dissertation.

By drawing attention to professional constructions of violence, the preliminary study, as discussed in Chapter 2, highlighted discourse – and discourses of gender and violence in particular – as crucial to understanding societal responses to violence. As highlighted by social constructionist scholars, such as Bruffee (1986, p. 774), those ‘entities that we normally call reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on’, are constructs, ‘generated by communities of like-minded peers’. Thus, in relation to professional knowledges in particular, as observed by Houston (2001, p. 855) and evidenced in Chapter 2, social structures ‘become ingrained into the very fabric of our consciousness, acting at a subliminal level to affect the way we speak, move and act’. In this respect, the great strength of social constructionism, for my work, is that it draws attention to the ‘contingency of those of our social practices that we [have] wrongly come to regard as inevitable’ (Boghossian, 2001). That the social world is constructed, that ‘meanings are made, definitions produced and interpretations propounded’ (Clarke & Cochrane, 1998, p. 29), thus represents the base point, the foundation for my thinking, analysis and theorising. The social constructionist perspective implies the ‘possibility of other constructions’ (p. 39), a recognition that is especially crucial for this thesis. Therefore, in applying social constructionism to the study of violence - as a positioning rather than a ‘theory’ – I do not seek to explain violence, through reference to social factors for example, but rather approach violence as, in itself, a social construct. Problematising violence, for me then, involves exploring the ways in which this construct is ‘made real’ (Willig, 2001, p. 8), and in particular, critiquing - and reconstructing - ‘the conceptual frameworks through we account for violence’ (Mason, 2002a, p. 261).
The ‘isms’: postmodernism; poststructuralism; feminism

A distinction is commonly drawn between two approaches to knowing - the ‘postmodern’ and the ‘modern’, with the former seen as a rejection of the latter. As explained by Seidman (1998, p. 347):

[i]f modernity is organized around a series of neat divisions (family/economy, science/ideology, politics/morality) and hierarchies (e.g., male/female, high/mass culture, reason/desire) and foundational premises (e.g., reason, science, individualism, the subject, progress, the West, the identity of humanity), postmodernity underscores a process of dedifferentiation or the blurring of these boundaries.

Whilst a definition of postmodernism is difficult to pin down, it is broadly understood as having ‘something to do with the breaking apart of modernism’ (Lemert, 1997, p. 21). Thus, postmodernism, at its most basic, seeks to counter the reliance on reason and straightforward ‘truth’ associated with the modernist stance. Nicely described by Gough and Price (2004, p. 33) as a ‘loose collection of ways of thinking’, postmodernism is thus characterised by suspicion and scepticism, particularly in terms of modernist claims to objective knowledge and ‘scientific’ social truths. In positioning my work as, broadly, postmodern I am embracing, in particular, the ‘resistance to closure’ (Stronach & McLure, 1997, p. 6) associated with this stance. I am motivated by the desire to find – or force - an opening in ‘discourses, regimes, policies, theories or practices which tend to the inertia of closure and certainty’ (p. 6).

Methodologically, my work is underpinned by key postmodern assumptions regarding the intimate connection between knowledge and power and the central role of social knowledges ‘in the making of selves and societies’ (Seidman, 1998, p. 349). The further acknowledgement that (social) scientists are ‘inextricably bound’ to their ‘social and historical conditions’ (p. 348) and, hence, the impossibility of objective detachment,
is also central. Closely associated is the recognition that, rather than simply observing or discovering, social scientists construct ‘social processes through the lens of their particular standpoint’ (p. 348). The way in which I understand my role as researcher, as indicated in Chapter 2, is thus crucial to the ways that I see - and do – this work. As observed by Willig (2001), research methodologies can be distinguished on the basis of whether the researcher is positioned as ‘author’ or ‘witness’, the latter reflecting a view of the research process as a ‘treasure hunt rather than a construction process’ (p. 13). Acknowledging my central role as author – that I am the one constructing the findings - recognises that the data could be used in a range of different ways; in Willig’s (2001, p. 13) terms, the ‘same bricks could be used to build a number of very different buildings’. Further, reflecting the broadly postmodern orientation of my approach, the research process with which I am involved – my thinking and analysis as the foundations of/knowledge building - is inevitably ‘interpretive, always contingent, [and] always a version’ (Wetherall, 2001, p. 384), ever partial and never complete. As such, this implies an ongoing sense of ‘strategic uncertainty’ (Stronach & McLure, 1997, p. 5). This thesis cannot, therefore, be read as a ‘coherent progression towards the closure of a definitive answer’ (p. 2). In embarking upon it, I am alert to the risks of such an approach; of the need to ‘court the dangers as well as the benefits’ and, most pressing, to resist heading for the ‘escape routes to the ground of certainty’ (p. 9).

**Constructionism and the ‘posts’**

Seeking to define and differentiate the ‘posts’, in this case, postmodernism and poststructuralism, is fraught with danger; indeed it has been observed that if these terms have anything in common it is that ‘each problematises the very notion of definition’ (Stronach & McLure, 1997, p. 2). In Smart’s (1995) view, whereas postmodernism is a ‘critique of epistemology’ which aims to make us rethink ‘what we think we know’, poststructuralism is ‘more intimately involved with the construction of local knowledge’ (p. 8). Whilst some, such as Anderson (2008, p. 49), argue that conflating poststructuralism and postmodernism ‘overlooks their significant and
nuanced historical and theoretical differences’, in practice the terms are often used interchangeably. It is clear that, notwithstanding such concerns, poststructuralism and postmodernism are closely linked and share common theoretical ground in their ‘rejection of truth as a fixed eternal object’ (Barker, 2008, p. 21). Indeed, as argued by Taylor (2006, p. 27), given the ‘plurality of theoretical contributions’ included within these, the dangers associating with conflating them may well be ‘over-stated’. Poststructural theorising, in Barrett’s (2005, p. 80) explanation, is ‘embedded within discourses of postmodernity’. In this respect, Semp’s (2006, p. 36) observation that social constructionism is ‘an approach to knowledge production that [both] developed in the postmodern epoch’ and underpins poststructuralism, usefully contextualises the interconnections between these three paradigmatic perspectives.

Postmodernism, poststructuralism and social constructionism, then, are aligned but distinct epistemologies. In emphasising the many parallels between these positions Sanders (1998, p. 116), for example, refers to noted social constructionist Gergen’s (1985, p. 27) observation that ‘[k]nowledge is not something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something that people do together’. Thus a poststructural approach is constructionist but takes this further by grappling with ‘some of the foundational assumptions of modernity’ (Heywood, 2002, p. 20). For my purposes, Van Wagenen Wrin’s (1999) evaluation of social constructionist and postmodernist theorising, in relation to gender in particular, is especially useful. In demonstrating that these paradigms are less ‘analytically distinct’ than often assumed, Van Wagenen Wrin identifies West and Zimmerman’s (1987) well-known and widely cited work Doing Gender as a ‘paradigmatic statement of social constructionism on gender’. West and Zimmerman challenged the notion of gender as the outcome of ‘natural’ or ‘biological’ difference in order to show that gender is an ongoing accomplishment, produced in and through interaction. Doing gender, they argued, ‘means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological’ (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137). Van Wagenen Wrin
contrasts this interactional view of gender with a poststructuralist understanding of gender as, or arising from, discourse, such as that proposed by Judith Butler. In Butler’s (1990a, p. 336) performative approach, ‘acts and gestures articulate and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core’. Hence the very idea of ‘pure’ gender/s can be understood as the ‘truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity’ (p. 337). Thus, in Van Wagenen Wrin’s view, poststructuralist approaches incorporate ‘some constructionist foundations’ but extend these in order to formulate ‘new directions’, making them particularly relevant to this thesis.

**Feminism**

Whilst acknowledging that feminism is ‘not a singular body of thought and has no singular definition’ (Phillips, 2006, p. 196), I identify my approach as fitting within, or at least as strongly influenced by, feminist epistemologies. This is certainly so to the extent that the analysis of gender relations is recognised as one of the fundamental goals of feminism (Flax, 1990, p. 40). As a critical exploration of the constitution and experience of gender relations and, in particular, the ways in which ‘we think or, equally important, do not think about’ (p. 40) these, feminist insights can be used to ‘clear a space’ for the re-evaluation of existing gender arrangements. Conceptualised in this way feminism, as a theoretical and political project focusing on the problematisation of gender, rather than exclusively on the oppression of women as a class, is critical to exploring the social construction of violence. As observed by Fawcett and Featherstone (2000, p. 7), however, feminism has ‘been historically and theoretically a modernist movement’; hence my positioning of myself as a feminist researcher is not straightforward and, as such, warrants further discussion.

The relevance of feminist thinking to understanding men’s use of violence, especially the link between dominant versions of masculinity and men’s use of power and control, is well documented (see, for example, Connell, 1995; Hearn, 1998; D. H. J. Morgan, 1987). Feminism, in Mason’s (2002a,
p. 258) view, has ‘given us a language for talking about, interpreting and understanding violence’. A central feminist insight, for instance, is the recognition that the cultural association between violence and masculinity provides a crucial context for understanding men’s violence against women. The influence of feminism is clear in the work of scholars in the anti-violence field. Kaufman (2001), for example, argues, because it originates in systematic gender inequalities, that addressing violence against women requires an approach that seeks to impact on the ‘cultural and social permission for acts of violence’ (p. 4) by challenging the structures of masculine power and privilege. In highlighting gender as socially and culturally constructed, rather than as the ‘natural order of things’, feminism counters essentialist views of femininity and masculinity as ‘somehow fixed genetically or biologically’ and, in doing so, raises the possibility that things could be different (Frey & Bellotti, 1995, pp. 143-144). Thus feminist-informed strategies of violence prevention and intervention commonly focus on undermining ‘the beliefs, values and discourses which support violence’ by challenging ‘patriarchal power relations’ and promoting ‘alternative constructions of masculinity, gender and selfhood’ (Flood, 2003, p. 460). Most importantly, for the purpose of my work here, a feminist perspective counters ‘narrowly psychological’ and other individualistic approaches (Hearn, 1999, p. 9) by ensuring a sustained focus on structural power and control.

Feminism is widely acknowledged as a critical influence on social science research, theory, policy and practice. In particular it is recognised as having played a pivotal role in the process of social reform in Australian society (Phillips, 2006, p. 203)(Phillips 2006: 203). A key criticism of feminist perspectives, however, is that they have maintained a ‘predominant theoretical focus’ on women, and on ‘women’s oppression in general’ (Murphy, 2009, p. 60), and have had little to say about men (Pease, 2001; Pease & Camilleri, 2001). White and Haines (2008, p. 124), for instance, argue that feminism ‘needs to do more than provide a woman-centred analysis’, by focusing ‘more broadly on gender relations in their entirety’. In this respect the term ‘gender’ has come to be used in a
way that renders it synonymous with women. Whilst the widespread conflation of gender with women, or ‘women’s interests’, is certainly not unique to feminist work, it is significant that this tendency has generally not been acknowledged – nor adequately addressed – in much feminist theorising. Hebert (2007), for example, strongly criticises feminism for its ‘clear preoccupation with “women”’ and failure to differentiate between ‘men’ and ‘masculinities’. This is both theoretically and politically problematic because, as was noted by Collier (1998, p. 55) some time ago, it contributes to the ‘marginalisation and institutional negation’ of both feminist and, what have ‘become known as “gendered”’ perspectives.

As discussed in Chapter 2, that discourses of gender and violence are intertwined and inseparable represents the fundamental basis of my interest in violence, or, more specifically, my focus on the ways in which violence is constructed. Hence, a perspective that focuses on women and on women’s oppression alone, whether feminist or otherwise, is not adequate for my theoretical task. Indeed it is the very notion of man as aggressor and woman as, invariably his victim, at least as this is embedded in public discourse, and the reproduction of ‘normative assumptions’ about victims and perpetrators (Mason, 2002a, p. 251), that I wish to disrupt. Hebert (2007) observes that much of the theoretical work in relation to men and masculinities has been undertaken by men, ‘with many feminists being reluctant to engage this literature’. She argues, and I agree, that this failure to ‘take gender seriously’ is damaging and particularly so for advancing understandings of the relationship between gender and violence.

My interest here is to contribute to the body of literature by approaching ‘violence’ from a different angle, by asking different questions of it. Elsewhere, Mason (2002b) has discussed the ‘epistemological rift’ that exists between ‘those who are committed to the empirical generation of experiential knowledge, and those committed to deconstructing the very concepts that provide such knowledge [...] with epistemic value in the first place’ (p. 17). She notes that this is particularly evident in ‘academic
spheres with strong political roots’, such as feminism, which tend to have a 'deep suspicion' of challenges to the 'authority of experiential knowledge' (p. 17), particularly those associated with poststructuralism, Conceptualised in this way then, my work fits clearly within the latter – poststructural - group of approaches.

The contribution of feminist thinking to theorising regarding men’s use of violence, as observed earlier, is significant and cannot be understated. The overwhelming majority of this work, however, has maintained a strong focus on men’s violence towards women and children, rather than on men’s violence towards other men. More recently, this has manifested in an emphasis on the explicit naming of men as the perpetrators of this violence. Howe (2008) refers to this as addressing the "man" question: ‘the discursive place occupied, or more usually vacated, by men in accounts of their violence against women’ (p. 1). Such ‘disappearing acts’, in this view, relate to the 'editing out [of] men and masculinity from analyses of forms of violence in which women have been hurt by men' (p. 57). Extending Howe’s analogy then, my interest here is in the ‘disappearing acts’ associated with the 'editing out' of men in relation to violence in general, specifically violence between men. I argue that it is not enough to focus on the gender of violence (or, more commonly, 'gendered violence'). Rather, shining the light on men’s violence against men means thinking seriously about the violence of gender. Thus, the crucial issue is not (just) what it is about men that accounts for violence, both that directed at women and other men, but what it is about the construction of gender, difference and identity that enables violence.

It is not enough to acknowledge men as the primary perpetrators (and victims) of violence, as an observation or statement of self-evidence. Rather, an acknowledgement such as this demands a response, thus highlighting the need to shift attention from men as violent and women as victims of men’s violence, to the violence inherent in what is asked of men and women. This extends to the ‘disappearing acts’ performed in relation to definitions of ‘violence’ and, in particular, the ways in which such
definitions are infused with gender, shaping who and what may be considered ‘violent’ and – most importantly – which of these ‘violences’ are seen as noteworthy. Herein lies my discomfort with much feminist theorising about violence; men’s violence towards each other matters to the extent that it reflects a hierarchical, divided society. It is this that provides both the broader context and the backdrop for understanding men’s violence against women and children.

**Bringing it together ...**

The focus on discourse, as discussed earlier, is a critical point of difference between constructionist and poststructuralist perspectives, the latter highlighting that gender, whilst performative, is not simply ‘done’ by individual performer/s. In Butler’s (1990b, p. 142) terms, there is no ‘doer behind the deed’ because the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed’. Thus, whilst a social constructionist perspective presents the easiest fit in terms of my epistemological orientation, it doesn’t go quite far enough in terms of providing a critical frame for the social and discursive construction of violence. As observed by Heywood (2002, p. 34), in many versions of constructionism ‘wider questions of power are never more than marginal’. In contrast, the poststructural emphasis on discourse ‘makes central the practices of power’, thereby enabling exploration of ‘the assumptions, techniques, procedures and strategies of power relations that effect what come to be accepted as the “truth”’ (p. 36).

Poststructuralism is, of course, not one thing; rather it encompasses a range of theoretical positions, perspectives and ideas. Whilst Weedon (1997), for example, regards poststructuralism’s distinctive focus on the ways in which power is exercised and the possibilities for change, as especially appropriate to feminist concerns (p. 19), she acknowledges that, given its diversity of forms, not all are ‘necessarily productive’ (p. 20) for feminism. Indeed, as observed by Fawcett and Featherstone (2000), within feminism(s) poststructuralism has ‘provoked wide-ranging reactions, ranging from the hostile, to the indifferent, to the creative’ (p. 5). According
to Powell (2010) what separates feminist and non-feminist poststructuralists is the former's insistence of the former on the 'agency of individuals within the workings of discourse', thus emphasising a 'two-way relationship between discourse and the individual' (p. 39). Agency, in this perspective, does not imply 'freedom from discursive constitution of the self', but rather emphasises the 'capacity to recognise [...] resist, subvert and change the discourses' (Davies, 1991, p. 51). As observed by Barrett (2005, p. 88), feminist poststructuralism can be used to 'examine socially available discourses and ways in which people take them up'. Further, by both placing gender at the centre of analysis and problematising 'knowledge and its production' (p. 89), it raises the 'possibility of change' (p. 88); that things could be different.

In their overriding concern with the 'relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of mean-making and reproducing meaning' (Belsey, 2002, p. 5), poststructural accounts, specifically those insights offered by key theorists such as Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose, discussed next, provide a critical framework for thinking about the ways in which 'violence' is constructed as a contemporary social problem. By applying a 'feminist lens' to poststructural perspectives – as discussed further in Chapter 4 - I argue that it is possible to counter some of the criticisms that have made of these, thereby rendering these approaches particularly valuable for analysing the ways in which violence is constructed and problematised.

**Power, knowledge and problematisation: Michel Foucault**

Whilst many poststructural and social constructionist theorists have drawn upon Foucault's work, Foucault himself, as has been widely observed, did not identify with any particular school of thought. In his own words, 'I think I have in fact been situated in most of the squares on the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously' (Foucault, 1984, p. 383). Nonetheless Foucault's concern with 'making things more fragile' (Foucault, 2007, p. 138) by demonstrating that 'what
appears obvious to us is not at all so obvious’ (p. 139) is broadly compatible with a poststructural perspective. Applied to ‘violence’, his work provides a way of thinking which troubles a conventional understanding of violence as straightforward and self-evident, raising critical questions regarding the ways in which the ‘problem’ of ‘violence’ is conceived and governed. The ‘history of problematizations’, as explained by Foucault (2007, p. 141), is a history of the ways in which ‘things’ become ‘problems’. In this respect Foucault was interested in analysing the ‘transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems’, specifically the quest to understand ‘how the different solutions to a problem have been constructed, as well as how these different solutions result from a specific form of problematization’ (Foucault, 1984, p. 389). Certain ways of thinking and talking about violence can this be seen as enabling the definition, identification, and governance of the (violent) subject. The transformation of some forms of violence into ‘problem violence’, as is my central interest here, therefore constitutes an enquiry into the *problematisation* of violence.

In his focus on the history of knowledge, Foucault was especially interested in those knowledges which seek to ‘construct a scientific knowledge of the subject’ (p. 152). In particular, he drew attention to the ways in which particular discourses emerge and come to be ‘seen as true’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 153). Thus the designation of some individuals, and some actions, as ‘violent’ is inseparable from the dominance of certain ways of knowing (Foucault, 2007, p. 151). Foucault is perhaps best known for his theorising of power through which he challenged conventional understandings of power as primarily repressive. In his view, power should instead be thought of as ‘outside the confines of state, law or class’, thereby making visible, the ‘myriad of power relations at the microlevel of society’ (Sawicki 1991: 20). In arguing that power is *exercised* - as ‘something which circulates’ (1980a, p. 98) rather than, simply oppresses - Foucault was particularly interested in the relationships between power and knowledge, asserting that ‘for knowledge to function as knowledge it
must exercise power’ (2007, p. 71). Thus, in this perspective, power ‘constitutes our very framework of thought’ (Naffine, 1997, p. 69).

Power, for Foucault, is exercised through the production and accumulation of certain forms of knowledge, specifically the production of ‘truth’ and disqualification of ‘non-truth’. Crucially, power is effective because it uses - and works through - knowledge and notions of truth including the mobilisation of norms. In emphasising power as productive, Foucault was focused on the ways in which power ‘produces’ individual subjects in the sense of being, both: ‘subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to (one’s) own identity by a conscience or self knowledge’ (Foucault, 1983, p. 212). By deferring to universal norms the disciplines, as bodies of knowledge, characterise, classify and specialise, serving to ‘hierarchise individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 223). Crucially, Foucault recognised that different discourses present different truths and represent different ways of knowing, thinking and speaking about the ‘truth’. In this context knowledge is ‘simply a way of thinking that allows the exercise of one’s will against others’ (Foucault, 1983, p. 212).

Foucault’s (1982, p. 326) notion of ‘dividing practices’, those techniques whereby ‘the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others’, is especially critical here, drawing attention to the effects of power. Power effects, here, are exercised through the ‘production of truth’ and ‘validated by their belonging to a system of knowledge’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 59). Focusing on the discourses of, and around, violence, as is my interest here, thus constitutes an investigation into, both, the exercise and effects of power, specifically in terms of the processes through which ‘certain subjects become objects of knowledge and at the same time objects of domination’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 153).

A Foucauldian perspective highlights the pervasive and diverse forms of social control that are basic to everyday life as well as the potential for multiple sites of resistance (Foucault, 1980a, p. 142). Instead of seeing
power as repressive, centralised and monolithic Foucault drew attention to the vast array of 'microlevel' and dispersed power relations. That is, power 'works' by invoking norms of conduct rather than by forbidding particular actions, thereby producing the 'self controlled', or disciplined, body. His gift can be seen as his incitement of a 'subversive tone' represented by challenges to 'established values as well as their costs' (David Garland, 1990, p. 134). In this respect his emphasis on the 'subtle', less visible, forms of control represents a critical contribution to the 'much wider ... theme of how domination is achieved and individuals are socially constructed' (David Garland, 1990, p. 134). In his quest to 'question over and over again what is postulated as self evident' (Foucault, 1988, p. 265), Foucault's work thus provides a critical framework to question, challenge, and disrupt conventional understandings about the world.

Foucault's work has nonetheless been widely criticised. His tendency to speak of power as 'a thing in itself' (David Garland, 1990), for example, has been identified as a significant weakness. Perhaps the strongest criticism of his work, however, has come from feminist theorists, most notably those focusing on the androcentrism which, it is claimed, permeates his interpretation of power. For instance, in Naffine's (1997, p. 77) view, Foucault failed to see that the operations of power and knowledge might vary according to the sex of the subject. Similarly, Sawicki (1991, p. 49) critiques Foucault's tendency to speak of power 'as if it subjugated everyone equally'. Thus, it is argued, Foucault failed to recognise, let alone analyse, the profoundly gendered nature of power relations. Other feminist critics, some of whom 'are absolutely vociferous in their condemnation of Foucault' (McLaren, 2004, p. 214), have taken stronger positions, pointing in particular to the 'lack of a normative framework' seen as necessary for 'demands for social justice' as well as his failure to adequately theorise the subject (p. 214). In this respect, many of the feminist concerns in relation to Foucauldian theory overlap with those regarding poststructural approaches, in particular the claim that poststructuralism 'abandons the subject' (Fawcett & Featherstone, 2000, p. 14) and negates 'the identity formations which are necessary for
political resistance' (p. 15). However, as observed by Foucauldian-inspired Butler (1992, p. xiv), claims such as this are based on an understanding of politics as a 'representational discourse' which, in presupposing a 'fixed or ready-made subject', serve to foreclose 'analysis of the political construction and regulation' of such categories as 'women' and 'men'. That is, to critique the subject is not to reject this but, rather, is 'a way of interrogating its construction as a pregiven or foundational premise' (Butler, 1992, p. 9).

Critiques of Foucault’s work, and of the uses made of it, are by no means restricted to feminist theorists. A common theme in such critiques is the 'perceived overdeterminism and subsequent undervaluing of human agency' and the 'assumed relationship between visibility and vulnerability' (Adams, 2007, p. 93). One of the more substantial concerns in terms of my work relates to the argument that, in offering a 'purely discursive' approach, Foucault neglected 'non-discursive factors'; that is, the recognition that there are 'real bodies and real people living the effects of discursive conventions' (Bacchi, 1999, p. 46). This is especially important in the case of violence given the need to attend to the 'real' harms experienced. In response to such concerns scholars, such as Kendall and Wickham (1999, p. 39), counter that Foucault did not claim that 'everything is discourse'; rather, in attending to the non-discursive 'dimensions of human activity' he argued that both the discursive and the non-discursive are 'equally subject to the dynamics of social construction and equally important in the production of reality' (Adams, 2007, p. 103). Whilst bodies, for example, are 'non-discursive in their materiality', they 'do not exist and operate in a non-discursive vacuum' (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 39), that is, the 'non-discursive is always within the ambit of discourse' (p. 46). It has nonetheless been argued that a Foucauldian analysis should be 'supplemented or corrected by some way of considering the lived body' (Barcan, 2008, p. 22), with feminist scholars making a particularly strong case in this regard. Bacchi (2009) proposes that 'feminist body theory', for instance, be integrated with a Foucauldian

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approach as a ‘counter-balance’, to ensure that ‘lived materiality receives due recognition’ (p. 265).

Mason (2002b) argues that Foucault’s work, in its recognition of power as both productive and oppressive, is especially useful for analysing violence. She thus advocates an approach that brings together and builds upon the strengths of both feminist and Foucauldian theory. In Mason’s view, Foucauldian theory can be used to illuminate how the ‘productive process of subjectification may take place through oppressive practices, such as violence’. whilst feminist contributions ‘show us how violence oppresses’ (p. 126, emphasis in original). Similarly, Butler (1992) argues that it is important to ‘denaturalize’ terms such as violence, not to undermine their ‘urgency or credibility’ as political issues but rather to ‘show that the way their very materiality is circumscribed is fully political’ (p. 19). Thus the Foucauldian notion of discourse is particularly critical to (poststructural) feminist analysis in its ability to ‘question [the] traditional deployment’ of such terms and the ways in which, as ‘sites of political debate’, these can silence by ‘regulating what is and is not designatable’ (Butler, 1992, p. 19). Recognising the role of discourses in constituting the ‘problem of violence’ therefore implies a shift in focus to the making of violence – or ‘making up’ (Hacking, 2002) of the violent subject - as a ‘particular kind of social object requiring a particular type of response’ (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 154).

Despite its limitations, most notably in terms of its relative neglect of the significance of gender, Foucault’s work, particularly that in relation to power and the power/knowledge nexus, is pivotal – both for feminism and more generally – and, as such, has ‘lent itself to creative development’ (Fawcett & Featherstone, 2000, p. 19) in a range of contexts. Feminist theorists such as Sawicki (1991), Howe (1994, 2008) and Naffine (1997) highlight his preoccupation with defamiliarising categories and practices in order to disrupt their self-evidence. Sawicki (1991, p. 101) regards as especially critical the ways in which he advocated for ‘the freedom to disengage from our political identities, [and] our presumptions about gender differences’. Further in emphasising the ‘productivity of the body,
the ways in which the social inscriptions of bodies produce the effects of depth’ (Grosz, 1994, p. xiii). Grosz argues that Foucault’s work provides a crucial foundation for contesting the ‘domination of the body by biological terms’, indeed, contesting the ‘terms of biology itself’, in order to extricate the body from ‘biological and pseudo-naturalist appropriations from which it has historically suffered’ (p. 22). In showing that power relations are complex, dynamic and productive, rather than repressive or oppressive, Foucault’s work has therefore made it possible to manipulate the cultural meanings of ‘man’, ‘woman’ and the relation between these (Naffine, 1997, p. 72). In this thesis, this makes it possible to resist the perception that the gender specificity of (men’s) violence is ‘natural’ or immutable. Thus, whilst it may be limited in some respects, it is the way in which Foucault’s insights are applied that is crucial. As demonstrated by a range of feminist poststructuralists, most notably Butler (1990b, 1993, 2004), Smart (1995), Naffine (1997), Sawicki (1991) and Howe (1994, 2008), by extending and building upon his central insights, Foucault’s work can be used to generate powerful feminist accounts. An ‘optimistic reading’ of Foucault’s work, then, as observed by Adams (2007), highlights its utility in providing the tools of liberation’, thereby creating ‘space for hope’ (p. 97).

**Governmentality: Nikolas Rose**

How do we understand ourselves, and how are we understood by those who would administer, manage, organise, improve, police and control us? What kind of presuppositions about human beings are built into our practices of production and consumption, of pedagogy and reform, or pleasure and erotics? And what images, values, beliefs, norms do we employ when we think about, enact and assess our existence? (Rose, 1999, p. ii)

Nikolas Rose’s work has, in his own words, been strongly ‘shaped by [his] encounter with the thought of Michel Foucault’ (Rose, 1999, p. ix). Rose is perhaps best known for his ‘genealogy of subjectivity’ (Rose, 1999) in
which he focuses on ‘psy’ knowledges, those ‘heterogeneous knowledges, forms of authority and practical techniques that constitute psychological expertise’ (p. ii), as the discursive context for production of the ‘self-actualising citizen’. Rose’s work is significant in a range of ways, not least because it ‘demonstrates the useful of a Foucauldian perspective as an analytical tool’ (Barcan, 2008, p. 14) for critically examining ‘the costs of contemporary subjectification and the “obligation” to be free’ (p. 19). Rose identifies the ‘certain style of criticism’ (p. x) exemplified in Foucault’s work as a key influence, pointing, in particular, to:

[Foucault’s] attempt to try to trace, in very concrete and material forms, the actual history of those forms of rationality that comprise our present, the ways of thinking and acting with which they have been caught up, the practices and assemblages which they have animated, and the consequences for our understanding of our present, and of ourselves in that present. (p. x)

Soyland and Kendall (1997) argue that Rose’s use of Foucault ‘works’ because he ‘takes [him] seriously’, rather than reducing his work ‘to a slogan’ (p. 15). Reflecting this engagement with Foucault’s ideas, Rose positions his own genealogical focus as an analysis of ‘the problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily thought – and the practices on the basis of which these problematizations are formed’ (Foucault 1986, cited in Rose, 2000, p. 313).

Rose has been somewhat critical of the ‘language of social construction’, observing that '[i]t is not very enlightening to be told repeatedly that something claimed as “objective” is in fact “socially constructed”’. A more useful focus, he argues, is to question the ways in which things are constructed:

Where do objects emerge? Which are the authorities who are able to pronounce upon them? Through what concepts and
explanatory regimes are they specified? How do certain constructions acquire the status of truth [...]’ (Rose, 1999, pp. 20-21).

It is here that the connection with my work, in terms of the questions I wish to ask of ‘violence’, is apparent. My overriding focus is, in Rose’s (2000, p. 315) terms: ‘[w]here, how and by whom are aspects of human being’, in this case, those designated ‘violent’, ‘rendered problematic, according to what systems of judgement and in relation to what concerns?’.

The work of Rose, like Foucault, emphasises the importance of understanding the ‘limited and specific forms of “personhood”’ acquired by individuals ‘in their passage through social institutions’ (du Gay, 2000, p. 279). This represents a crucial shift away from a reliance on ‘general social theoretical and psychoanalytical accounts’ regarding the ‘formation of “subjectivity” or “identity”’ (p. 279). In this view, the ‘self’ or ‘subjecthood’ is not a universal or essential object; rather it is ‘but one, specialized way in which individuals have been encouraged to relate to themselves as persons’ (p. 283). Rose is particularly interested in ‘devices of meaning production’, that is, ‘grids of visualization, vocabularies, norms and systems of judgment’ (Rose, 2000, p. 314), and the ways in which these produce experience and personhood. A ‘genealogy of subjectification’ is, thus, not a ‘continuous history of the self’ but rather focuses ‘directly on the practices within which human beings have been located in particular “regimes of the person”’ (p. 314). This is in contrast to the more popular view, such as that expressed by noted sociologist Anthony Giddens, of the ‘self’ as a ‘biographical narrative’ (Giddens, 1991, p. 54), constructed by the individual and informed by their day-to-day decisions and experiences. In claiming that ‘[w]e are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves’ (p. 75), Giddens therefore privileges individual autonomy and agency at the expense of historical, political and economic context (see King, 1999). Rose, however, argues that ‘our very experience of ourselves as certain sorts of persons’, for example, as violent, vulnerable, powerless, and so on, ‘is the outcome of a range of human technologies’ - those ‘hybrid
assemblies of knowledges, instruments, persons, [and] systems of judgement’, that ‘takes modes of being human as their object’ (Rose, 2000, p. 315).

Rose is considered ‘one of the leading practitioners of the governmental approach’ (Dean, 1999, p. 178). Following Foucault’s assertion that government be understood as the ‘conduct of conduct’, this approach involves a focus on the ‘formation and shaping of the identities, capacities, and statuses of members of populations’ (Dean & Hindess, 1998, p. 11). Foucault used the term ‘governmentality’ in the ‘broad sense’ to refer to the ‘techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour’ (Foucault 1997, cited in Rose, O’Malley, & Valverde, 2006, p. 83). Governmentality, or ‘government at a distance’ as Rose terms it, should be understood as a ‘delicate matter’ through which ‘micro-fields of power’ are harnessed to ‘enable extension of control over space and time’ (Rose, 1999, p. xxii). Rose uses the term ‘advanced liberalism’ to specify ‘the assemblage of rationalities and technologies of contemporary liberal rule’ (Dean, 1999, p. 174) found in ‘advanced liberal democracies’ such as Australia, UK, and USA. Modern societies, he argues, are ‘characterised by a particular way of thinking about the kinds of problems that can and should be addressed by various authorities’ (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 2), thereby enabling the management of, and maintenance of order within, populations (Bacchi, 2009). Thus, given my control concern with the construction of ‘violence’ as a social problem, I am especially interested in the potential of a governmentality approach for exploration of the ways in which violence is thought about and problematised, as an ‘entry point into how rule is thought’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 31). Crucially, because governmentality is seen as having a ‘discursive character’ (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 4), it is necessary to direct attention towards the ‘particular technological devices of writing, listing, numbering and computing that render a realm into discourse as a knowable, calculable and administrable object’ (p. 5).
An understanding of discourse as a ‘technology of thought’ (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 5) is central to the governmentality approach. Government, in this view, is only made possible though ‘discursive mechanisms that represent the domain to be governed as an intelligible field’ (p. 6). Importantly, governmentalities are ‘both mentalities and technologies, both ways of thinking and tools for intervening’ (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 20). Hence, ‘forms of authority’, including ‘positive knowledges and expertises of truth’, play a crucial role in these ‘rationalities of government’ (Rose, 1999, p. xxii). Power, as the exercise of government, thus works through ‘the authorities who define phenomena as problems’ and the criteria through which ‘certain persons, things or forms of conduct come to be seen as problematic’ (Rose, 1999, p. xi). As ‘a mode of authority’, expertise performs an exclusionary function, controlling who can speak authoritatively about an issue. Accordingly, the establishment of one set of ‘truths’ closes off the production of others (p. xvi), amounting to limitations ‘on who may be allowed to speak appropriately and legitimately of certain issues’ (Breckenridge, 1999, p. 14). In this respect, Rose draws attention to the ‘existence of alliances, conflicts and rivalries between different claims to authority’ (p. xi), implying that ways of knowing and theorising violence, for example, have more to do with the exercise of ‘arbitrary authority’ than the ‘real nature of humans’ as subjects (p. viii).

Rose’s body of work, particularly when read in conjunction with that of Foucault, provides crucial context and points of reference for this dissertation. Key insights, of specific relevance to my investigation, include the social and political role of knowledge and the emergence of expertise as a mode of authority. The study of government is thus centrally concerned with the construction of ‘governable subjects’ and, in particular, the criteria in relation to which certain persons, things, forms of conduct come to be seen as problematic. Foucault’s (1982, p. 326) notion of ‘dividing practices’, those techniques whereby ‘the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others’, is critical here and evident in the separation of ‘acceptable’ (that is, as ‘understandable’) and ‘unacceptable’ violences, the designation of ‘legitimate’ and illegitimate / ‘unfair’
violences, and, indeed the very naming of some acts, and not others, as ‘violent’. In this sense, the ‘dividing up’ of violence, as discussed in the previous chapter, and its alignment with certain explanations, technologies, authorities and subjectivities (Rose, 1999) draws attention to the effects of power, exercised through the ‘production of truth’ and ‘validated by their belonging to a system of knowledge’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 59). As a ‘social, not a natural, process’ (Hearn, 1996, p. 29), the defining and labeling of violence enables it to be represented as ‘understandable’ in certain circumstances (D. H. J. Morgan, 1987, p. 181) and performs a crucial function in terms of the establishment of ‘particular domain[s] of scientific knowledge’ (Foucault, 1984, p. 388).

**Linking methodology to method**

Decisions regarding how to investigate a particular topic, as emphasised by Stanley (n.d. cited in Silverman, 2010, p. 332), are ‘intimately connected with epistemological and ontological issues relating to the very nature of that topic as a “topic”’. My concern in this chapter has been to explore the intersections between my conceptual framework and the ways in which ‘violence’ may be conceptualised as a research topic. Rather than approaching violence as a ‘thing’ to be examined or explained, I am interested in how violence is conceptualised, explained and, most importantly, problematised. Thus this thesis represents an investigation into the construct, or concept, of violence; my aim is not to ‘know the “object” [of violence] but to observe it with all its contradictions and incompleteness’ (Lee, 2001, p. 6, my emphasis).

There exists an extensive body of literature, across a range of disciplines and theoretical perspectives, which has sought to explain, assess and prevent violence. Such works tend to treat ‘violence’ as self-evident and a ‘ready-made’ (Deleuze 1994, cited in Bacchi, 2009, p. xvi) problem, a practice which I do not wish to perpetuate here. I am not interested in ‘more of the same’; rather my motivation is to investigate the ‘conditions necessary for the appearance’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 44) of violence as a
social problem. This is to recognise that a social problem ‘does not wait in
limbo the order that will free it and enable it to be become embodied in a
visible and prolix objectivity’. Violence, that is, ‘does not pre-exist itself’,
rather it ‘exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of
relations’ (p. 45).

In Chapter 2 I reflected upon issues concerning my life experiences and
‘social, cultural, economic and personal identity location’ (Walter, 2010, p.
13) - in short, my standpoint - in terms of the ways in which these have,
and will continue to, ‘filter and frame’ the research. One’s standpoint of
course, cannot be dealt with in a single chapter and then ‘left behind’, nor
can this be ‘separated’ from other methodological considerations. The
epistemological, axiological and ontological frameworks which constitute
one’s standpoint both inform and are shaped by one’s theoretical
conceptual framework; the two are intertwined. Similarly, distinctions
drawn between ontology and epistemology may be artificial in that, as has
been observed by Guba (1990, p. 26), ‘what can be known and the
individual who comes to know it are fused into a coherent whole’. Broadly,
poststructuralism and feminism or, rather my take on these, are key
influences in terms of my approach to this research. Stanley (1990, p. 14)
has argued that feminism may be seen as ‘not merely a “perspective”, a
way of seeing; nor even this plus an epistemology, a way of doing; it is
also an ontology, or a way of being in the world’. As a way of thinking and
‘being’, this may equally describe poststructuralism which, as expressed
by Butler (1992, p. xiv), ‘is not, strictly speaking, a position, but rather a
critical interrogation of the exclusionary operations by which “positions” are
established’.

The ‘search for clarity and simplicity of meaning’, as highlighted by Humes
and Bryce (2003, p. 180), is ‘illusory because there will always be other
perspectives from which to interpret the material under review’. A range of
approaches exist in relation to the analysis of social problems; these differ
in the ways in which they conceptualise ‘problems’, that is, as, either,
objective or constructed (J. Brown & Munn, 2008). A ‘positivistic’
approach, for instance, ‘seeks out objective indicators of a phenomenon’, whereas constructionist perspectives ‘focus on meaning-making processes, namely those groups and their strategies, that bring the particular social problem to public attention’ (J. Brown & Munn, 2008, p. 220). In this respect, my work fits clearly within the latter group because it is based upon the recognition that meanings are dynamic and change over time as well as ‘between different claim making groups’ (p. 220). Specifically, I am interested in the ways in which the social problem of violence/s has been made ‘manifest, nameable, and desirable’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 41). Echoing Rose, it is not enough to focus on the social construction of violence; more work is needed to ‘do something’ with this knowledge. Hence it is necessary also to consider the ‘powerful “grids” or networks of regularities […] that are constitutive of the emergence […] of a particular problem as a social problem’ (Scheurich, 1997, p. 98), this encompassing those ‘regularities’, such as gender, race, class and governmentality, that constitute what is – and is not – named as a problem and thus, an ‘object of social visibility’ (p. 103). The range of possible ‘solutions’, or policy choices, is interlinked with these social regularities: the grid of regularities, as discussed in the following chapter, can thus be understood as acting ‘like a preconceptual field that constitutes some policy choices as relevant and others as virtually invisible’ (p. 102).

Discourses, as ‘institutionally supported and culturally influenced conceptual and interpretive schemas’ (Bacchi, 2005b, p. 202), influence the ways in which issues are understood and, hence, named as social problems. In this perspective, discourses ‘realise their power in the materialised practices of policy-making’ (Heywood, 2002, p. 82). Social problems, then, are ‘created’ in and through discourse. A focus on policy is crucial because, as Heywood (2002) argues, this provides a way to tap into discourses, highlighting the ways in which ‘certain problems emerge and are represented, and how different understandings are played out, as well as how social coalitions on specific meanings emerge and are translated into institutional policy setting’ (p. 82). Taking this further, an understanding of policy as discursive activity, as advocated by Bacchi,
directs attention towards the issues that ‘make the political agenda’, specifically in terms of the ways in which their ‘construction or representation [...] limits what is talked about as possible or desirable, or as impossible or undesirable’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). In this respect, Heywood’s discussion of the theoretical value of a poststructural approach to policy analysis, such as that advocated by Scheurich (1997) and Bacchi (1999, 2000, 2004, 2009), discussed in the next chapter, confirms my own methodological direction. Whilst Heywood’s research involves an examination of gene-technology politics within the context of environmental policy, the points that she makes regarding the connections between discourse, power, and policy are equally relevant for this dissertation:

[exploration of the] discourse from which policy questions, issues and problems emerge [...] aids in locating them socially and institutionally. It addresses questions of how socio-political power is exercised and how to understand the social relations that construct technology, knowledge and governance. (Heywood, 2002, p. 36)

‘Politically astute’ analysis, then, is that which exposes the ways in which ‘public policy thinking tends to remain within certain narrow modes of problematization’ (Shapiro 1992, cited in Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). A policy-as-discourse approach, as taken here, which aims to bring ‘silences in problematisations out into the open’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 50), thus constitutes an essentially political exercise.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have endeavoured to explain my research approach, specifically the theoretical and conceptual framework that guides my work, shaping both my conceptualisation of ‘violence’ as a research topic and, accordingly, the ways in which I engage with ‘violence’ throughout this thesis. My intention is not to approach violence as a ‘thing’ to be examined or explained. Rather I am interested in how violence is conceptualised,
explained and, most importantly, problematised. In this sense, it matters less how I understand and define violence than it does to analyse existing definitions and explanations of violence, especially those that have been ‘officialised’ through their adoption in authoritative forms and arenas.

What is defined as violent/violence? What is not defined as violence/violent? How might defining something as ‘violence’ serve a silencing function? What is defined, or named, as ‘problem violence’? How is violence explained? How is ‘problem violence’ explained? How do explanations differ between contexts? What assumptions underpin such explanations? These are critical questions which have, largely, been neglected, certainly insofar as they relate to issues of power, knowledge and subjectivity. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, I outline the details of my chosen research method, discussing and evaluating the specific models for policy analysis proposed by James Scheurich and Carol Bacchi in terms of how these might be used to explore these questions. This is followed, in Chapter 5, by an account of the broader policy framework in Australia, included as an orientation to the specific policy analyses in Chapters 6 - 8.
CHAPTER 4: METHOD

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss policy analysis in general before outlining the details of the research approach taken in this thesis. The specific goal of this thesis is to examine policy as a means through which to ‘probe processes sustaining gendered inequities and hierarchical relations’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, pp. 149-150). How ‘we define the status of the text’, in this case, policy as text, depends however on the ‘theoretical framework from within which we approach the text’ (Willig, 2001, p. 10). Theoretical – and methodological - choices are, in turn, informed by our epistemological stance. As discussed in Chapter 3, and inspired by the work of Foucault, Rose and others, I am interested in exploring the ‘relationships between discourse and how people think or feel (subjectivity), what they may do (practices), the material conditions within which such experiences may take place’ (Willig, 2001, p. 107) and, crucially, the implications, or ‘lived effects’ of such positionings. Thus the bulk of this chapter, building upon the content of Chapter 3, is devoted to examining alternate perspectives for critiquing and analysing policy, specifically those proposed by Foucauldian informed theorists James Scheurich and Carol Bacchi. I introduced the work of Scheurich and Bacchi in the previous chapter; here I outline in greater detail their respective policy analysis methods in order to establish a framework for my own policy examination. This discussion is followed by an evaluation of contemporary applications in order to demonstrate the utility of these methods for my own work.

I begin this chapter by distinguishing between conventional methods, being those which treat policy as a response, or reaction, to a ‘real’, pre-existing problem and critical, poststructurally influenced approaches.
Policy and policy analysis

Policy analysis texts typically contain sets of ‘strategic or analytical tools’ and focus on policy in terms of its ‘formulation, implementation and evaluation’ (Barns, Dudley, Harris, & Petersen, 1999, p. 5). In these the tendency is for the social and political context to be taken as given: as ‘something which the intelligent policy maker takes into account and deals with as he or she designs and implements chosen strategies’ (p. 6). Thus issues of power, the nature of the state and so on are generally downplayed, if not disregarded altogether. Importantly, even research arising from critical perspectives can under-analyse crucial aspects by, for example, treating the state as a ‘unitary object’ – the capitalist state, the patriarchal state, etc – with ‘its own rationale, motivations and interests’ (Barns, et al., 1999, p. 7), rather than ‘one segment of a much broader play of power relations’ (p. 8).

It is common for policy-related literature, such as textbooks and journal articles, to focus on distinct sectors (policy settings) or issues (policy problems) including family, housing, employment, health, crime, order, and so on. The chapters in a book, for example, may reflect the dividing up of content in this way. Most significantly, for my purposes, violence is rarely a focus; rather violence tends to be, either (or both), categorised as crime, that is, as a ‘law and order’ policy issue; or, under the guise of ‘domestic violence’, contained under the heading ‘gender (meaning, women) and policy’. Similarly, the tendency is for gendered critiques to be, effectively, quarantined through their restricted application to the ‘special needs’ of women, particularly in relation to ‘the family’ and domestic setting. Indeed, on the whole, and as noted by Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2011), ‘research that analyses policymaking as gendered’ continues to be ‘fragmented’ (p. 2, my emphasis). Thus ‘violence’ becomes a ‘crime policy problem’ and domestic violence a ‘women’s policy problem’. Interestingly, this parallels the approach taken in much of the ‘violence’ literature, in which, by separating out ‘indigenous violence’, ‘youth violence’, ‘alcohol-related violence’, ‘domestic violence and so on, the ‘problem’ becomes
attached to indigeneity or youth or alcohol. So it is that policies create problems and, in doing so, create people: producing and reinforcing ‘specific categories of social being and specific patterns of social organisation’ (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 112).

As observed by Colebatch (2006), ‘[w]hen we talk about policy, the focus is usually on the subject matter [...]’. The process of policy gets less attention’ (p. 1, my emphasis). Conventional approaches to policy analysis treat policy as a response, or reaction, to a ‘real’, pre-existing problem. Problems are thus seen as existing outside of the policy-making process (Bacchi, 2009) and policies as simply providing the ‘solution’ to ‘fix’ these. This is epitomised in the introduction to an Australian policy (or ‘policy sciences’) text, contributed to by ‘a group of Australia’s leading thinkers’:

our collective wellbeing depends on successfully adapting our behaviour to new challenges [...] the point is that living together entails the solutions of such collective problems, and our attempts to prescribe solutions are encapsulated in public policy (P. Saunders & Walter, 2005, p. 1).

From this perspective the ‘problem’, or ‘problem population’, is conceptualised as something that needs to be cured: ‘a pathological condition’ (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 59). Focusing on the ‘problem’ in this way also serves to displace and distort, as in the well-established policy emphasis on women’s disadvantage rather than men’s advantage (see Bulbeck, 2005b, p. 143). Moreover, such approaches tend to treat social problems as ‘technical problems’ which require ‘technical solutions’ and, in doing so, obscure their structural and ‘inherently political’ nature (p. 55). Analysis conducted on this basis tends to be ‘problem-oriented’ or ‘remedial’, aiming to ‘identify inadequacies of certain provisions and suggesting remedies’ (p. 58); in other words, ‘tinkering’ with, rather than challenging and unsettling, existed or proposed policy ‘solutions’. Thus much research on social policy serves to reinforce, rather than counter, the ‘individualisation of the social’ (Jamrozik, 2009) associated with
neoliberal governance. In order to avoid ‘acquiring the characteristics of “palliative care”’ (p. 321), alternative research approaches such as those developed by Scheurich and Bacchi, as discussed in the next section, are needed to ‘reverse’ this trend.

**Alternative approaches**

*Policy Archaeology: James Scheurich*

Scheurich (1997) is critical of both traditional and post-positivist policy research on the basis that each treats the social problem to which a policy relates as an ‘empirical given’ (p. 95). Traditional approaches, in particular, tend to rely upon a ‘medical metaphor’ in which social problems are seen as ‘society’s ills’. The focus of policy studies is thus ‘the study of social diseases (social problems) for the purpose of curing the patient (the social body) or, at least, controlling the disease so the larger social body is preserved’ (p. 96). According to Scheurich, post-positivist policy studies, whilst ostensibly offering a more critical approach, take a similar stance and perform essentially the same function. In his view, instead of questioning ‘the liberal social order itself’ (p. 97), both proceed from the assumption that the ‘emergence of the disease ...is “natural” and “real”’ and thus, ‘much like the natural emergence of the symptoms of a disease’ (p. 95), requires ‘treatment’ via a (policy) solution. ‘Policy archaeology’, Scheurich’s proposed alternative, is strongly influenced by the work of Foucault and aims to address the shortcomings of conventional approaches to policy research by focusing attention on problems as socially constructed; on the conditions of possibility for the emergence and visibility of certain social practices and social problems. As a ‘radically different approach to policy studies’ (Scheurich, 1997, p. 94), policy archaeology focuses on ‘the constitutive grid of conditions, assumptions, [and] forces which make the emergence of a social problem, and its strands and traces, possible’ (p. 98). In short, it aims to ‘investigate how a social problem becomes visible as a social problem’ (p. 98) and, accordingly, how only ‘certain solutions (and not others) are seeable and knowable by social agents’ (p. 109).
Schurich's approach to policy analysis consists of four main 'arenas of study' which, though distinct, are intertwined and overlapping rather than linear and discrete. The first of these, Arena I, focuses on the social construction of problems and is concerned with questions such as:

By what processes did a particular problem emerge, or better, how did a particular problem come to be seen as a problem?
What makes the emergence of a particular problem possible?
Why do some "problems" become identified as social problems and other "problems" do not achieve that level of identification?
By what process does a social problem gain the "gaze" of the state, of the society, and thus, emerge from a kind of social invisibility into visibility? (Schurich, 1997, p. 97)

Arena II, which Schurich refers to as the 'social regularities arena' (p. 97), and Arena I are intimately connected because it is these 'powerful grids or networks of regularities' (p. 98) that enable the emergence of particular social problems as well as the 'range of acceptable policy choices' (p. 99). By constituting 'what is socially visible or credible' (p. 100), social regularities are thus both productive, in the Foucaultian sense, and reproductive.

Schurich names gender, race, class, governmentality and professionalization as social regularities which intersect in 'complex and grid-like' ways, making 'it possible for [a] particular problem to emerge as a problem', that is, they construct the problem and constitute it 'as an "object" of social visibility' (p. 103). The social regularities arena thus encompasses both the epistemological and the ontological in that it 'constitutes both who the problem group is and how the group is seen or known' (p. 107). Crucially, Schurich does not regard such regularities as (necessarily) intentional but rather as 'operating like powerfully embedded preconceptual frames' with the effect that certain 'modes of thinking about social life and categories of thought are privileged as common sense or
natural or the best or are just assumed’ (p. 105). In this sense Scheurich’s ‘social regularities’ are akin to Foucault’s ‘discourses’, that is, in constituting objects they ‘conceal their own invention’ (Foucault 1972 cited in Scheurich, 1997, p. 105). Scheurich identifies governmentality and professionalisation as key social regularities which are closely linked. Governmentality is the ‘kind of governance that counts, describes, defines, [and] brings everything under its gaze’ (Scheurich, 1997, p. 105), whilst professionalisation refers to the ‘proliferation of professions’ that exist to ‘treat and manage the citizenry […] according to the norms of the current social order’ (p. 106). Hence these social regularities (Arena II) connect with the social construction of problems (Arena I) because they function to ‘arrange’ the ‘seeing’ of this target group, the seeing of it as a problem group’ (p. 107).

Arena III focuses more specifically on the ways in which social regularities shape and constrain the range of possible policy choices – or what are seen as appropriate policy solutions. In doing so, some policy choices are highlighted as relevant whilst others are rendered ‘virtually invisible’ (p. 102). Attention is thereby directed towards policy solutions and choices and away from social problems which are ‘simply assumed to be “known”’ (p. 109). Arena IV, interestingly, turns the spotlight back on the field of policy studies itself. Here Scheurich acknowledges that policy studies are, in themselves, a ‘governmental apparatus’, producing ‘grid-congruent problem, problem groups, and policy solutions’ (p. 110). Policy analysts, therefore, are not only key contributors to the construction of social problems and solutions but, moreover, given their status as ‘experts’ (linking to Arena II) are able to legitimate such constructions and exclude others.

Applications

Whilst Scheurich is clear that his policy archaeology approach is relevant to the analysis of both social and education policies, it is within the educational field that it has been most frequently applied. For example, scholars have used Scheurich’s work to examine the national natural
science curriculum in South Africa (Ramsuran & Malcolm, 2006), anti-bullying policies (Walton, 2010), responses to youth violence in Canadian schools (Mawhinney, 1995), and educational policies impacting on people with disabilities (Ferguson, 2003). In a different context, Heywood’s (2002) inspiring study of gene-technology politics uses an expanded model of policy archaeology to illustrate ‘how the discursive nature of policy-making is related to the international regulatory regimes of governance’ (Heywood, 2002, p. 301). The great strength of policy archaeology, as observed by Heywood, is its analytical focus on power relations. It can thus be used to highlight the ways in which ‘politics and policy-making reflect the articulation of discursive practices of power in the ongoing social construction of regulatory arenas’, as evident, for example, in the ‘delineation between politics and non-politics, science and non-science’ and so on (p. 295). The following overview of the work of Ramsuran and Malcolm (2006) and Walton (2010) is provided to highlight the utility of Scheurich’s approach as well as its specific relevance to my work, that is, to analysing violence as a policy problem and the associated policy ‘solutions’.

**Walton**

Walton (2010) draws upon Scheurich’s model of policy archaeology to analyse school policies on bullying, focusing in particular on how the ‘problem of bullying [...] has come to be understood in certain ways [...] and how policy solutions are constrained and limited accordingly’ (p. 135). Specifically he sets out to demonstrate the extent to which policy development ‘reflects a larger modernist project of creating order by managing social practices that become highlighted as problematic’ (p. 142). Whilst not ‘necessarily adhering to all aspects of Scheurich’s “instructive format” (p. 139), Walton explores the ways in which ‘social regularities operate to set parameters not only of what may be seen and talked about, but how’ (p. 142), as evident in a range of documents including a Government ‘Task Force’ Report and local school policies. He observes that:
Filtered through a grid of social regularities, the notion of bullying is transformed from being evidence of social pathology enacted behaviourally and requiring intervention or remediation, to being a problem constructed to maintain dominant social order by delineating and labelling particular children, the ‘bad’ ones, as bullies, and other particular children as ‘victims’. Discourse on bullying implicitly labels children as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. [...] In discourse on bullying, this represents how social problems are presented as ‘givens’. (Walton, 2010, p. 141)

Bullying is thus conceptualised as instances of individual behaviour; bullies are ‘particular children who act in particular ways’ (p. 142) - problem children in other words.

Following Scheurich, Walton focuses on governmentality and professionalization as well as the social regularities of gender, race and class (Arena II). Social regularities, as ‘constructs of social difference by which people are categorised, labelled, and Othered’ (Walton, 2010, p. 141), are frequently left out of policy discussions. Thus Walton shows that bullying is constructed in policy ‘as a behavioural problem in need of policy solutions’ (p. 141) rather than a reflection and expression of social difference. Within a context of ‘zero tolerance’, bullying is understood as compromising school safety, ‘however it is that “safety” is defined’, and thus punitive responses are constructed as necessary ‘to correct the bully’s behaviour’ (p. 142). Zero tolerance in schools is not, however, ‘universal and monolithic’ but rather is applied selectively, as, for example, in the widespread failure to ‘acknowledge, much less attempt to deal with, social differences in any form’ (p. 139).

Ramsuran and Malcolm

Ramsuran and Malcolm (2006) are interested in the policy process in relation to the reform and development of national educational curriculum, specifically that for science education, in post-Apartheid South Africa. Like Walton, they apply Scheurich’s work by drawing upon his notion of social regularities (Arena II), in particular those relating to professionalisation and
the ways in which this functions to constitute ‘what is socially visible or credible’ (Schurich, 1997, p. 100). Important features of professionals, according to Ramsuran and Malcolm, include that they ‘represent the idea of “experts”’ and, because they are ‘networked to a (global) profession’, are influenced by the ‘ideas that dominate professional discussion’. In balancing their allegiances to - and the tensions between - their profession and the State, professionals can therefore be ‘co-opted to particular positions’ (pp. 516-517). Ramsuran and Malcolm further observe, in relation to the intersections of government/management and professionalisation, that the notion of ‘professional’ is used in an exclusionary way to draw a distinction between professionals as ‘curriculum experts’ (‘knowers’) involved in the writing of policy and classroom teachers (‘doers’), classified as ‘professionals in the domain of practice’ (p. 517). Recalling Schön’s (1983) distinction between the ‘high hard ground’ of theory and the ‘swampy lowland’ of practice, as discussed in Chapter 2, teachers are thereby positioned as ‘implementers’ (p. 521); ‘expected to realise the policy [but] deemed poorly equipped to contribute to that policy’ (p. 520).

In Ramsuran and Malcolm’s study, the tacit ‘criteria’ for membership of the policy writer group includes professional credibility and allegiances ‘consistent with the government’s position’ (p. 521). Consisting of ‘defensible experts’ (p. 521), the policy team is therefore in a position to, both, legitimise the designation’ of problems and problem groups and, crucially, ‘legitimitise themselves’ (p. 527). In being called upon to ‘treat’ the social problem, experts anticipate the policy solution even as they define and refine the problem; hence the ‘presence and practices’ of experts ‘make the problem visible, and in so doing they define the problem as part of offering a solution to it’ (p. 527). Importantly, in constructing and redefining the ‘problem’, policy writers ‘stay close’ to that international ‘best practice’ which is:

mostly developed in first-world countries, and consistent with a neo-liberal emphasis on accountability and individualism. They
did this not in a highly conscious way, but via their own professionalisation and professional commitments. (Ramsuran & Malcolm, 2006, p. 522)

Professionalisation thus encompasses the ‘dominant liberal social order’, constituting ‘that which has become visible and acceptable within that social order’ (p. 527). Ramsuran and Malcolm’s application of Scheurich’s policy archaeology thereby highlights the critical role of professionalisation, as one of a complex grid of social regularities, in the ‘naming, describing, and treating’ of social problems and problem groups (Scheurich, 1997, p. 106).

What's the problem represented to be?: Carol Bacchi

Carol Bacchi positions her approach to policy within the broader context of seeking to understand how governing takes place: ‘how order is maintained, and how we live within and abide by rules’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. ix). This challenges the conventional view of policy as, simply, the response – or solution – to an identifiable, pre-existing ‘problem’. Instead policies are understood as constituting, or giving shape to, problems; hence, ‘rather than reacting to “problems”, governments are active in the creation (or production) of policy “problems”’ (p. 1). Thus social ‘problems’, in Bacchi’s (2000, p. 48) view, are “created” or “given shape” in the very policy proposals that are offered as “responses”. In other words, governments don’t simply respond to already existing ‘problems’. Rather, by ‘constituting the shape of the issues to be considered’ (p. 50), governments construct the meaning and significance, indeed the very existence, of problems.

‘Problematisations’, according to Bacchi, are central to governing processes’ (p. xii), and it is this recognition that lies at the heart of her approach to policy analysis. Bacchi proposes that we are, in effect, ‘governed through problematisations rather than through policies’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 31), and explains that:
[t]his position starts from the premise that policy ‘problems’ do not exist separate from their representations. It also contends that an examination of postulated policy ‘solutions’ will reveal what is represented to be the problem. Representations of a ‘problem’ must then be closely examined to see what assumptions underpin different representations, what effects follow from them, and how subjects are constituted within them. Crucially we need to reflect upon what is left unproblematic, what is likely to change and what is likely to stay the same. (Bacchi, 2004, p. 131)

Working towards a critical understanding of policy therefore requires a ‘shift in focus from [assumed] “problems” to problematisations’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 32). Analysis involves interrogating how “troubling conditions” take shape in specific policy proposals’ (p. 31), by focusing on problem representations, that is, the ways in which particular policy problems are ‘constituted in the real’ (p. 35). Policies can thus be seen as ‘competing interpretations or representations of political issues’, rather than as straightforward ‘solutions’ to ‘problems’ (Bacchi, 1999, p. 2).

Bacchi is a key advocate for analysing policy as discourse, arguing that paying ‘attention to the ways in which “social problems” or policy problems get “created” in discourse’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 48) is critical in order to expose, and thereby challenge, the ‘silences in problematisations’ (p. 50). She is particularly interested in, what she regards as, the tension that exists between the uses and effects of discourse, that is, between agency (the ‘agentic marshalling of discourses’) and the constraints associated with one’s discursive location (Bacchi, 2000, p. 51). Thus, whilst ‘we are all “in” discourses that shape and limit the possibilities of “what can be said”’ (Bacchi, 2004, p. 143), Bacchi argues that it is important that we not think of discourses as ‘monolithic’ or beyond contest. She refers to this as a ‘dual problematic’ for theorists, requiring that attention be directed towards both ‘what the subject is able to say, and what the subject is permitted to
say’ (Bacchi, 1999, pp. 41, my emphasis). The first part of this problematic, according to Bacchi (2004, p. 143):

emphasizes the power of discourses to ‘construct certain possibilities for thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations. We do not speak the discourse. The discourse speaks us’ (Ball 1990: 18). The second half alerts us to the differential access of people to the institutions which produce discourse.

Discourses, then, are always, inevitably, linked to the exercise of power. Based upon a Foucauldian recognition of the ways in which knowledge transforms power, most notably in the context of the ‘population-focused form of governmentality’ associated with (neo)liberal forms of rule, Bacchi’s analysis thus emphasises ‘the knowledges through which rule takes place’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 26, emphasis in original).

Bacchi’s approach to studying policy encompasses a scope that is considerably broader than that of other, more conventional, perspectives. In focusing, more expansively, on ‘how rule takes place [and] how we are governed’ in a way that incorporates both state and broader influences, Bacchi challenges traditional understandings of society and its governance. By directing attention towards the ‘repercussions for different groups of people’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 25) as well as the crucial role of experts in influencing the ‘shape of governing knowledges’ (p. 26), the ‘conduct of individuals and organisations’ is linked to the ‘objects of politics’ (Miller & Rose 1990, cited in Bacchi, 2009, p. 26). Importantly, Bacchi goes much further than questioning which, and why, issues do or do not make it to the political agenda. Instead she proposes that analysis must also take in the ways in which the ‘construction or representation of those issues limits what is talked about as possible or desirable, or as impossible or undesirable’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). In this perspective then, following Colebatch (2006), the work of making policy ‘encompasses the processes of problematisation, the organisation of expertise and the
devising of technologies of governing’ (Colebatch, 2006, p. 9). Bacchi’s model of policy analysis which she terms the ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ (WPR) approach, thus incorporates examination of:

*discursive effects*, in particular the ‘role of discourses in constraining ways of thinking’; that is, ‘the limits imposed on what can be said or thought’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 40);

*subjectification effects*, in relation to ‘how subjects are constituted in problem representations’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 41). This requiring close attention to ‘how those represented to be “troublesome” are described, and how those so targeted might absorb, or challenge, that message’ (p. 42); and

*lived effects*, that is, the ‘material impact of problem representations on bodies and lives’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 40), this highlighting the significance of ‘non-discursive’ factors.

The *WPR* approach to policy analysis consists of six interconnected questions which, together, encourage a ‘sceptical stance towards claims to “knowledge”, and [aim] to disrupt taken-for-granted “givens”’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 20) as these appear in policy and other documents. Importantly Bacchi warns against engaging with policy as rhetoric, as if issues are intentionally shaped to influence, persuade or mislead (p. xix). Rather her analytical focus is on the ‘deep conceptual premises operating within problem representations’ (p. xix). Hence the *WPR* questioning approach is ‘not intended as a one off exercise’; instead it requires ‘repeated application due to the ways in which problem representations “nest” or are embedded one within the other’ (p. 21). Notwithstanding this, Bacchi acknowledges that the separate and sequential application of each question will not always be necessary. Analysis should instead aim to ‘determine which questions are foregrounded’ (p. 101), this enabling a more integrated, narrative, style. Bacchi’s intention, then, is not that the
WPR approach be ‘applied as a sort of formula’ but, rather, that it be used as a guide to ‘encourage a form of critical thinking’ (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 116). Self-analysis is also central to the WPR approach, this recognising that each of us is ‘immersed in the conceptual logics of our era’. The directive to apply the questions ‘to your own problem representations’ is thus central to Bacchi’s WPR model. As researchers, she argues, we have our own ‘work to do in ensuring that we do not simply buy into certain problem representations without reflecting on their origins, purposes and effects’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19).

Applications

The WPR approach, as envisioned by Bacchi, has broad application across academic, policy and professional realms. All policy, in this view, involves a ‘fixing of meaning’ based on ‘unexamined presuppositions’ (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 116). Nonetheless, perhaps reflecting the relatively recent publication of Bacchi’s key works (for example, Bacchi, 1999), the WPR policy analysis approach has not been widely applied. Examples of scholarly work drawing upon WPR principles do exist however and are highly relevant to this thesis. Here I focus on four scholars whose works well demonstrate the utility of Bacchi’s approach, specifically in relation to analysis of gender and violence in the policy context. Discussed first, Australian academics Suellen Murray and Anastasia Powell use Bacchi’s work to examine both the ‘naming and framing’ of children’s experiences of domestic violence in Australia and New Zealand (A. Powell & Murray, 2008) and the discursive construction of domestic violence in Australian policy documents (Murray & Powell, 2009). Secondly, Jeff Hearn and Linda McKie (2008, 2010) illustrate the strengths of Bacchi’s analytical approach in their critique of the ‘presumptions about gender and violence that frame and inform processes of policy formation and implementation’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010).

Powell and Murray

Powell and Murray (2008) draw on Bacchi’s WPR approach in their enquiry into the “discovery” of children’s experiences of domestic violence...
as a social problem’ (A. Powell & Murray, 2008, p. 455). Specifically, they identify a range of competing discourses which underlie ‘various policy and legal responses’ and influence how the ‘problem’ is represented in ‘different places as well as over time, and with what effects’ (p. 457). Powell and Murray’s work highlights the ways in which the various discourses associated with the law (family law, criminal law, and so on), academia, human rights, feminism, and ‘backlash’ politics, most notably those reliant on particular (gendered) understandings of the family, motherhood and fatherhood, ‘are mobilized in different ways across different policies, and often operate in contradiction’ (p. 460), resulting in ‘contradictory and inadequate responses’ (p. 455). This level of analysis thus enables them to theorise the rendering of children’s experiences as invisible - or visible in only certain ways - in public policy discussions, with ‘very real and sometimes problematic outcomes for children’s and women’s safety (p. 467).

Murray and Powell’s next collaboration involves the use of Bacchi’s WPR approach to investigate the discursive constructions evident in the naming, framing and defining of domestic violence across Australian policy arenas. They justify their decision to focus on policy on the basis that policy documents, ‘in their own right’, are the ‘foremost visible expression of current Australian public policy understandings of domestic violence’ (Murray & Powell, 2009, p. 3). Thus they are especially interested in identifying and exploring the ‘particular understandings drawn on and knowledge produced in the conceptualisation of domestic violence as a policy problem’ (p. 2), as well as that which is ‘left unproblematised and unaddressed’ (p. 4). Of particular interest is their discussion of the different ways of naming and defining domestic violence and the implications in terms of ‘whose experience is named and whose is not’ (p. 6) and how domestic violence is framed as a policy problem. For example, they find that policies using ‘gendered frameworks’ are more likely to be focus on both the ‘wider context of social disadvantage’ and the specific impacts of violence for women and children (p. 8), whereas those taking a ‘strengthening families’, or ‘ungendered’, approach tend to ‘prioritise family
harmony or maintaining family relationships over women’s and children’s rights to safety’ (p. 11). Indeed ‘ongoing contestations over gendered or ungendered problematizations’ emerge as a central theme - and crucial influence – for policy approaches, as Murray and Powell make clear in their concluding statement:

shifts in understandings and responses to domestic violence do not straightforwardly reflect changes in societal values over time but, rather, the ongoing negotiation of contested representations or discourses of domestic violence as a policy problem. How domestic violence is named tells us something about to whom it refers, and its framing suggests the extent to which gendered or other analyses are in play. (Murray & Powell, 2009, p. 17).

Hearn and McKie

Jeff Hearn, a respected scholar in the masculinities field, has in recent years focused his work more specifically on ‘contemporary critical debates on men and their social policy implications’ (Hearn, 2010, p. 182). Of particular relevance, for my purposes, is his collaborative work with Linda McKie which draws upon Bacchi’s approach to ‘identify and critique presumptions about gender and policy’ through reference to the ‘policy problem of “domestic violence”’ (Hearn & McKie, 2008, p. 75). I consider Hearn and McKie’s work at length here as an exemplar of Bacchi’s WPR approach but also due to its significance to my own work and its particular emphasis on the gendered/gendering processes of policy construction with regard to violence. Hearn and McKie’s work, like that of Bacchi, starts from the position that ‘gender constructs policy, as policy constructs gender’ (p. 75). Because policy is ‘constructed by and through assumptions about gender’, they argue that much policy can be ‘understood as policy on and about gender and gender relations’ (Hearn & McKie, 2008, p. 75). The gendered nature of policy is generally not recognised however, as, for example, in the depiction of policy as ‘gender neutral’, or it is taken for granted, for instance, in the equating of gender
with women or ‘with limited aspects of gender relations’ (Hearn & McKie, 2008, p. 78). Here also Hearn and McKie distinguish between ‘agendered’ policies focused exclusively on ‘women as service users and providers’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 137) and emphasising women’s agency and ‘ungendered’ policies which ‘fail to note that most perpetrators [of violence] are men’. Thus whilst policy often appears to be ungendered, it is in fact agendered ‘in so far as the focus is mostly on women’. As a consequence of this ‘averted gaze’ to gender, policy attention is directed towards the effects of violence, that is, on women and children as victims of violence, and thus fails to critically engage with ‘gender, patriarchy and men’s practices’ (p. 137).

Hearn and McKie cover a lot of ground in their analysis of domestic violence policies. Here I draw attention to six key points regarding their use of Bacchi’s WPR approach that I consider particularly significant to my own research. Firstly, Hearn and McKie emphasise the importance of the definitions and terminology used to describe violence in establishing the parameters for ‘what may, or may not, be considered or highlighted in policy work’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 138). This recognises that definitions of violence may reflect ‘several, sometimes overlapping standpoints: the violated, the violator, those dealing with violence and those who analyse violence’ (Hearn & McKie, 2008, p. 76). Shifts in the use and influence of different definitions thus reflect ‘the shifting and contingent nature of power’ (p. 76).

Secondly, Hearn and McKie highlight the ways in which ‘demarcation of the private and the public in perspectives and policies’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 140) enable ‘barriers and silences’ (p. 152), thereby closing off opportunities to challenge and critically engage with issues of gendered and social hierarchies.

Thirdly, Hearn and McKie emphasise the importance of embracing an approach that seeks to ‘broaden the interconnections between gender and violence’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 139). Specifically they argue that the
‘gendering’ of men and men’s violence should be an ‘explicit part of the policy process’ (p. 141). That is, so long as gender and violence continue to be predominantly linked with women as victims and women as activists/campaigners, violence is likely to remain a ‘women’s (only) issue’ (p. 142). Closely connected is Hearn and McKie’s observation that a gap exists between critical studies of men and masculinities and policy work, with the result that men’s use of, or complicity with, violence tends to be under-analysed in ‘most policy processes and debates’ (p. 141). This links with the tendency of the criminal justice system to focus on ‘perpetrators’ - as in the ‘stereotyped notion of the brutish perpetrator as an atypical man with substance abuse or chronic behavioural problems’ (Hearn & McKie, 2008, p. 78) - rather than engage critically with ‘violence and men’s practices more generally’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 141).

Finally, Hearn and McKie (2008, 2010) draw attention to the national, international and supranational contexts for problem representations and associated policies. In particular, they distinguish between concepts of gender neutrality and gender equality in terms of their relative influence on governing practices. Gender neutrality, associated with neo-liberal rule, emphasises the ideal of equal opportunity or equal treatment. In contrast, a gender equality model focuses more specifically on the regulation of social needs and issues in the public and economic spheres, such as through anti-discrimination legislation. Whilst both approaches are problematic in different ways, each fails to critically engage with issues of gender, gendered hierarchies and men’s practices, thereby enabling a ‘wholly or partially degendered gloss on the very gendered, indeed gendered violent, social realities’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 149). Thus the ‘[c]ontinued adherence to neoliberal notions of gender, gender-neutrality, [and] even gender equality’, according to Hearn and McKie (2008, p. 82), ‘renders certain possibilities problematic’, thereby limiting, in Bacchi’s (1999, p. 41) terms, ‘what the subject is able to say, and what the subject is permitted to say’.
Method: A working plan

There are clear connections between Bacchi’s *WPR* and Scheurich’s *Policy Archaeology* approaches, most notably that both are solidly underpinned by, and interwoven with, the work of Foucault. Each has substantial merit in terms of guiding the analytical process for this thesis and, in my view, are sufficiently compatible to be used together in a way that extends, intensifies and adds depth to my analysis (see, for example, Bacchi, 2009, p. 40). Whilst Bacchi’s ‘six question’ approach to policy analysis does not necessarily ‘line up’, in a straightforward way, with Scheurich’s four ‘arena’ methodology, I do not regard this as an impediment but rather as an opportunity to ‘add value’, facilitating the making of connections, the consolidation of theoretical links, and so on. In this sense, opening my analytical work to the influence of both Bacchi and Scheurich, represents my commitment to an iterative process, of questioning and re-questioning, thinking and re-thinking; in short, of not giving in to the temptation to settle for ‘easy’ answers.

The table below represents a preliminary attempt to conceptualise the fit between these approaches, that is, Bacchi’s ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’, or *WPR*, Questions 1 – 6 and Scheurich’s *Policy Archaeology*, or *PA*, Arenas I – IV, specifically in terms of the lines of enquiry, here termed ‘focus questions’, which these evoke for my policy analysis. I do not claim that this thesis will address, or address satisfactorily, all of these focus questions. Rather I set these out here as key areas of concern: a guide or framework for my analysis.
| WPR 1 What's the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy? | Policy Archaeology (PA) | Focus Questions:  
How is violence defined and understood?  
What is named as ‘violence’?  
What is problematised as ‘violence’?  
Why are some violences named and problematised and not others?  
What violences are emphasised, deemphasised, and/or unacknowledged? |
|---|---|---|
| WPR 2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’? | PA Arena II: Identification of network of social regularities | Focus Questions:  
How are human nature, society, social order, social relations, etc understood and conceptualised?  
What political rationalities, governmentality are in play?  
What regimes of governance are evident?  
How is the individual conceptualised?  
What concepts, categories and keywords are used? How are these used and defined?  
How are concepts such as victim/perpetrator, active/passive, public/private, violence/nonviolence, etc. used and for what purpose/s?  
How are notions of risk, vulnerability and safety understood and applied?  
How is ‘violence’ (or ‘problem violence’) differentiated from ‘non-violence’ (or acceptable violence)?  
How is gender defined and used?  
To what extent is gender addressed or made explicit (notions of gender equality, gender neutrality, etc)?  
How are broader questions of power, difference, privilege and inequality considered and/or addressed?  
How are constructs of gender, ‘race’ and class linked to the ‘problem of violence’ and/or ‘problem group’ and its visibility? |
| WPR 3: How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about? | PA Arena II  
PA Arena III: Study of the social construction of the range of acceptable policy choices | Focus Questions:  
How has violence been explained and theorised?  
How has the ‘violent subject’ been conceptualised?  
How/in what ways are the ‘violent’ (‘abnormal’) subject and ‘non-violent’ (‘normal’) subject differentiated?  
What ‘interventions’ have been proposed and/or institutionalised?  
What disciplinary / professional groups have emerged as influential? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WPR 4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?</th>
<th>PA Arenas: I &amp; III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Focus Questions:**  
What is un/underanalysed in the predominantly used explanations of violence?  
What is left out?  
What complexities are overlooked?  
What violence is overlooked?  
How might attention to these alter the problem representation and proposed solutions?  
How is ‘violence’ divided up and explained within and between different sectors/realms and contexts?  
What is, and is not, conceptualised as an appropriate arena (or target) for government and other intervention? | |
| WPR 5: What effects are produced by this representation of the problem? | PA Arenas: I, II, III, IV |
| **Focus Questions:**  
Who is identified as ‘violent’ and with what effects?  
Who is identified as responsible for violence?  
Who is identified as vulnerable and/or at risk of being victimised?  
Who/what is violence attributed to?  
Who is identified as responsible for addressing or managing violence?  
How does the policy address, or speak to/about, women?  
How does the policy address, or speak to/about, men?  
How/in what ways are conventional understandings of gender (for example, in relation to sex/gender difference, gendered roles and responsibilities, etc) reinforced?  
How/in what ways are conventional understandings of gender (for example, in relation to sex/gender difference, gendered roles and responsibilities, etc) challenged?  
How/in what ways are the dominant social order/ rationality/ies reinforced or challenged?  
To what extent is change (or different social arrangements) presented as possible and/or desirable? | |
| WPR 6: How/where is this representation of the ‘problem’ produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? | PA Arena IV: Study of social functions of policy studies itself |
| **Focus Questions:**  
How have specific theories/theorisations gained influence and dominance?  
Which groups contributed to the policy construction of the problem of ‘violence’ and proposed solutions?  
What alternate explanations/arguments have been produced? | |
Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined methods of policy analysis focusing in particular on the Foucauldian inspired models proposed by James Scheurich and Carol Bacchi. I have argued that the overall focus of this thesis, on the ways in which the social problem of violence/s are made ‘manifest, nameable, and desirable’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 41) is broadly compatible with poststructural approaches to policy analysis, specifically those which treat policy as discourse. An understanding of policy as discursive activity aims to bring the ‘silences in [such] problematisations out into the open’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 50) by directing attention towards the ways in which the construction or representation of social problems ‘limits what is talked about as possible or desirable, or as impossible or undesirable’ (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). In this respect, Bacchi’s (2009) focus on the central role of problematisations in ‘governing processes’ (p. xii), considered together with Scheurich’s (1997) emphasis on the ‘conditions, assumptions, [and] forces which make the emergence of a social problem’ (p. 98) possible, provides an excellent way in which to proceed with the analysis of policy constructions of violence. As analytical frameworks, and in different but closely related ways, both models are (broadly) conducive to this exploration of the discursively constructed relationship/s between gender and violence, and (directly) relevant to analysis of how particular understandings of ‘violence’ – and not others - have become dominant and authoritative.

In the next chapter I ‘set the scene’ for the in-depth policy analyses which follow in Chapters 6 – 8 by providing an account of the policy framework as it relates, broadly, to responses to violence in Australia. To this end, Chapter 5 includes, both, a discussion of the Australian policy process and structure as well as an overview of a broad range of violence-related policies, programs and projects which may be considered indicative of those which exist across the country.
CHAPTER 5: SETTING THE SCENE - AUSTRALIAN POLICY RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the Australian policy framework as it relates, broadly, to violence responses, interventions and prevention. I have structured this chapter in two parts. In the first part I consider the policy structure in Australia and, as an illustration of the political-policy process, discuss the establishment and outcomes of the Australian National Committee of Violence (1987/88). In the second part I present an overview of the current range of Australian policies, programs and projects in which the stated aim is to address violence in some way. In presenting this overview of the policy field I also consider some other materials which provide important context for understanding policy responses in Australia, these including documentation regarding parliamentary committees and inquiries as well as other programs, campaigns and so on.

The term ‘social policy’ describes the range of ‘systematic public interventions relating to social needs and problems’ (Fawcett, Goodwin, Meagher, & Phillips, 2010, p. 7). The boundaries between the realms of what constitutes ‘social’, ‘economic’, and ‘public’ policy, however, are considerably more ambiguous than this definition might suggest. As shown in Chapter 4, a wide range of perspectives on social policy exist; the ‘social policy tradition’, as described by Barns, Dudley, Harris and Petersen (1999), consists of both ‘more orthodox and critical’ approaches and encompasses a broad interest in the ‘social, economic and political conditions in which policy arises’ (p. 6). Poststructural analyses of social policy are less common leading Barns and his colleagues to conclude that the implications of poststructuralism ‘for our understandings of social policy and its impacts have been relatively unexplored’ (p. 1). Similarly, much of the mainstream literature on policy-making has failed to ‘fundamentally question the use of the fixed set of categories of “men” and
“women”, whilst also excluding ‘issues of gender identities and expression’ (Lombardo, et al., 2011, p. 13). This dissertation represents an attempt to ‘address this lacuna’ (Barns, et al., 1999, p. 1).

In this chapter I draw predominantly on Jamrozik and Nocella’s (1998) and Jamrozik’s (2009) work which, in Barns et al.’s (1999) terms, might be considered a critical, rather than poststructural, perspective on social policy. I nonetheless consider the relatively straightforward nature of this work, given its contemporary Australian focus, to be adequate for the purpose of this chapter and a useful basis for the poststructural policy analyses that follow in Chapters 6 - 8. I further acknowledge that the ‘process’ of policy-making, if indeed such a process exists, is considerably more complex than that reflected in the neat diagrammatic version presented here. In this respect I include my interpretation of Jamrozik and Nocella’s framework as an orientating device to the Australian policy context and, in particular, as a way of illustrating the broad fit between this thesis and the preliminary study discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, for the purpose of this specific exercise in the mapping of Australian policy responses, I am resigned to working with a largely unproblematised notion of ‘violence’ as it appears in various policy and other documents. I nonetheless do so consciously and strategically; as a means to the end of finding my bearings within the Australian policy landscape.

1. The Australian policy framework

Jamrozik and Nocella’s (1998) conceptual framework of the policy process, its institutional framework and ‘spheres of activity’, whilst somewhat misleading in its representation of this process as primarily ‘top-down’ (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 68), provides a useful starting point for conceptualising the focus of my analysis. As depicted below in Figure 1, Jamrozik and Nocella distinguish between the policy planning and formulation (political), policy interpretation (administrative), and policy application (operational) spheres.
According to Jamrozik (2009, p. 66) it is at the political level of policy formulation that ‘values, philosophies, theories, political platforms and group interests are translated into legislation or specific programs’. Thus this represents a political or moral perspective which is concerned primarily with how things ‘should’ be (p. 70). Policy is interpreted at the administrative level and it is here that problems or issues are ‘converted into a series of tasks organised through a division of labour’ (p. 66); that is, the nature of the issue is converted ‘from political to technical’ (p. 68). Crucially then, it is this reduction of complex, contested issues, by ‘making them instead the focus of technical judgements about the efficiency or efficacy of different solutions’ (Newman & Clarke, 2009, p. 27) - in short, taking the politics out of policy - that is my primary concern here. At the service, or operational, level, issues are further converted into ‘professional problems’, this involving a process in which problems are “fitted into” the particular theor[ies] and method[s] of service delivery that
[are] dominant in those professions at a given time’ (p. 68). This can be further represented, diagrammatically, as:

Figure 2: Problem Conversion

(Jamrozik & Nocella 1998)

It is nonetheless important to resist the tendency to assume that policymaking takes a ‘rational form’ (I. Jones & Newburn, 2006, p. 18) as might be suggested by linear depictions such as this. Rather, policymaking is, in practice, ‘often the result of unintended consequences, serendipity and chance’. Moreover policy-making, as emphasised by Fawcett, Goodwin, Meagher and Phillips (2010), is ‘extremely contested and ambiguous’ (p. 24), involving ‘contests over meaning as well as over authority and resources’ (p. 25). In this sense, Hancock’s (2006, cited in Fawcett, et al., 2010, p. 24) reference to the ‘messy argy-bargy of the lived experience of policy work’ provides a useful counter to the idea that policy and sequential problem-solving can be equated in a simple or straightforward manner.

Jamrozik and Nocella’s (1998) ‘conversion process’ further highlights the re-working of social issues into problems of individual or group pathology (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 68). In this way, problems are removed from the political sphere and reframed as the personal problems of an ‘affected population’. Put simply then, whilst in my preliminary study I focused on the operational, or professional, sphere of activity in relation to the professionally defined problem of violence, in this thesis I shift my attention to the political sphere; to the ‘making’ of violence as a policy issue. It is important to recognise, however, that the spheres of activity and their respective actors, whilst presented as separate and contained, are inter-related; they are ‘distinct but not necessarily discrete’ (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 66) in that those actors in the operational sphere, for example,
may also be involved in the political sphere, whether as individuals or collectively, via activities such as lobbying, activism, and so on. Here, a poststructural perspective also draws attention to the myriad of ways in which power circulates ‘around and beyond the official institutions of the central state’ (Barns, et al., 1999, p. 10).

The tendency for professional workers to be presented as ‘separate from and independent of’ (A. Jones & May, 1992, p. 21) the political - and policy – context is also problematic. Whilst it is clear that public policies fundamentally influence ‘institutional arrangements’ and the nature of the work undertaken, or in Jamrozik and Nocella’s (1998) terms, the administrative and operational spheres of activity, it is equally clear that policy should not be seen as ‘something remote, inaccessible, and divorced from the world of practice’ (A. Jones & May, 1992, p. 22). It is thus misleading – and ultimately counterproductive – to assume that a sharp dichotomy exists between policy, as the exclusive territory of government, senior public servants and so on, and practice, as what workers ‘do’. Rather, ‘practice is policy, and policy is, in considerable part, what practitioners do and fail to do’ (p. 23). Newman and Clarke’s (2009) notion of ‘policy as translation’ is useful here in highlighting the ‘active work of construction’ (p. 22) that runs throughout the policy making to implementation process. That is, ‘[e]ven where changes are experienced as imposed “from above”, actors [including service providers, practitioners, and so on] have to find ways of translating them that are more or less congruent with “local” contexts’ (p. 22). Policy frameworks may provide the parameters for practice but ‘practitioners are constantly making decisions’ in this regard, via the ‘interpretative acts of deciphering, defining and applying social policies to fit specific circumstances’ (Fawcett, et al., 2010, pp. 4-5). Practitioners may also contribute to policy development through ‘data collection and record keeping’ as well as by ‘feeding information “up” through the organisation’ (p. 6). It is in this sense that practitioners may, wittingly or otherwise, play a critical role in drawing attention to – or, more crucially, establishing or denying - ‘the political status of any given need’ (Fraser, 1989, cited in Fawcett, et al., 2010, p. 26). Thus the failure to
name, problematise and challenge violence, in this perspective, contributes to its depoliticisation.

Responding to violence in Australia: Lessons from the National Committee on Violence

Australia currently lacks a coordinated national approach in relation to the prevention of, and responses to, violence. In recent history, the National Committee on Violence (NCV), established in 1987 by joint agreement between then Prime Minister Bob Hawke and the state and territory heads of government, is an example of an encompassing approach to violence in Australia. The Committee was initiated in the context of national debate regarding gun control prompted by two random shooting incidents in Melbourne earlier that same year and, more generally, a ‘climate of profound anxiety about the state of violence in our community’ (National Committee on Violence, 1990, p. L). In this respect, the shootings were seen as representing the ‘extreme manifestation of a growing level of alarm both in government and in the community generally’ (p. L).

The brief of the National Committee on Violence (NCV) was to ‘investigate violence from a wider perspective’, this including an examination of the ‘level of violence in Australia’ and a review of existing ‘explanations for violent behaviour’ in order to ‘make recommendations for the control and prevention of violence’ (Chappell, 1992, p. 156). Interpersonal violence was deemed its primary focus on the grounds that ‘collective violence and political violence are exceedingly rare in Australia’ (National Committee on Violence, 1990, p. 5). Committee members included a range of ‘noted authorities’ who were appointed by the Federal Government in recognition of their ‘expertise’ and ‘pre-eminence’ in related fields. The NCV secretariat was situated within the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in recognition of its status as the ‘centre for cooperation between jurisdictions in the area of criminological and criminal justice research’ (Chappell, 1992, p. 156). The decision to position the Committee in this way was especially significant, both reflecting the dominant focus on criminal violence (or violence as crime) and shaping the overall direction of
their investigations. Although a wide range of issues were canvassed over the course of the inquiry, the Committee’s principal focus was on the ‘causes’ of individual acts of (criminal) violence. Interestingly, while acknowledging the ‘many and varied’ contributors to violence, including ‘biological predisposition; chemical facilitation’, ‘personality factors; social-psychological explanations’ and ‘cultural factors’, the Committee stated clearly its view that the ‘experiences of childhood and the influence of the family are paramount in determining’ individual violence (National Committee on Violence, 1990, p. Liv). Further, whilst emphasising the connection between violence prevention and ‘political will’, the Committee nonetheless maintained an overriding concern with the willingness of ‘all Australians’ to ‘change their attitudes’ and condemn violence (p. Lv).

At the end of its relatively short, fifteen month, lifespan, the Committee released its final report Violence: Directions for Australia in which it set out three ‘major objectives’ and 138 recommendations. Key recommendations, some indicating a move away from an exclusive focus on criminal violence, included: the ‘adoption of a national strategy for the promotion of non-violence attitudes; the reduction of factors which aggravate the risk and extent of violence; [and] an improvement in the availability of accurate information about the extent and nature of violence […] as a] basis for decision-making’ (National Committee on Violence, 1990, p. 118). Unsurprisingly, not all of the recommendations were accepted by the Commonwealth government and, of those accepted, not all were implemented by the respective state and territory governments. Notwithstanding the status of the NCV recommendations as a ‘benchmark’ for measurement of government policies and programs, it has since been observed that a number of the changes made in response to the Committee’s report ‘almost certainly reflect the emergence of new priorities […] including several changes of government’ (AIC, 1994b, p. 1).

At the Commonwealth level, two of the ‘major’ post-NCV initiatives included a national child abuse campaign and the establishment of a Violence Monitoring Unit, located within the AIC, with responsibility for
information dissemination and training development (AIC, 1994b). The Violence Monitoring Unit was subsequently expanded and, in 1991, renamed the Violence Prevention Unit (VPU), in order to ‘provide greater capacity to serve state and territory governments with information, assistance with project development and other activities directed towards the prevention of criminal violence’ (AIC, 1992, pp. 25-26). The VPU’s upgraded role including the development of ‘an Australia-wide data base on projects and programs dealing with violence’ (p. xii) and administrative responsibility for ‘a prestigious new award’, namely the ‘Australian Heads of Government Violence Prevention Award’ (p. 26). A Clearinghouse on violence against women was later established in response to the National Committee on Violence against Women (NCVAW) initiated in 1991, this also located within the VPU at the AIC.

Around the same time the VPU was, again, expanded and renamed the ‘Crime and Violence Prevention Unit’ (AIC, 1993, p. 2). By the following year, however, the AIC was under review and, according to their Annual Report (AIC, 1994a), the work of the Crime and Violence Prevention Unit (CVPU) had been substantially limited by ‘resignations, the Institute’s inability to recruit staff during the period of reviews of its activities and the restructuring of the Institute’ (p. 26). By the end of 1994, as a result of this review and on the basis of the claim that the AIC needed ‘to ensure a better identity of purpose’ and integration of its ‘currently discrete functions’ (Tanzer, 1994, p. 21), the CVPU has ceased to exist as a separate and distinct unit. The projects associated with the CVPU were subsequently ‘integrated’ and reorganised into three core research program areas: crime analysis and policy; crime and violence control and prevention; and deaths in custody (p. 21). Sixteen years later, according to the AIC website, this has expanded to six research/program areas: Geospatial Analysis Program; Crime Reduction and Review Program; Global, Economic and Electronic Crime Program; Crime and Populations Program; Violence and other Serious Crime Monitoring; Modelling and Forecasting Program.
This brief overview of the activities and aftermath of Australia’s National Committee on Violence is fascinating in its illustration of the evolution of a problem from ‘political’ to ‘technical’. Specifically, this constitutes a movement from a ‘wider perspective’ on violence, as originally envisaged by the, then, Heads of Government; to the NCV’s recognition of the complexity of violence, with its ‘many diverse characteristics and causes, involving all levels and all aspects of Australian society’ (AIC, 1994b, p. xi); through to the distinctly narrow focus on criminal violence as evident in its containment within the category ‘violence and other serious crime’, as both the ‘property’ of the specialist CVPU and, later, as one of many ‘crime types’ to be ‘monitored’. Notably, the Clearinghouse on violence against women, now called the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, has since been moved to the Centre for Gender-Related Violence at the University of New South Wales and is funded under the Women’s Safety Agenda through the Commonwealth Office for Women, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). Similarly, the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, considered by Graycar and Mouzos (2002, p. 1) to be one of the ‘most successful’ outcomes of the NCV, was moved from the AIC to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, also funded by FaHCSIA, at around the same time.

What started as a wide-ranging and comprehensive survey of violence in Australia spanning social, economic, environmental, and psychological considerations, community education and awareness, the need for cultural change, and so on, has ultimately been reduced to the technical – contained and manageable - problem of monitoring, measuring and controlling criminal violence. In the process, violence against women has been, in effect, redefined as ‘gendered violence’, or as a ‘gender issue’, and violence against children as a ‘family issue’, both having been removed from the realm of ‘violence and other serious crime’. Comparably, the National Inquiry into Racist Violence which was initiated by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in August 1989, can be seen as having functioned in a similar way to separate and
displace (so-called) ‘racist violence’, positioning it as an issue of ‘racial hatred and hostility’ (HREOC, 1991, p. 15), rather than a matter of broader national concern.

Policy-making and research

The events surrounding the National Committee on Violence are interesting also in their illustration of the range of influences on policy and, in particular, the relationship between social science, research and policy-making processes. As observed by Jamrozik (2009) research, especially ‘policy-relevant research’ and social analysis, plays a significant role in policy, not least because researchers, in their identification and interpretation of relevant issues, contribute to the authoritative defining of social reality (p. 52). Speaking ten years on from the release of the Committee’s final report for instance, Graycar and Mouzos (2002, p. 1) link the ‘availability of timely information’ to the development and implementation of public policy. Reflecting a largely uncritical stance regarding the self-evident value of research, they nominate the growth of the ‘knowledge base in the crime and justice area’ as one of the Committee’s most significant achievements, this providing policy-makers with a basis from which to ‘make informed choices’ (p. 9).

The ‘researcher-sponsor relationship’ (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 55) is especially critical, as evident in the NCV process, given that such research can serve to ‘validate government policies’, both existing policies and those under development. The ability to exercise influence, if not control, over the research agenda, output and its dissemination (p. 53) is therefore important for governments. This can be seen in the appointment of certain ‘politically reliable’ (p. 53) people to the NCV as well as the decision to locate it within the AIC, a Commonwealth statutory authority reporting to the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice. Research, then, can function to ‘demonstrate government concern about an issue which a body of public opinion expect[s] the government to address’ but which, due to its complexity and the potential for opposition from ‘powerful organisations or individuals’, is ‘risky to tackle’ (p. 55). Further, and more critically, research
conducted both at the time of and since the NCV, via schemes such as the Homicide Monitoring Program, has enabled the conversion of complex political issues into technical problems. The ‘problem of violence’, therefore, has been ‘taken as given’, as one requiring ‘containment and control’ (pp. 71-72). Thus such research, perhaps inadvertently, acts as a ‘political palliative’, functioning symbolically to demonstrate the efforts made to deal with the ‘intractable problem’ (p. 72) of violence.

2. Mapping the current policy landscape

Violence in Australia has not since been the subject of such wide-scale and nationally focused political interest. Various themes can be identified, in the current policy environment such as those in relation to violence in Indigenous communities, violence against women and children, youth violence and bullying, and alcohol-related violence. Overall, however, the focus has been on the particular contexts or circumstances within which violence occurs, rather than on violence in and of itself. Violence is, therefore, depicted as a manifestation of the problems presented by particular groups of people, in particular areas (rural/urban), from whom other groups need to be protected; as indicative of (public) disorder; as interfering with the workings of the ‘night-time economy’; and so on. Whether this represents a greater – or more sophisticated - understanding of violence(s) or, rather, as I suspect, an increasing shift towards the obscuration of violence through its absorption into multiplying categories is, of course, debatable.

The most notable feature of the Australian policy landscape is the lack of a coordinated and overarching approach to violence prevention. Responses to violence are not recognised as the responsibility of any one Minister or portfolio and, complicated by Australia’s federal structure, there is little discernable ‘logic’ regarding the responsible sectors/bodies in each state and territory. Thus, as has been observed by Junger and colleagues (2007), it is ‘not possible to speak with any authority about “Australian violence prevention policies’” (p. 330). Australia is not alone in this regard.
In their 2007 review of violence prevention policies in Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Junger et al found a 'surprisingly similar' (p. 327) trend across these seven countries: of 'organisational problems' related to the lack of a 'coordinated policy' approach and strong media interest in violence, the latter associated with 'management by crisis with the result that policies are not based on evidence, but instead seek to appease public outrage' (p. 328). Whilst in Australia the situation is 'highly variable, changes frequently, and is rather difficult to summarize', Junger et al observe that, in general, 'ideology, fiscal realities, and political priorities' (p. 330) remain dominant influences on policy at both the state/territory and federal levels. The current validity of these observations is well illustrated in the various policies, programs and projects discussed next.

**Australian violence initiatives: An overview**

In this section I provide an overview of violence-related policy and program initiatives across Australia. Information for this review was gathered via a range of means including general website searches using keywords such as 'violence', 'violence + policy', 'violence + Australian government', etc; and scrutinisation of the corporate profile, including areas of responsibility, mission statement, organisational structure, etc, and documents such as guidelines and internal policies, of specific state/territory and federal government departments. Policy/program areas included those that specify violence as either their primary focus or as one of a range of issues depicted as inter-linked. This encompasses those that may be broadly conceptualised as preventive as well as those that are reactive, that is, concerned with those actions 'pre-defined' as violent, most commonly in the context of legally defined 'violent crime'. My primary focus here, however, is on preventive policies in that: 1) reactive responses are, to a large extent, determined by legislation rather than policy and, hence, relate mainly to criminal acts, as defined in/by law; and 2) all responses to violence, even those that constitute a reaction to 'non-compliant social conduct' (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 279), may be considered
preventive in the sense that they are directed towards the prevention of future, or further, violence

Newman and Clarke’s (2009, p. 20) describe ‘the social as an unruly and demanding field of forces that is subject to diverse and contested efforts to map it, discipline it, regulate it, and develop it’. Distinctions between ‘types’ of behaviours, problems and so on, as evident here, can in this perspective be seen as key ‘governmental distinctions’ associated with the shaping of ‘social identities and relationships’ (p. 11). In emphasising the sites and practices through which ‘publics and publicness’ (p. 10) are made and remade, Newman and Clarke (2009, p. 10) further highlight the significant role played by specific policy interventions. Meanings of ‘public’ and ‘private’ are, in this sense, both descriptive and normative in the ways that they ‘help to shape social identities and relationships’ (p. 11). Through its policies and practices, the state is able to ‘inscribe the appropriate boundary between public and personal responsibilities’ and, in doing so, position itself ‘as both the repository and guarantor of public values [...] and as the defender of a collective conception of public interest’ (p. 14).

In Australia, government concern for public values is particularly evident in the attention paid to alcohol-related violence, most significantly in the context of ‘public disorder’ occurring in and around licensed venues (see, for example, K. Graham & Homel, 2008; A. Morgan & McAtamney, 2009). Here the policy emphasis is mainly on policing and control of the ‘drinking environment’ through, for example, regulatory measures in relation to closing hours, licensing conditions, and so on. Significant also is the related emphasis on ‘confrontational violence’ associated with ‘night-time leisure’ in the context of the ‘night-time economy’ (see, for example, Tomsen, 2010).

Violence in Indigenous communities has similarly been approached from a primarily policing/control perspective, as demonstrated most dramatically in the federal government’s 2007 Northern Territory Emergency
Response. A range of programs, services, and supports have been introduced within the health, correctional and justice settings under the banner of the Emergency Response. In these, Indigenous men have been positioned as the perpetrators of violence and Indigenous children as the victims of violence. In this context, Indigenous women tend to have been constructed as either/both victims of violence and/or as failing to adequately protect their children from (Indigenous) men's violence. Overall, 'Indigenous violence' remains an enduring focus of Australian political and media attention, especially within the context of concern over (dis)order and 'antisocial' behaviour in public spaces.

Youth violence moves up and down the political agenda and, similarly, is strongly linked to concerns regarding 'antisocial behaviour' and public (dis)order (see, A. Morgan & McAtamney, 2009; and J. Williams, Toumbourou, Williamson, Hemphill, & Patton, 2009). Recently it has been the subject of greater attention, ostensibly in response to an escalation of youth violence in Australia (p. vii), and the focus of a Parliamentary Inquiry Avoid the harm – Stay calm (House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth) into the impact of violence on young Australians. Interestingly, whilst the Inquiry stated as its primary concern the effects of violence upon young people, the final report, released in July 2010, reflects a clear focus on reducing violence. For instance, notwithstanding its terms of reference, the Committee nominated the question 'what needs to be done to curb youth violence?' (p. vii) as its 'fundamental' concern. Accordingly, its recommendations include the development of a 'national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy' and strengthening of police-community relationships (p. xiv).

Finally, anti-homosexual, or homophobic, violence, has attracted some academic interest (see, Mason, 2002b; Tomsen, 2006; Tomsen, 2009)

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4 See Lattas and Morris's (2010) critique of the federal government's emergency 'intervention' as indicative of the 'incorporation of “culture” into neoliberal forms of racial governance', thereby depoliticising 'racial power by reframing it as part of the state's sovereign obligation to deliver care and biosecurity' (p. 61).
but, to date, there is little indication that this has been taken up as a significant policy issue.

Findings

Insofar as it is possible to draw conclusions on the basis of this review, it is fair to say that Australia lacks a uniform focus, policy or policy framework in relation to preventing and/or responding to violence, nor is there any discernable ‘logic’ regarding the assignment of responsibility for this to departments and sectors within and across Australia. In this, my findings are consistent with those of Junger et al. (2007). Nonetheless, the review presented here is certainly not exhaustive nor is it intended to be definitive. Rather it is included as a guide, perhaps better described as a ‘mud-map’, to the policy framework as it relates to violence in Australia. Here I am especially interested in making some critical, though general, observations, keeping with my ‘mud-map’ analogy, in order to ‘signpost’ significant features, pot-holes, speed humps, no-through-roads and so on. As such, this section represents an important orientation to the in-depth policy analyses contained in Chapters 6 – 8. To facilitate discussion I have grouped these observations under five headings: ‘Violence = domestic’; ‘Domestic violence: Victims and perpetrators’; ‘Violent offenders: Correcting criminal violence’; ‘Editing men out of violence’; and ‘The absence of gender and gender(ed) analysis’. I emphasise, however, that these groupings are somewhat artificial in that they clearly overlap and interrelate; they are for convenience rather than theoretical validity.

1. Violence = ‘domestic’

The most striking aspect of my review of Australian policy and programs is that, in the vast majority of cases, references to violence and/or violence prevention ‘mean’ family violence (FV) and/or domestic violence (DV). This is not generally made explicit in the title and it is often necessary to read some way into the body or detail of the content before this becomes clear. Hence, most of the materials that I looked at, though categorised or titled as ‘violence’, were specifically concerned with (men’s) violence against women and children. For example, a search using the term
‘violence’ on the N.S.W. Government website gives ten results, each relating specifically to ‘domestic violence’, four of which directly address women as victims (e.g. as services for women). Similarly in a search of the A.C.T. Government Directory the key word ‘violence’ returns only one result: a link to the website ‘Women ACT’ which is described as an ‘online information service for women and girls’. Other noteworthy examples include:

- As the ‘state-wide specialised training, consultancy and resource development [body] for N.S.W. Health and interagency workers’. the principal focus of the Education Centre Against Violence (N.S.W.) is ‘interpersonal’ violence. The training and resources referred to on its website, however, relate almost exclusively to sexual assault, domestic violence, ‘Aboriginal family violence’, and child protection.

- The N.S.W. Police’s ‘strategic vision for crime prevention in NSW’ includes the goals of ‘Reducing Violence’ and ‘Dealing with offending’ but refers only to DV, with a sole focus on ‘victims and their families’. Further, domestic and family violence – but no other violences – are included in the twenty-three ‘community issues’ listed on the N.S.W. Police website.

- In the ‘Keeping people safe’ section of the N.S.W. State Plan 2010 (NSW Government, 2010) nine objectives are listed in relation to the priority ‘Reduce rates of crime and anti-social behaviour’; three of these relate to DV and there is otherwise no specific reference to violence.

- The Queensland Council of Social Service (Queensland Council of Social Service, 2009) opens its Policy Position paper on violence prevention with the statement: ‘All forms of violence are a violation of human rights’. Within a sentence, however, ‘violence’ has become DV/FV, this being the focus of the rest of the paper.
- The S.A. government website is organised via a series of section headings, one of which concerns ‘Safety at home and in the community’. Of the ten topics/links listed here, two relate to domestic violence and child protection but no reference is made to other forms of violence.

Supporting Newman and Clarke’s (2009) point regarding the state’s role in the making of ‘publics and publicness’, a tendency to separate ‘public’ and ‘private’ violences was also apparent here. This is well illustrated in the N.S.W. Government’s 2008 Crime Prevention Framework which, according to the explanatory statement provided, is concerned only with ‘non-DV related crime’ because DV is a ‘shameful crime’ that requires a ‘separate, specific strategy’ in order to ensure the ‘safety of NSW families’ via the ‘full focus of dedicated interventions’. Western Australia’s *Preventing Violence: The State Community Violence Prevention Strategy 2005*, in its focus on ‘community violence’, appears at first glance to have taken an unusually inclusive approach by encompassing a range of violences including, but not limited to, DV/FV. However, in defining community violence as ‘violence between people or groups who may or may not be known to each other (strangers or acquaintances), which occurs generally (but not always) in a public place’ (W.A. Office of Crime Prevention, 2005, p. 8), it can be seen that the actual focus of the Strategy is on public displays of crime and disorder. This is further evident in the Strategy’s statement that it intends to target ‘high prevalence, lower impact’ violent incidents such as those occurring in licensed premises, on public transport, ‘parks, shopping areas and the street’, ‘between gangs and groups of people’, ‘on the road’ (‘road-rage’), and ‘targeted at staff of service agencies, schools and hospitals’ (p. 8). A subsequent ‘spin-off’ report, *Community violence among young people* (TNS Social Research, 2007), commissioned by the W.A. Office of Crime Prevention and the Injury Control Council of W.A., further demonstrates the prioritisation of public violence.
The ‘GLOVE Project’ (Gender, Local Governance, and Violence Prevention in Private and Public Space), a partnership between the University of Melbourne and VicHealth, initially appears more promising. The stated aim of the project, according to its website, is to explore the ‘continuing divide in research and public policy between violence intervention in the public and private realms’. It promises to contribute to the development of local government policy by taking an ‘integrated approach to violence prevention’, underpinned by an acknowledgement of ‘gender differences in the experience of violence’. Upon further investigation, however, the website content and downloadable materials relates specifically to domestic/family violence. Indeed, in the GLOVE Project’s final report it is stated that:

[the] project has shifted from an emphasis on integrated violence prevention to family violence prevention, partly because of the priorities and funding streams of the local government-community partnerships, and partly because the state and national policies have shifted from a commitment to integrated violence prevention to violence against women prevention’ (Whitzman, 2009, p. 28).

No further explanation is provided, nor is any reference made to the Project’s stated focus on the ‘divide between violence intervention in the public and private realms’, despite indication that the project aims have been met. The production of four fact sheets, available on the website, is noted as one of the key outcomes of the project. Each of these refers, in their titles and description, to violence and its prevention but, in content, relate only to DV/FV.

Overall, then, I found very few references to violence other than DV/FV; I have provided only a small selection of examples here. Interestingly, this directly counters arguments, such as that advanced by Murray (2005, p. 31), that violence against women within the Australian context of ‘ungendered law and order discourse, [...] gets subsumed in wider
concerns about violence in society'. Looking further afield, whilst the social work and psychology disciplines might both be considered 'key players' – as service providers - in relation to interpersonal violence intervention, neither of their professional bodies, namely the Australian Psychological Society (APS) and the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), specifically address or name violence on their websites. The AASW does have a ‘Domestic and Family Violence Position Paper’ (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2009), however, with the possible exception of oblique references to anger and ‘conflict management’, violence is not mentioned in the numerous background/issues papers, positions statements, and so on that constitute the APS and AASW professional/practice frameworks.

2. ‘Domestic’ violence: Victims and perpetrators

As indicated, this review indicates that domestic and family violence continues to attract the bulk of the attention in relation to current policy, funding, and other responses to violence in Australia. Crucially, whilst there is some indication of movement in this regard, much of this concern is directed at victims of domestic violence, their need for protection, support, services and so on. Within this context, ‘victims of violence’ invariably mean ‘women’. Whilst this association of women (and children) and victimhood is not universal, it is implicit in much policy and related literature and very much explicit in the prominence of key words/phrases such as ‘women’s safety’ and the ‘safety of women and children’. In this sense, the focus on domestic/family violence may be seen as linked with broader concerns about families, family breakdown, and social order (see Murray, 2005).

A growing emphasis on individual responsibility and choice, primarily in relation to ‘perpetrators’ of domestic violence, is also strongly evident. Indicative of this trend is the Queensland Department of Communities’ declaration that ‘using abuse and violence in your relationship is a choice. You can choose to identify the abusive behaviours and to stop this type of behaviour’. The term ‘perpetrator accountability’ also appears frequently in

Curiously though, despite frequent references to ‘accountability’ and the need for ‘perpetrators’ of DV to ‘take responsibility’, it is difficult to find relevant community-based programs and services. Whilst such programs certainly exist, the lack of a clear ‘logic’ in terms of the roles and responsibilities of government and non-government agencies across Australia means that it is hard to know who to contact and where to start. In contrast, services for women and children are numerous, exist across a range of government and non-government sectors including health, housing, welfare, crisis services, child protection and so on, and are generally clearly labelled (for example, as ‘services for women’ or, simply, ‘DV’), accessible and easy to find. Many of these same agencies, however, either overlook ‘perpetrators’ altogether or explicitly disavow any responsibility. N.S.W. Health, for example, provides a range of services for victims of DV but, in its ‘Policy and Procedures for identifying and responding to DV’, states unequivocally that its role is not to provide direct treatment to an individual for the perpetration of violence’ (NSW Department of Health, 2003, p. 21). ‘Public sector health agencies’, according to N.S.W. Health, ‘do not provide therapy for people who are violent towards their partners’ (p. 25).

3. Violent offenders: ‘Correcting’ criminal violence

The correctional system is one of the few contexts in which violence programs/interventions exist that are not linked, either implicitly or explicitly, to domestic/family violence. Even in this context, however, the tendency is for these to be positioned as ‘specialist’ services with each state/territory department having an ‘intensive’ program which is able to accommodate only a relatively small number of ‘violent offenders’.
programs in relation to which information is publically available are invariably based on psychological principles, with a strong actuarial focus and clear emphasis on individual responsibility, cognition and decision-making. For example:

- Queensland’s Department of Corrective Services offers an ‘High Intensity Violent Offending Program’ consisting of two components, ‘Cognitive Self Change’ and ‘Making Choices’ which aim to enable its participants to take ‘direct control of thoughts, feelings and beliefs, including the general rules or principles they have chosen to live by’.

- The ‘Violent Offenders Therapeutic Program’, run by the N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services, is a ‘high intensity, residential [i.e. prison-based] program for medium-high to high risk offenders, delivered by specialist psychologists’ (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2005, p. 2). A ‘violent offender maintenance program’ is also available in the community correctional setting. ‘Violent Offender Treatment’, encompassing a focus on ‘distorted thinking, anger management, victim empathy, behaviour management skills, and relapse prevention’, is also provided by a private, presumably for-profit, organisation called the ‘Clinical & Forensic Psychology Service’.

- The Department of Correctional Services in South Australia provides ‘group-based, cognitive-behavioural programs for moderate to high-risk sexual, violent and indigenous offenders’\(^\text{5}\) (SA Department for Correctional Services, 2010, p. 13), through its Rehabilitation Programs Branch. Staffed predominantly by psychologists, these programs aim to ‘increase offenders’ capacity for self-management and positive living by promoting positive

\(^{5}\) No rationale is provided for the grouping together of ‘sexual’ and ‘violent’ offenders with Indigenous offenders. It is difficult, however, to overlook the implication here that ‘Indigenous offenders’ and ‘violent offenders’ are, somehow, interchangeable.
relationship skills, managing negative emotions or unhelpful thinking patterns, and increasing awareness of the impact of offending’ (p. 13).

- In Western Australia, the Department of Corrective Service’s ‘Violent Offending Treatment Program’ (VOTP) has a focus on skill acquisition including ‘communication, conflict management, planning and consequential thinking’, whilst also paying attention to ‘external factors’ such as peer pressure, drugs and access to weapons (Hall, 2000: WA Department of Corrective Services, 2009).

Of the correctional violence programs examined, all have been developed, and are usually delivered, by psychologists. Each positions the ‘violent offender’ as a rational, autonomous agent, as evident in the focus on choice, ‘self management’, and ‘positive living’ in the program descriptions. Further, in each of the programs a direct link is drawn between violence and anger, aligning violence with conflict and, thus, emphasising the need to develop skills in communication, emotion management and anger control. As stated by one of the psychologists associated with the West Australian VOTP, for example, the program has as its key aim that participants develop the capacity to ‘recognise their anger and at the same time not express it in hostile and negative ways’ (Hall, 2000). Indeed, each state/territory includes anger management-type programs, generally categorised as programs for aggression and violence, as one of their ‘core’ offender interventions. Such programs are delivered extensively across custodial and community settings and target a large proportion of the offender population. This blurring together of anger and violence is evident throughout the correctional and criminal justice systems, as in the general community: anger and violence are generally depicted, and predominantly understood, as intrinsically linked. Illustrating this, a Macquarie University academic introduces a radio program on ‘managing anger’ (ABC Radio National, 17 August 2009) with the statement that ‘the better we understand anger, the more hope we have of
reducing violence and associated crime'. Similarly, in ‘Changing men’, an
episode of Four Corners (ABCTV, broadcast 25 February 2008), violence,
against women in this case, is referred to as ‘bad behaviour’ and linked
with both ‘frustration and not being able to communicate effectively in
other ways’.

Domestic violence ‘perpetrator programs’ are listed as available in most
states/territories but, it seems, are run infrequently. The N.S.W.
Department of Corrective Services (DCS) is the only correctional
organisation that has a specific Domestic Violence (internal) policy and
staff training package publicly available on their website. The policy
document starts with the statement: ‘Domestic violence is a crime; not a
symptom of a problem in a relationship. It is the problem’. Later in this
same document, however, guidelines for working with, or ‘case-managing’,
perpetrators of DV are included which indicate that the focus of such work
should be on teaching ‘relationship skills’ and ‘control mechanisms to
amend behaviour’ (Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy, nd, sect.
2.4). The policy also strongly emphasises a view of the offender as
rational, autonomous agent, this evident in its focus on ‘self control [as] a
crucial, and often missing, ingredient for success’ (Strayhorn 2002, cited
sect. 5.4) and the oft-repeated assertion that ‘offenders must accept
responsibility for their violent actions’. The selection of readings and
references contained in the staff training package is also striking, each
reflecting a clear focus on, both, ‘batterer characteristics’ and interpersonal
skills deficits such as a lack of communication skills and poor ‘spouse-
specific assertion’ within the context of ‘problematic marital situations’.

Concluding that ‘the jury is still out on the causes, theories and treatment
of DV offenders’ (sect. 4.1), N.S.W. DCS advocates a ‘pragmatic’ array of
’intervention techniques’, including: cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT);
‘effective listening’; ‘model[ling] the communication skills which you want
DV offenders to use within their own relationships’; the teaching of
‘delayed gratification’ skills; and discussion of ‘destructive versus

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6 As of 9 December 2010, this information is no longer available to the public via the DCS
website nor that of their training division, Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy.
constructive behaviours’ (Sect. 5: Intervention techniques). Thus, despite dividing-up of ‘domestic’ and ‘other’ violent offenders, it is clear that DCS conceptualises these violences in broadly similar ways, most notably in the alignment of poor communication skills – or the ability to ‘manage’ one’s anger – with violent behaviours.

4. Editing men out of violence

With the exception of domestic/family violence, violence by men/boys, though often implicit, is rarely acknowledged. For example, a media release entitled ‘Tough new measures to tackle motorcycle gang violence’ (Premier of NSW, 23 March 2009), one of the few instances that I found of a policy focus on ‘non-domestic’ violence, uses emotive language to describe violence as ‘brazen acts’ and the perpetrators as, both, ‘criminals’ putting ‘innocent people at risk’ and ‘thugs’ terrorising ‘our streets’. Notably, whilst masculinity is implied in the ‘tone’ of the media release, no explicit reference is made to men as either the perpetrators or victims of this violence. In another instance, the Men’s Health Information and Research Centre based at the University of Western Sydney effectively de-genders violence in its reference to the ‘unfortunate human capacity for violence that concerns us all’. Similarly, men’s violence is almost entirely absent in the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards administered by the Australian Institute of Criminology. None of the projects recognised in the awards focus specifically on either boys/men or on male violence – nor, for that matter, do any address violence, in itself, directly. In 2009, for example, projects receiving national awards included those targeting ‘youth’ offending in general, respite care for disadvantaged children, family violence prevention, alcohol ab/use and drink-driving, and ATM ‘ram-raids’. State and territory awards were given to projects focusing on violence against women, community-building and community safety, ‘at risk’ children and youth, child sexual abuse, release support for specific prisoner groups, and alcohol and drug ab/use. Similarly, the 2010 national awards focus on ‘young people at risk of offending or victimisation’, female victims of violence, and community regeneration.
Interestingly, government ‘anti-violence’ campaigns also fail to name men or men’s violence even though it seems clear that this is the audience that they are targeting. For example:

- The tag-line of the Victorian Real Champions (2009) campaign is ‘Real champs look out for their mates’. The campaign focuses on six ‘moves’ which, it claims, can be used to stop a drunk ‘mate’ from getting into ‘trouble’ and, in particular, a fight. The ‘muzzle move’, for instance, should be used ‘when your mate gets lippy […] to stop him talking himself into a fight’; and the ‘receptionist move’ when ‘your mate is getting a bit seedy with some guy’s girlfriend’.

- South Australia’s Don’t cross the line (2009) campaign has the tag line ‘Your partner. Your job. Your mates’ respect. Your kids. What are you putting on the line?’. Whilst claiming to be an ‘anti-violence community awareness campaign’, its focus is exclusively on domestic violence with stated goals including increased awareness of legal changes regarding domestic violence and the prevention of ‘relationship violence by changing community attitudes’. The campaign itself is based on the notion of ‘absolute boundaries’ and uses examples and scenarios to illustrate ‘what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships’. An on-line / flash-player ‘game’ is featured on the campaign website so that members of the public can have a go at (literally) ‘drawing the line’ in given scenarios. Each scenario has a ‘correct’ answer that is subsequently revealed.

- ‘Tackling Violence’, a partnership between the N.S.W. and Federal government and the Australian/National Rugby Leagues (ARL and NRL), aims to reduce ‘domestic and alcohol-related violence’ (Minister for Community Services, 7 March 2009). The project involves the provision of funds to regional/rural rugby league clubs with ‘significant numbers of Aboriginal players’ for the purpose of running ‘local campaigns’. Thus, although the project
documentation and associated campaign does not specify men, let alone Indigenous men, this is clearly its intent. Players who ‘sign up’ for the project, according to the media release (Minister for the State Plan, 6 March 2010), have ‘agreed to be a community role model by not hurting our women’ (my emphasis). A ‘new and expanded season’ of Tackling Violence was subsequently launched in March 2010, this suggesting that the Federal and N.S.W. governments regard it as a worthwhile project.

As examples of ‘agent-deleting texts’ (Howe. 2008. p. 14), the above campaigns demonstrate clearly the de-gendering of talk about (men’s) violence; in Howe’s terms, the ‘civilised discourses of erasure’ (p. 2). This is especially apparent in the language used in Victoria’s Real Champions, and South Australia’s Don’t cross the line campaigns, both of which manage to clearly direct their message at men without ever actually naming men. Indeed, in its declaration that ‘[t]here’s no single type of person who uses violence or abuse to dominate a relationship. [...] violence and abuse happens in every country, culture and age’, the SA campaign well illustrates the ‘editing out of men and masculinity’ in ‘narratives and explanations’ of violence (Howe, 2008, p. 57).

5. The absence of gender and gender(ed) analysis

Throughout this reviewing exercise, as particularly evident in the preceding section, I have been especially struck by the almost complete absence of gender in policy/program discussions, both those regarding violence and, to a large extent, domestic violence. Further, as discussed earlier, the term ‘violence’ is uniformly used in a ‘generic’ sense, that is, as anyone’s - not specifically men’s - violence. Moreover, when gender is named or mentioned, this is generally in primary reference to the ‘status of women’. In the health arena, for example, expressions such as ‘gender equity’, ‘gendered health outcomes’ and ‘gender sensitive’ are often used to designate women’s ‘special’ needs and circumstances. The terms ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ are also commonly used interchangeably - as in the ‘male gender’. Further, gender is often referred to in the context of feminist
approaches and analyses of violence, as one of a range of perspectives on violence and, generally, for the purpose of disparaging or marking these out as ‘different’.

Given the influence of feminist perspectives on understandings of domestic violence, both in terms of theorising and practice, one might expect a strong - and well integrated – focus on gender analysis in the domestic violence policy area. I found, however, that even here there was a tendency to treat gender as peripheral rather than foundational. For instance, whilst DV was occasionally described as ‘gendered’ violence, use of the term gender in these circumstances served merely to highlight it as ‘overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women and children’ (Womens Health NSW, 2009, p. 3). Hence, the term ‘gendered violence’ was used, exclusively, in reference to domestic / family violence rather than to draw attention to the broader context for/of violence. For example, whilst the focus of the Research and Education Unit on Gendered Violence (University of South Australia) is, as the name suggests, ‘gendered violence’, its objectives and activities relate specifically to ‘DV, child abuse and sexual assault’. Incredibly, in its eight page ‘Domestic and Family Violence Position Paper’ the AASW (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2009) fails to mention gender at all, other than to say that it ‘promotes working within a human rights framework and a gendered understanding of violence’ (p. 1). No explanation or further discussion of ‘gendered understanding’, in terms of what it might mean in this context, is provided. Later in the position paper, and belying this claim, the AASW discusses violence as either a ‘coercive control tactic’ or ‘conflict tactic’, emphasising that it ‘acknowledges the existence of both conceptual understandings and assists AASW members to work with individuals and families within the framework of their unique circumstances and needs’ (p. 3).

Recent government initiatives in Victoria represent a noticeable exception to this broader tendency to neglect gender. For example, in emphasising the need to work towards broader goals than ‘just’ that of a reduction in
violence against women, *A Right to respect: Victoria’s plan to prevention violence against women 2010-2020* encompasses a focus on gender equity, ‘non-violent and non-discriminatory social norms’ (Office of Women’s Policy, 2010, p. 6) and ‘multiple forms of violence’ (p. 24). Further, in line with its ‘whole of community framework’ (p. 18), it aims to direct attention towards ‘broader cultures of violence’ (p. 6) including schools, workplaces, the media, sport and popular culture. *No To Violence* (NTV), Victoria’s ‘male family violence prevention association’, also specifically acknowledges gender when it defines ‘male family violence’ as an ‘expression of gendered power: that is, the power that men – individually and collectively – have over women and children’. Even here though, whilst positioning gender as centrally important, by reducing gendered power to something that men ‘have’, NTV fails to acknowledge structural power relations as the critical context for individual men’s behaviour.

Australian school-based and child/youth developmental programs represent another exception to the more common approach of neglecting gender. These programs tend also to embody a broader perspective with a greater emphasis on the structural, rather than individual, context. *Mind Matters* (Commonwealth Department of Health & Aging, 2000), a federal mental health promotion aimed at secondary school students, for example, advocates a ‘shift in focus from fixing individuals to ‘healthy systems’. Here it is argued that paying attention to the attitudes and behaviour of the school and broader community is more appropriate than focusing on individual students as the ‘cause of problems’. Moreover, in its focus on the interrelated nature of ‘belonging and identity’, *Mind Matters* acknowledges hierarchies of difference - and the politics of identity more generally - as a crucial context for violence.

School-based programs that focus more specifically on violence tend to fall within the category of either anti-bullying programs or ‘positive relationships’ education. The *LOVE BITES* program developed by the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
(NAPCAN) is an example of the latter, its goal being to ‘educate young people about respectful relationships and reduce the incidence of relationship violence in the community’. Incorporating a ‘contemporary feminist analysis’ and based upon recognition of ‘relationship violence as a gendered crime’, the program focuses on ‘analysing gender inequities’, social norms and gender roles. This emphasis on the social and cultural contexts for violence, as evident in the Mind Matters and LOVE BITES initiatives, has not however carried through to the national policy level, as discussed further in Chapter 8.

Bullying. No way! (BNW) is an anti-bullying resource developed for the use of Australia’s Government, Catholic and Independent schools. Like sections of the Mind Matters (MM) program, it encompasses an emphasis on power and gendered analysis which is broadly compatible with a feminist understanding of domestic violence. Both MM and BNW, for example, associate bullying with an ‘imbalance of power’ (Commonwealth Department of Health & Aging, 2000, p. 11), involving the oppression of a less powerful person/group by a more powerful person/group ‘often on the grounds of difference’ (p. 11). These programs also acknowledge gendered expectations and (hegemonic) masculinity in particular as the critical context for bullying. The language of MM, for instance is quite explicit in its description of (male) bullies as ‘like vigilantes on the outlook for lawbreakers, “patrolling the boundaries” of accepted gender roles and sexuality’ (Commonwealth Department of Health & Aging, 2000, p. 58). Similarly BNW recognises bullying as a way of regulating gendered behaviour based on an implicit devaluing of femininity. Such bullying, it notes, may be directed at girls who are ‘not doing their femininity appropriately’ and boys ‘to deny the legitimacy of boys’ behaviour when they operate in different ways from the acceptable or dominant forms of masculinity’.

Explanations for bullying are not consistent, however, and significant shifts are evident, at times within the same document. Power, for example, is conceptualised as both a personal quality or possession and an
expression of the social and structural context for/of power. BNW, in particular, appears to undermine its stated focus on power and gender imbalances in its description of bullying as a manifestation of ‘distrust, fear, misunderstanding, lack of knowledge or jealousy’ and declaration that ‘[a]ll humans have the potential to bully, harass or discriminate against others’. The selection of quotes from former students in the BNW material is also revealing. For instance, one boy observes that the BNW program taught him that ‘small people can be just as powerful as the best boxer in the world [and] girls can be as powerful as boys’, this suggesting a (mis)understanding of power as individually possessed and wielded. Evidence of the influence of a ‘crisis of masculinity’ discourse (see, for example, Biddulph, 1995; Buchbinder, 2003) is also evident in program materials, this serving to underemphasise – and shift attention from – structural privilege. It is asserted in BNW, for example, that ‘[e]veryone loses when unequal power or status is taken for granted [...]’, boys convinced that aggressive behaviour demonstrates masculinity are robbed of the relationship skills needed for happiness in adulthood’.

The anti-bullying programs reviewed here include a range of strategies to reduce and address bullying. On the whole, the recommended strategies focus on the individual with an emphasis on raising awareness and building skills in areas such as communication, assertiveness, conflict resolution and anger management. MM, for example, proposes that students ‘at risk of bullying’ be taught ‘alternate strategies’, that is, alternatives to bullying, through anger management and assertiveness training (Commonwealth Department of Health & Aging, 2000, p. 17). Likewise, BNW recommends that students receive instruction in the ‘management of emotions and positive social relationships’. Access to mediation to facilitate resolution of ‘social and interpersonal’ issues is also included as a key strategy. Such methods clearly reinforce the notion of bullying as an inter/personal issue linked to poor communication and depict violence as, primarily, an expression of anger. Moreover, some of the content implies that ‘victimised students’ should also bear responsibility for bullying behaviour. Whilst MM, for instance, recommends
teaching all students ‘communication skills, assertion, problem-solving, and help-seeking’ (Commonwealth Department of Health & Aging, 2000, p. 13), it advocates that ‘victimised and vulnerable’ students be specifically targeted for ‘general social skills’ training and ‘strategies to deal with potential incidents’ (p. 17). It is difficult to reconcile such explanations with the emphasis, within these same documents, on power relations within the context of difference, understood as inferiority. In this respect, school-based programs share with the other policy and program areas reviewed in this chapter the tendencies to attribute violence to anger and conflict, focus on ‘visible and intentional interpersonal forms of violence’ (J. Brown & Munn, 2008, p. 226), and prioritise individually-focused explanations and interventions. Interestingly, whilst these school programs speak the language of gender in a way that is not apparent in the other areas reviewed here, thereby demonstrating the influence of feminist and other critical understandings, this is not consistent and, overall, the programs represent an uncomfortable mix of contradictory perspectives.

Summary

Whilst the overview of programs and policies presented here is wide-ranging and ‘broad-brush’, it is possible to draw a number of (tentative) conclusions regarding the positioning of violence within the Australian policy landscape. Firstly, the situation across Australia is highly variable and this is so both between and within states/territories. Overall, the problematisation of violence, or rather what is considered or named as ‘violence’, is idiosyncratic and inconsistent; some behaviours, actions individuals and groups are deemed violent in some circumstances and places and not others. Thus ‘violence’ is understood and interpreted in different ways in different contexts. In this respect, who uses violence, against whom, where, and in what circumstances, matters.

Overwhelmingly, the range of programs and policies reviewed here emphasised individual responsibility, accountability and rationality, with a focus on emotion-management, decision-making and self control. In this
context, the relative scarcity of, or at least the difficulty accessing, ‘anti-violence’ intervention programs, with the exception of those in correctional settings, is ironic given the pervasive insistence on ‘perpetrator accountability’, individual responsibility to change, and so on. The dominance of psychological approaches to understanding, explaining, and intervening in violence is common across sectors, departments and agency settings. The reliance on individualised, ‘expert’, approaches is, in this respect, entirely consistent with the ‘privileging of scientific, technocratic and economic discourses’ that characterises the broader Australian policy agenda (Morley & Macfarlane, 2008, p. 31).

Gender is generally neglected and rarely mentioned except in relation to, so-called, ‘gendered violence’, conceptualised as violence against women and children. Overall, a gender-neutral tone dominates and is evident in the use of language such as ‘relationships’, ‘families’, ‘family violence’, and ‘people’. Similarly, violence by men/boys is seldom acknowledged as such - that is, as men’s use of violence – and is excluded from discussions of ‘gendered violence’. Indeed violence itself is rarely addressed directly unless this is on the basis of its association with a particular group (‘youth’, Indigenous people, ‘Lebanese gang rapists’, etc), setting (licensed premises, rural communities, public areas, etc), or victim (women, children, older people, etc). In this way, policies enable a shift in focus away from violence and on to the ‘problems’ presented by young people, alcohol abuse, ‘cultural difference’\(^7\), and so on.

**Policy analysis: Federal or state?**

The focus for this thesis is the Australian federal government policy arena. My decision to analyse federal, as compared to state/territory, policy is based on two key recognitions. Firstly, as the primary body responsible for resource allocation across Australia, the Commonwealth government

\(^7\) See Lattas and Morris’s (2010) discussion of the ways in which contemporary governance practices, as evident in the NT ‘Emergency Response’, rely upon the depiction of ‘dysfunctional cultural patterns’ (p. 76) as productive of violence. In this perspective, these ‘supposedly embedded cultural practices’ are responsible, both, for high rates of violence and, more generally, for preventing Indigenous people from ‘moving into the modern world’ (p. 77). See also Rundle (2007) and Austin-Broos (2010).
provides the overall, national, policy framework within which states and
territories must function. Thus, whilst the states and territories have
‘considerable freedom’ in relation to the development and implementation
of their own policies, it is clear that this ‘freedom of action is circumscribed
by the federal government’s taxation powers and allocation of expenditure
for social policy areas’ (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 75; see also Fawcett, et al.,
2010). Further, whilst in accordance with the Australian Constitution the
federal government has the right to intervene, via legislation, in particular
social policy areas, it is not obligated to do so. Hence, as observed by
Jamrozik (2009. p. 98) social policy has been a ‘kind of “plaything” for any
incoming government wishing to change the policy into one that favours its
ideology and its supporters’ interests’. As a means for the government to
‘make its mark’, federal policy thus provides a rich source for investigating
the problematisations which are central to governing processes in
Australia (Bacchi, 2009).

Secondly, I focus on the federal level as the overall policy framework for
Australia because I do not wish to contribute to a reductionist approach in
which one state/territory is pitched against another. Whilst it is clear that
there are substantial differences between (and within) Australian
states/territories, it is neither helpful nor accurate to discuss issues as if
these are unique to a particular jurisdiction; that is, a ‘NSW problem’, the
way that Victoria does things, and so on. Rather I am interested in
maintaining a ‘big picture’ vision – bigger, that is, than that of the
party/political - in relation to the ways in which ‘problems’ are created,
produced and ‘given shape’ in and through policy. Moreover, the themes
identified here as relatively consistent across Australia, in relation to the
ways in which the ‘problem’ of violence has been conceptualised over time
and context, as has been illustrated in this chapter, demonstrate vividly
that political projects transcend political/party allegiances (Newman &
Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the broader policy context in Australia by canvassing a model for understanding the policy-making process and outlining a range of violence-related policy and program areas, spanning the federal and state/territory government levels. This chapter thus ‘sets the scene’ for the in-depth policy analyses which follow in Chapters 6 – 8. I have shown here that the ways in which violence is conceptualised, problematised and addressed are highly variable across Australia and this is so both between and within states/territories. Absolutely consistent however is the emphasis on individual responsibility, accountability and rationality, as evident in the importance placed on emotion-management, decision-making and (self) control, and the failure to acknowledge, let alone critique, gender. In this context, who uses violence, against whom, where, and in what circumstances is closely related to the varied, and various, ways in which violence is named, interpreted and responded to, in/through policy and practice.

Recent policy activities seem to have coalesced around three focal points, namely, violence in Indigenous communities, particularly family violence and sexual assault; domestic violence including violence against women and children; and developmental / early intervention initiatives such as anti-bullying and ‘positive relationship’ programs in schools. In the next three chapters, which constitute the body of this thesis, I analyse two of these policy areas, namely women and children’s safety (Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, Chapter 7); and education (Australia’s National Safe Schools Framework, Chapter 8). In the next chapter, Chapter 6, I focus specifically on the gender(ed) discourses drawn upon in Australia’s National Health Policies.
CHAPTER 6: HEALTH

Introduction

In this chapter I examine Australia’s *National Health Policy*, this encompassing both the *National Male Health Policy* (NMHP) launched in May 2010 and the *National Women’s Health Policy* (NWHP) released in December 2010. Whilst I am primarily interested in the *NMHP* I refer also to the *NWHP* in order to highlight both the complementarities and significant points of difference between these. Both policy documents are largely silent in relation to violence but provide an excellent opportunity to explore representations of gender, specifically in terms of the ways in which each positions, and subjectifies, boys/men and girls/women. The particular focus of this chapter, then, is on the discourses of gender drawn upon, mobilised and reproduced in/through the *NMHP* and *NWHP* policy documents. As such, this chapter, in its focus on policy representations of gender, establishes a critical basis for the examination of policy representations of violence which follow in Chapters 7 and 8. Together, Chapters 6 - 8 demonstrate the extent to which the intertwined discourses of gender and violence are dependent on each other and, in our current imagination, unthinkable in any other way.

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first, central policy themes including gender and gender equality and preventive approaches to health are identified, examined and critiqued. The focus here is on the discourses of gender, and assumptions of gender difference in particular, that underpin Australia’s *National Health Policy*. In the second part of this chapter, I explore the specific, oppositional, positionings of boys/men and girls/women which are embedded within the ‘problems’ constructed, and ‘solutions’ proposed, in the *NMHP*. I begin this chapter, however, with an overview of Australia’s federal health policy and its background.
**Australia’s Health Policy**

The National Male and Women’s Health Policies⁸, according to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging (2010a), aim to ‘ensure that specific health needs of both men and women are addressed’. The *National Women’s Health Policy (NWHP)*, released 29 December 2010, builds upon the previous NWHP’s (1989) commitment to establish ‘an environment where more can be done to ensure that all Australian women have better health and health care’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 7). The *National Male Health Policy (NMHP)*, however, released in May 2010, is the first such policy in Australia and ‘provides a framework for improving the health of all males and achieving equal health outcomes for population groups of males at risk of poor health’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010a).

Both the NMHP and NWHP are directed towards the broad aim of improving health for all Australians, with particular focus on those who are at ‘greatest risk of poor health’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 11; 2010d, p. 7). The NWHP, perhaps reflecting its status as an evolving document building upon the ‘solid foundation’ of the first NWHP (1989), presents a more sophisticated approach in its emphasis on the ‘dual priorities’ of addressing ‘immediate and future health challenges’ with respect to ‘health services and prevention programs’, as well as ‘broader reforms’ in relation to health inequities and the ‘fundamental ways in which society is structured’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 7). Hence, the NWHP encompasses both ‘evidence-based health priorities’ in relation to the ‘challenges associated with death and burden of disease for women’ and ‘longer-term strategies’ or ‘policy goals’ (p. 11). In contrast the NMHP is structured around ‘priority areas of action’ and ‘priority groups’, that is, ‘those considered at high risk of poor health outcomes’. Identified priority groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, males from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, males living in rural

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⁸ No explanation is provided regarding the decision to use different terminology (‘male’; ‘women’s’) in the respective policy titles.
and remote areas of Australia, males with a disability, including mental illness, and males from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 11). The NWHP’s ‘policy goals’ and the NMHP’s ‘priority areas for action’, listed below, are nonetheless broadly similar, both focusing on preventive health, building an evidence base, addressing the different health needs associated with ‘life stage’, and prioritising the needs of those at ‘highest risk of poor health’.

**National Women’s Health Policy: ‘Policy goals’:**

1. Highlight the significance of gender as a key determinant of women’s health and wellbeing.
2. Acknowledge that women’s health needs differ according to their life stage.
3. Prioritise the needs of women with the highest risk of poor health.
4. Ensure the health system is responsive to all women, with a clear focus on illness prevention and health promotion.
5. Support effective and collaborative research, data collection, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge transfer to advance the evidence base on women’s health. (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 9)

**National Male Health Policy: ‘Priority areas for action’:**

1. Optimal health outcomes for males
2. Health equity between population groups of males
3. Improved health for males at different life stages
4. A focus on preventive health for males
5. Building a strong evidence base on male health
6. Improved access to health care for males. (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 13)
Interestingly, the *NWHP* specifically names – and foregrounds - gender in its first goal, namely, to ‘highlight the significance of gender as a key determinant of women’s health and wellbeing’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 9). Gender is dealt with more obliquely in the *NMHP*, however, and primarily in the context of ‘gender equity’. Here, gender equity is linked to the ‘priority areas’ of ‘optimal health outcomes for males’ and ‘improved access to health care for males’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 13). In this respect the term ‘gender equity’ is used in reference to men having an ‘equal opportunity to realise good health’ (p. 13).

More significantly, in what seems a remarkable omission, both policy documents are largely silent in relation to violence. The *NWHP* addresses ‘violence against women’ in relation to the ‘key resource’ (p. 88) of women’s ‘access to a safe and secure environment’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 91), understood here as a ‘key social determinant influencing women’s health and wellbeing’ (p. 85). The only mention of violence in the *NMHP*\(^6\) is made in the context of ‘relationships and violence’, as one of a range of ‘social determinants of male health’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 15). No explanation is provided and it is thus unclear what exactly the policy writers are referring to here; for example, whether this relates to men’s use of violence or to men’s other experiences of violence, as victims for instance. This is an issue to which I will return later in this chapter.

Having provided an overview of the *National Health Policy*, I now turn to the specific themes which underlie and/or structure each of the policy documents. For ease of discussion I have grouped these into two broad categories - gender and preventive health - in relation to the particular discourses drawn upon in the *NWHP* and *NMHP*.

\(^6\) Whilst one of the *NMHP*’s ‘Supporting Documents’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, pp. 8-10) includes some discussion of violence, framed as a ‘social determinant of male health’, the focus here is primarily on the ‘violence that males experience’ and there is no follow through, either in this document or in the *NMHP* itself, in terms of recommended goals, strategies or actions.
Part One: Discursive themes

Gender

The reliance of Australia’s National Health Policy on a particular construction of gender is, arguably, its most distinguishing feature; men and women are specifically differentiated, and subsequently positioned, in particular ways. The Consultation Discussion Paper for the NWHP, for example, addresses women as ‘mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, wives and partners’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2009, p. iii), whereas the NMHP, in addition to these familial roles, presents a more expansive view of men as providers, carers, ‘uncles, friends and role models’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 10). Further, whilst women’s health is linked to the ‘health and wellbeing of families and whole communities, through [women’s] caring, nurturing and educative roles’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2009, p. 2), the NMHP emphasises men’s ‘varied and important roles in Australian society’ as well as their contribution to a ‘wide range of community activities [...] and in the paid and unpaid workforce’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 10). Here, men’s ‘good’ health is linked to ‘employment and financial security’ (p. 22) and there is a strong focus on men as ‘healthy workers’, particularly in terms of the implications for productivity, reduced absenteeism, and so on. In contrast women’s employment and associated health needs are all but overlooked in the NWHP and its related Discussion Paper.

Conceptualising sex and gender: ‘Males and females are different’

Both policies rely on an understanding of sex and gender as separate and distinct, based upon, and reflecting, a biology / culture, or nature / nurture, dichotomy. The terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are generally used as if they are interchangeable and for the purpose of signposting biological differences, to the extent that women and men are represented as the sum of their ‘biological and physiological characteristics’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 86). The NMHP’s inclusion of the World Health Organization explanation of gender: ‘[p]eople are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men’ (WHO 2002
cited in Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 13), exemplifies this approach. Within this explanatory framework of men and women’s ‘biological differences and their gender roles’ (p. 13), it thus follows that men and women are understood as having ‘different needs, obstacles and opportunities’ (p. 13). The NMHP places particular emphasis on the need to recognise that ‘males and females are different’ (p. 13) within the context of substantiating its key theme: that ‘males have unique needs within the health system’ (p. 7). In this respect, the NMHP’s primary orientation is towards demonstrating that ‘unequal health outcomes’ (p. 7) exist between men and women and that men are at a considerable disadvantage in this regard. In contrast, the NWHP focuses more expansively on the impact of ‘gender roles and gender relations’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 86) for women’s health, specifically in terms of broader inequalities in access to resources. Nonetheless, in its emphasis on ‘sex’, conceptualised as the (self-evident) differences between men and women’s bodies, the overriding focus of the NWHP is on the ways in which women’s ‘bodies are more vulnerable than men’s’ (p. 50). In conflating ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, both policies proceed as though it is possible to clearly discern ‘what is “biological” and what is “gender”’ (Lohan, 2007, p. 494), thereby overlooking the ‘complex processes by which biological facts are contextually defined and therefore gendered’ (see also Emslie & Hunt, 2008).

Sex/gender are, elsewhere, positioned as variables within the context of ‘evidence-based health priorities’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 8), discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. Both policies prioritise a need for ‘gendered data and research’ (p. 113) although it is not clear what the policy-writers actually mean by this. Terms such as ‘gender sensitive performance indicators’ and ‘gender perspective’ are nonetheless peppered throughout both documents in a way that suggests that these are self-evident and should be convincing in their own right. Sex/gender is nonetheless understood as one in a range of ‘other variables’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 112) which may impact upon health outcomes. Accordingly, both policies call for
'disaggregated' data, that is, health data that is 'separated out according to sex' (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 24), in order to enable 'exploration of the relationship' between variables such as ethnicity, socio-economic status and disability, and sex/gender (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 113). In this respect, the NMHP advocates that men’s health strategies be 'informed by research on the impact of sex, gender and age on attitudes, behaviours and outcomes' (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 24), which can be seen as an attempt to isolate, and thereby decontextualise, sex/gender as a distinct variable with identifiable, measurable effects.

The tendency to operationalise gender 'as a dichotomous variable', as argued by Pease (2009, p. 185), dislocates 'health outcomes [from] the wider social context of the gender order'. Recognising the complex meanings associated with 'sexed bodies', however, implies that it is not necessarily possible, nor desirable, to clearly designate differences in men’s and women's health as 'caused' by 'sex differences' or gender (Lohan, 2007, p. 494). Emslie and Hunt (2008), for instance, illustrate the complexity of the interconnections between sex and gender, these encompassing both the 'gendered expression of biology' and, perhaps more critically, the 'biologic expression of gender', that is, that gender divisions are themselves 'expressed in the biological body' (p. 809). Whilst health and health related research has traditionally focused on males and male bodies, there has been little 'conscious or thoughtful attention to masculinity per se' (Broom, 2009a, p. 140). The NMHP policy, and associated documentation, as observed by Saunders and Peerson (2009, p. 93) is 'at best hesitant, and at worst deliberately evasive' in this regard. Thus interpretation of gendered patterns of health commonly lacks an explicit, or critical, theorisation of gender, as evident in the NMHP's tendency to rely on 'anecdotes and stereotypes' (p. 141) discussed later in this chapter.

Masculinity in the NMHP is strongly - 'inextricably' - linked to biological sex (Doyal, 2000, p. 937), that is, to the male body. Epidemiological findings in
relation to differential injury/death rates, for example, are ‘presented as if gender were of no particular relevance’ (Courtenay, 2009, p. 25), thereby rendering men’s greater involvement in risk-taking and violence ‘normal’ (for men) and unproblematic. Indeed the NMHP engages with the social construct of masculinity only to refute this as an issue of significant concern. For example, reference is made to the ‘commonly held view’ that men are reluctant to visit doctors due to the ‘traditional stereotype of a strong and self-reliant male’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 26), but quickly countered with the assertion that ‘there is no evidence that “masculine” identity is the cause of lower rates of service use’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2008b, p. 10). The ‘problem’ of men’s ‘lower use of health care services’, according to the NMHP, instead relates to the ‘barriers that make it difficult for males generally, and individual males, to visit their general practitioner’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 26). Hence, references to ‘difficulties in engaging males’ are reframed as a need to ‘more effectively reach and engage’ (p. 20) by ‘specifically focusing’ (p. 23) on men.

**Gender equity**

The importance of a ‘gendered approach’ to women’s health is emphasised strongly throughout the NWHP. Whilst the NMHP places substantially less emphasis on gender, and certainly to masculinities, it does pay significant attention to the issue of gender equity. Gender equity approaches have been strongly criticised on the basis that, in effect, they may function as little more than ‘just a case of ensuring that one policy does not have bias over the other’ (J. A. Smith, Robertson, & Richardson, 2010, p. 76). In the NMHP, gender equity is discussed in relation to Priority Area One: ‘Optimal health outcomes for males’ where it is described as:

mean[ing] that the health system recognises that males and females are different, and responds in ways that make it easier for males and females to have the care they need. Gender equity means that males and females are given equal opportunity to
Thus gender equity is here conceptualised narrowly with an overriding focus on difference, specifically the difference between men and women with respect to their ‘specific or unique needs’. In contrast, the NWHP uses the term ‘gender inequality’ to refer to the broader context of gender as a determinant of women’s health. Reflecting a profound disregard for the ways in which gender reflects and shapes social relations, the NMHP stresses the importance of ‘respect for each gender and the diverse roles that males and females choose and are given within the community’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, my emphasis). Hence, as seen also in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children (see Chapter 7), gender equity is reduced to the oppositional status of men and women and of relations between them.

Gender (in)equality is commonly framed in terms of women’s disadvantage and improving the status of women, as in the National Plan. As discussed in Part Two of this chapter, however, the NMHP inverts this problematic, instead emphasising male disadvantage. Thus the ‘problem’ of gender equity is here represented as the neglect of men’s needs and interests as well as the costs for men associated with their particular roles and responsibilities. In this regard, the direct implication is that these ‘costs’ relate specifically to men’s roles in ‘looking after’ women and children, that is, as providers or ‘breadwinners’, and, further, suggests that men’s disadvantage, in the context of societal changes, is caused by women’s advantage. Clearly this overlooks and obscures both men’s collective advantage and the extent to which this has been, and continues to be, ‘contingent on women’s “disadvantage”’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 197). Moreover, it entirely neglects the fact that some men benefit much more than others; that is, that ‘political, economic and cultural inequalities are produced and distributed not only between but also within the genders’ (Greig, Kimmel, & Lang, 2000, p. 2).
Preventive health

Prevention and health promotion are central themes of the NMH and NWH policies, both of which emphasise a ‘preventive health focus’ oriented towards supporting ‘Australians to lead healthier lifestyles and reduce their risk’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 20). There are, however, subtle differences between the ways in which this is articulated in each document. The NWHP, for example, positions itself within a ‘social model of health’, emphasising the need to ‘understand health within its social context’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 86), thus recognising the links between social inequalities and health inequities. This broader preventive theme encompassing a focus on ‘social, cultural, environmental and economic factors’ (p. 86) is maintained throughout the NWHP policy and related documents. The NMHP, however, is based upon a narrower and more prescriptive notion of prevention focused on reducing ‘preventable health differences’ and ‘avoidable health inequalities’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 15) through identification of ‘the reasons for poor health’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2008b, p. 15) and, in particular, ‘population groups of males at risk’. Prevention, in the NMHP, thus involves: ‘gathering and analysing information about the determinants of health; the distribution of risk; health and illness in the population; behaviours, attitudes and beliefs; and the evaluation of impact, outcomes and cost-effectiveness’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2008b, p. 16).

Preventive approaches to health, according to Broom (2008), are associated with a ‘distinctive neo-liberal political economy and a cultural economy of modernity’, incorporating a focus on the individual, an emphasis on evidence and the ‘medicalisation and expansion of the field of health’ (p. 130). This is strongly evident in the orientation of the NMHP - and less so, or less overtly so, in the NWHP - towards ‘enabling people to increase control over the determinants of health’, through the collection of information via ‘research, monitoring and surveillance activities’, in order to understand the ‘distribution of risk’ and identify ‘lifestyle risk factors’
(Department of Health and Aging, 2008b, p. 16; 2010b, p. 20). This can be seen as indicative of a shift in emphasis away from government responsibility and towards individuals taking responsibility for their own health (see Pease, 2009). Thus men, in the NMHP, ‘are encouraged to think about doing something for themselves’ (p. 30) by ‘taking charge of their health’ (p. 21) and taking ‘individual action to improve their health’ (p. 7).

The notion of governmentality provides a valuable analytical frame for studying health and health policy as a means through which biopolitical problems, that is, those concerned with the ‘administration of the process of life of populations’ (Dean, 1999, p. 98), are constructed and made manageable (Scott, 2003). The idea of ‘freedom’, as a strategy of government, is crucial here. Freedom, as argued by Rose, is ‘choice, autonomy, self-responsibility, and the obligation to maximize one’s life as a kind of enterprise’ (Rose, et al., 2006, p. 91). Individuals, or subjects, are therefore ‘obliged to be free’ in the sense that they are ‘required to conduct themselves responsibly, to account for their lives and their vicissitudes in terms of their freedom’ (p. 90, my emphasis). Techniques of governance are based upon ‘activity, agency & freedom’ (Scott, 2003, p. 279) so that their regulatory nature is not readily apparent but, rather, is reframed as emancipatory, aimed at ‘realising one’s full potential’.

In the NMHP’s emphasis on ‘unhealthy behaviours’ (p. 15), ‘good’ health and the maintenance thereof is cast as the ‘duty or obligation’ of at-risk individuals (Scott, 2003, p. 289) in order to ‘protect the vitality and integrity of the population’ (p. 279). In his discussion of the problematisation and governance of prostitution in contemporary NSW, Scott (2003) identified the existence of ‘specific techniques of power’. These can be recognised as key themes in the NMHP. ‘Sanitationist’ practices, for example, are ‘prohibitionist’ in character and function to ‘isolate or separate polluted bodies from a moral community’ (p. 279). ‘Hygienist’ practices, however, are based on differentiation, with the ‘strategic aim of empowering “at risk” bodies by providing protection, cure, reformation, and rehabilitation’ in
order to ensure that the body ‘reaches a certain standard of sociality deemed medically and socially desirable’ (p. 280). Such practices thus enable the governance of bodies, specifically ‘through the promotion of social rights and responsibilities’ (p. 280), but also, and more critically, through the marking of bodies as ‘healthy’ (responsible, motivated) and ‘unhealthy’ (dangerous, anti-social).

Social determinants of health

Both the *NMHP* and *NWHP* embody a ‘social determinants of health’ (SDH) approach based on the recognition that ‘changes in the adverse conditions of people’s lives are necessary to reduce avoidable health inequalities’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2008a, p. 6). A number of perspectives on the SDH model exist, these ranging from an emphasis on individual behaviours, that is, of social (or risk) factors as ‘working through individual behaviours’, to critical understandings regarding the ‘role governments play in creating specific social, economic and environmental contexts that help to make people either “ill” or “well”’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 135, original emphasis). In this respect, the *NMHP* can be seen to take the former approach whereas the *NWHP* is somewhat closer to the latter, more critical, stance. Bacchi, for example, notes the tendency in some applications of SDH to move from a focus on ‘broad social influences on well-being to the ability to respond’ (p. 134, original emphasis) to these. In the *NMHP*, this is reflected in the repeated exhortations that men ‘take individual action to improve their own health’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 7), ‘take charge of their health’ (p. 11), and so on.

Social determinants of health are (re)framed in the *NMHP* as ‘adverse social and economic circumstances’ which can ‘lead to high levels of stress and unhealthy behaviours [and] contribute to high rates of disease and injury’ (p. 15). In other words individual men are positioned here as ‘responsible for putting themselves at risk of ill-health’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 135), either because of what they do (eat, drink, smoke, take risks, etc) or fail to do (exercise, self care, etc). Poor health is thus positioned as either ‘a matter of chance (e.g. “faulty” genes) or a consequence of the exercise
of “good” or “bad” decisions in the free market’ (Petersen, 2009, p. 210).

Social determinants, in the NMHP, are thereby reduced to ‘attitudes, values and beliefs’ (Lohan, 2007, p. 498) as well as risk factors and risk(y) groups, with men conceptualised as, essentially, the ‘sum of their individual behaviours’ (R. Williams, Robertson, & Hewison, 2009, p. 479). Government intervention, then, becomes a matter of coming up with strategies to both stimulate individual behaviour change (R. Williams, et al., 2009) and identify ‘risky’ groups so that ‘their’ riskiness can be managed (Guthman and Dupois 2006 cited in Bacchi, 2009, p. 135), that is, in the wording of the NMHP, the targeting of efforts to ‘population groups at risk of poorer health’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 20). Risk targeting and management can therefore be seen as, essentially, political strategies, functioning to ‘demonise and infantilise particular groups in the population’ (Diprose, 2008, p. 144). This is especially evident here in the NMHP’s positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, as discussed in Part Two.

Whilst a social determinants of health approach provides the foundation for both the men’s and women’s health policies, the ways in which this is conceptualised, particularly in relation to the determinants selected for attention, differs significantly between the two. Reduced largely to ‘where we live and what we do’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2008b, p. 6), the social determinants named as relevant to men’s health in the NMHP’s consultation phase included ‘education, workplace and environmental factors, social integration, unemployment and disadvantage due to physical location such as living in rural areas where there is limited access to health services’ (p. 6). In the final policy document the list of determinants had been further narrowed to include ‘income, education, employment, injustice experienced by AATSI peoples, relationships and violence’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 15). Interestingly, this is the only mention of violence in the entire policy; no further explanation or discussion is entered into.
In contrast, the NWHP takes a more inclusive approach in its conceptualisation and operationalisation of the social determinants approach, referring to the wide ‘range of social, cultural, environmental and economic factors’ which may be linked to ‘good and ill health’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 86). These are grouped under four ‘thematic headings’ which, reflecting the scope of the issues considered, include: ‘sex and gender; life stages; access to resources including income, education, employment, social connections and safety and security; and diversity’ (p. 85). Significantly, gender is explicitly named as a ‘key determinant of women’s health’ and ‘highlighting the significance of gender’ (p. 9) identified as one of the five, overall, policy goals. This makes the NMHP’s neglect of gender seem all the more remarkable. Another way of looking at the NMHP, however, is that it represents, at least in part, a reaction – or counter - to the women’s health policy. MacDonald (2006), for instance, is a key advocate for (his version of) the social determinants approach which he sees as reflecting a crucial ‘move away from policies and practices that perpetuate negative views of men’ (p. 456). Conceptualising ‘men’s health practice in terms of gender and health’, in his opinion, is ‘just another way of addressing women’s health concerns – specifically gender inequalities and the impact of discrimination on women’s health – rather than men’s health concerns’ (p. 456). Thus Macdonald, one of the authors cited in the NMHP, specifically links gender to women and ‘women’s issues’.

It is clear that the NMHP, to a large extent, glosses over the ways in which gender and masculinities interact with social, cultural and economic factors in favour of a very general ‘social determinants’ approach (see, Collins, McLachlan, & Holden, 2011; M. Saunders, 2010). A number of commentators raised concerns during the NMHP development phase regarding the ‘dismissal of men’s gender identity’ (M. Saunders & Peerson, 2009, p. 93) - specifically the ‘rejection of hegemonic masculinity as integral to men’s health’ (p. 94) – and lack of attention to men’s violence (Keleher, 2009). Despite calls for the government to address these limitations, the tone and content of the finalised policy is, for the
most part, consistent with the earlier discussion papers. As such, it remains profoundly limited/ing with respect to the ways in which it positions men and women.

**Discourses of risk and health**

Various theorists have highlighted, and critiqued, the ‘rise of risk’ in social theory and social policy (see, for example, Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). It has been argued that in the movement towards a ‘risk society’, more and more aspects of social life, as well as institutional and organisational structures, are ‘governed through objective, actuarial predictions of risk’ (Hannah-Moffat, 2005, p. 29). Thus responsibility for a range of social problems has shifted from the state to individuals and communities. This has been linked to the emergence of the ‘prudent and rational risk managing subject’ (p. 34) within the context of a broader focus on individual deficits rather than social/structural issues. As explained by Kemshall (2003, p. 101)

> The ‘responsible citizen’ is required to self-manage and exercise prudential choices towards socially desirable ends within an overarching principle of self-regulation. The responsible citizen will make the required choice. Those who do not are recast as risky and blameworthy, in need of re-moralisation and correction.

In her discussion of public health campaigns in Australia, Diprose (2008) notes the emergence of an intensified focus on ‘managing calculable risk’ in the form of, what she calls, ‘political technologies of pre-emption’ (p. 141). Diprose identifies four key features of the ‘pre-emption paradigm’, each of which can be seen in aspects of the *NMHP*: firstly, the assumption that risks are ‘incalculable, unpredictable but always imminent’; secondly, that ‘unpredictable and fallible human agency’ constitutes the ‘salient cause of harm’; thirdly, the rise of a moral dimension to health including a ‘cautious and fearful comportment toward the future’ (i.e. the ‘tendency to posit the worst possible future arising from what is deemed to be risky practice’); and finally, a conservative orientation towards preserving ‘what is deemed good about the past’ (pp. 142-143). Hence, as demonstrated in the *NMHP*, ‘risk-taking behaviours’ (Department of Health & Aging, 2010b,
p. 22) are linked to ‘lack of knowledge and awareness of the level of risk and the consequences of risk taking’ (p. 22), with a corresponding emphasis on ‘health literacy’ as an ‘enabler’ (p. 21), awareness raising, and resilience building (p. 25).

The NMHP is accompanied by a series of supporting documents: ‘healthy minds’; ‘healthy routines’; ‘healthy reproductive behaviours’; and ‘healthy limits’, which further exemplify its concern for the risk presented by certain behaviours and certain individuals. Here, social problems are reframed as individual problems or deficits, in this case, as ‘unhealthy’ behaviours and ‘poor lifestyle management’ (Lohan, 2007, p. 498). Closely associated is the intensification of surveillance as ‘more and more bodily states become objects of preventive interventions’ (Broom, 2008, p. 134). Further, the NMHP emphasis on men as workers, as apparent in its focus on the link between men’s good health and ‘employment and financial security’ (p. 22), and the costs associated with ‘unhealthy’ workers (see, for example, the discussion of employee health and safe work practices on p. 22), reflects a broader political concern with health costs and economic productivity (M. Saunders & Peerson, 2009, p. 92). Thus, as observed by Diprose (2008, p. 143), those ‘events, practices and technologies’ considered to be most risky and ‘irresponsible’ correspond with ‘those that are seen to threaten economic security’. Crucially, the NMHP wholly fails to acknowledge, let alone address, the ways in which gender relations, and practices of masculinity in particular, become ‘embodied as diverse health conditions’ (Schofield, Connell, Walker, Wood, & Butland, 2000, p. 252). That is, it draws uncritically upon discourses of ‘health’ and risk that are, in themselves, ‘deeply embedded in identities, social relations, gender, class, ethnicity and culture’ (p. 134).

**Evidence-based policy**

The final point that I wish to make regarding the National Health Policy is its reliance on particular understandings of evidence, research, and ‘evidence-based health priorities’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 8). Both the men’s and women’s policies, for example, prioritise
the ‘routine collection of health data’, ‘separated out according to sex’ (or ‘disaggregated’ in the NWHP) and the establishment of ‘data collection methods that consider gender sensitive performance indicators’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 24). This raises a range of issues in relation to the idea of ‘user-driven research’, when ‘user’ means ‘policy-maker’, specifically in terms of the commissioning and shaping of research questions and what is seen to ‘count’ as ‘evidence’. That is, as emphasised by Bacchi (2008, p. 171) ‘evidence based policy’ with its ‘emphasis on counting, efficiency and effectiveness […] becomes a technology for disciplining researchers’. and as such, fits with – and thus fails to challenge - neoliberal governmental rationality. This is certainly consistent with the reliance in both policies on data collection, variables, (of sex, ethnicity, etc), measurement, evaluation, dissemination of results, ‘monitor[ing] scientific developments’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 25), and so on. Research, within this policy context, is thus positioned as instrumental and output-oriented; as something that researchers ‘produce’ and policy-makers ‘consume’. In this sense, the ways of doing (‘legitimate’, useful/usable) research are normalised such that ‘alternative research, arrangements, and subjectivities’ are made ‘impossible and therefore unimaginable’ (Spencer & Taylor, 2010, p. 57)

Particularly interesting, for my purposes, are the different kinds of research drawn upon in the National Health Policy and the ways in which these shape the policy directions. NWHP, for example, calls specifically for research exploring the relationships between health, gender and other social determinants including ‘socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability and sexual identity’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 113). A different research agenda is evident in the NMHP, however, this focusing on ‘particular population groups of males’ and male responses to ‘adverse life events’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 25). In this respect, ‘gay, bisexual and transgender groups’ are subsumed within ‘different population groups’ including ‘culturally diverse population groups’ (p. 25). This tendency to ‘ignore or oversimplify’ masculinity, especially in relation to the heterogeneity of males, thus sidesteps critical questions in
relation to ‘gendered patterns of health’. This includes questions regarding the specific ways in which ‘masculinity might be implicated’ in health related experiences and behaviours (Broom, 2009a, p. 141). In this respect, authors such as Smith (2007b) and Lohan (2007) have noted that critical studies of masculinity, as compared to ‘men’s studies’, and research relating to ‘multiple masculinities’ (J. A. Smith, 2007b, p. 23) have been largely ignored in the health promotion/prevention field (see also Petersen, 2009). Doyal (2000, p. 934) further observes that research which reduces ‘sex’ to ‘specific biological characteristics’ is especially problematic given the strong relationship between ‘qualitative dimensions of well being’ and ‘health problems’. In other words, because there is no one ‘reality of “maleness” and “femaleness”’ (p. 935), it is not possible to understand the ‘impact of sex’ (or gender for that matter) in isolation. In this context, the linking of research to ‘narrow policy agendas and the pursuit of “quick fixes”’ (Petersen, 2009, p. 209), and associated neglect of critical approaches, diverts attention from social structures, social inequality and, in particular, the power relations inherent within diverse masculinities and femininities.

**Part Two: Positioning Men and Women**

In Part One of this chapter I critiqued the discourses of gender, difference and prevention which underpin Australian national health policy. In this section I explore the specific, and oppositional, positionings of boys/men and girls/women in this context. Paying attention to the ways in which individuals and groups are positioned by, and within, policy is crucial because, as emphasised by Taylor (1998, p. 333), ‘[a]ppeals to particular “identity categories” function either as legitimating or disciplinary’. Social policy is, in this sense, ‘deeply implicated’ in establishing both the discursive and material conditions ‘for the realisation or foreclosure of particular identities’ (p. 333).

In this section, Part Two, I identify, what I consider to be, the organising themes – or problematics – around which the NMHP is built and consider
the assumptions underlying these as well as the specific ways in which these work to position men and women, masculinity and femininity. This is consistent with Scheurich’s (Policy Archaeology: Arena I) emphasis on policy problems as social constructions and, accordingly, the need to question how particular issues come to be seen as problem/s and what makes the emergence of particular problem/s possible (Scheurich, 1997, p. 97). In Bacchi’s (2009) terms, my focus here is on, both, the particular problem representations embedded within Australian health policy and the proposed policy ‘solutions’, or responses, in terms of what these reveal about the nature of the assumed problem. To this end, the rest of this chapter is structured around interrogation of the two problematisations and corresponding policy ‘solutions’ which are central to the NMHP.

1. Policy problem: Males are disadvantaged

Each of the National Policies refers to ‘significant social, economic and cultural changes in our society’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 3) as the broader context for health in Australia. What this is taken to ‘mean’, however, is different in each. The NMHP emphasises the challenging nature of these ‘major changes to roles and responsibilities’ by drawing particular attention to the ‘continued economic pressures on many men as breadwinners and income-earners’ (p. 3). Indeed it is this very recognition – ‘of the specific health challenges facing males in Australia’ (p. 9) – that is cited as having led to the decision to develop the NMHP, as the first such policy in Australia. In contrast, the NWHP’s focus is on the ‘significant improvements’ in women’s health that have been associated with these changes (p. 7). Thus, in this and a range of other ways explored in this section, the NMHP is oriented towards an understanding of men as a disadvantaged group whilst also recognising some men as especially disadvantaged relative to others. Specifically, the NMHP provides the following rationale for this position:

major structural change in the economies of developed nations, including Australia, has been occurring since the 1980s. These changes have resulted in a significant loss of manufacturing and
manual labour jobs, a decline in full-time employment, and a rise in part-time and contract-based employment, particularly in the service industry. These changes have had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of many males, particularly disadvantaged males. (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 5)

In establishing the case for men as disadvantaged, the NMHP discusses a range of factors which it considers especially critical for men, these including the economic pressures on men ‘as breadwinners and income earners’ (p. 3), loneliness and social isolation, lack of services and support for fathers, and relationship and family breakdown. For example, reflecting its overriding focus on the neglect of men’s needs, the ‘loss of full-time, secure employment’ is seen as having a greater impact for men, particularly in terms of their ability ‘to fulfil the role of family provider, a key gendered role in our society, which is for many males crucial to a sense of health and wellbeing’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 5). Further, the NMHP cites research findings that ‘married males have better physical and mental health outcomes than males who are divorced, bereaved or single’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 16) in relation to its claim that ‘males at all ages tend to experience feelings of loneliness more than women’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 8).

Men’s disadvantage is a key problematic framing the NMHP. As such, the strategies of the NMHP are primarily oriented towards men’s ‘disadvantage’ in relation to access to health care. Equal access to health care, it is argued, ‘is an issue for males in general’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 26), constituting an ‘health inequity’ between men and women (p. 7). Implicit in its emphasis on the need for the media to promote ‘males as positive family members’ (Priority area 3.1, p. 19), is the assumption that men have been disadvantaged – or misrepresented – in this respect also. Hence, as evident in the examples provided above,
men’s disadvantage is specifically constructed here as relative to women’s ‘advantage’. In this sense, disadvantage and advantage, like men and women, are positioned as opposites, with women the implied beneficiaries of the social changes which have ‘caused’ men’s disadvantage. This is consistent with the popular focus on boys as disadvantaged within the education system which is discussed in the NMHP’s supporting documentation. Here, ‘boys’, without qualification, are specifically named as ‘disadvantaged students’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 12). In this respect, boys’ ‘alienation from learning’ is said to have ‘flow-on effects on their economic, social and emotional well-being for life’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2008b, p. 9).

The NMHP focus on men’s disadvantage, and on listing the ‘various ways in which men’s health is disadvantaged, relative to women’s’ (Lohan, 2007, p. 494), is problematic on a number of levels, not the least of which is that fails to acknowledge the ‘complex processes by which health statistics are gendered’ (p. 494). This practice is, of course, not unique to the NMHP; factors such as gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality are routinely ‘treated by health scientists as variables to be controlled for’ (Courtenay, 2009, p. 17). Most crucially though, it disregards the overarching and gendered nature of power relations and, in particular, the intersections of gender, race and class. Not only is this a critical recognition in its own right but, moreover, in the current context, overlooking the ‘power asymmetry in gender relations’ – and of men’s collective advantage in this regard - means discounting this as a powerful ‘underlying motivation’ in terms of men’s health practices:

it is the very pursuit of this power and privilege which often leads men to harm themselves due to the fact that it is the very social practices which undermine men’s health (assuming their physical and mental health to be strong and invulnerable) that also facilitate men to demonstrate manliness and acquire power in sexist and gender dichotomous societies (Lohan, 2007, p. 497).
Here Lohan is referring to both 'hegemonic cultural practices', such as working long hours, and the 'institutional practices of workplaces and nation states' (p. 497) which together provide the necessary context for understanding men's, and women's, health. 'Dismissing their health needs and taking physical risks', for example, is a means by which men are able to 'legimitis[e] themselves as the “stronger” sex' (Courtenay, 2009, p. 25). Thus, whilst there may certainly be negative health impacts associated with men's gender identities, it is clear that men, on the whole, derive 'major benefits' from the gendered status quo: '[i]n fact for most men the social gains of masculinity probably far outweigh the losses' (Doyal, 2000, p. 937). In this respect the 'male disadvantage' claim must be qualified with the acknowledgement that men's health issues (or, in NMHP terms, men's 'unique needs') are not caused by gender inequity but, rather, relate directly to the beliefs and practices associated with the construction and maintenance of 'male identity' (Doyal, 2000, p. 934), and in particular, heterosexual male identity (Doyal, 2001, p. 1062).

1.1. Policy solution: Addressing male disadvantage

The solution proposed in the NMHP to the problem of men's disadvantage is to focus on men's 'unique needs':

Males have unique needs within the health system. Not paying attention to these unique needs can contribute to unequal health outcomes between males and females and between different groups of males (Department of Health & Aging, 2010b, p. 7)

In this respect, it is claimed that the 'particular challenges' faced by men can be traced to both their 'unique biological needs' and the 'social circumstances of male lives' (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 13). The NMHP thus devotes much of its attention to facilitating men's 'equal access to health care' (p. 26) by 'tailoring' the health system 'to respond effectively to the varied needs of Australian males' (p. 11). In this context, it seeks to refute the 'commonly held view', which it refers to as
the ‘male deficit model of health’ (p. 12), that males ‘lack interest in preventing illness’ and are ‘less likely to visit doctors’ because ‘doing so may be considered a sign of weakness’ (p. 26). The report of the Senate Select Committee on Men’s Health (2009), a forerunner to the NMHP, critiqued this view in greater depth. The male-deficit model, according to the Committee, is based on a ‘view that men are to blame for much of their adverse health outcomes by adopting risk-taking or other irresponsible behaviours and by failing to seek advice, support or treatment at an early stage’ (p. 12). In rejecting this claim, the Committee cites research that ‘taken together […] suggests that neither lack of interest nor lack of contact with the health system is the primary problem but rather that men are not getting the best value out of the contact that occurs’ (p. 17). The report goes on to canvass a range of ‘ways of reaching out to men’ (p. 20), many of which appear in the subsequent NMHP.

The rejection of the ‘male deficit model’ has been applauded by other prominent voices in the men’s health field, including MacDonald (2006) and Malcher (2006, 2009), as reflecting ‘a more rational and compassionate view of men’s health needs’, preferable to one that attributes ‘all male health problems simply to “men behaving badly”’ (Macdonald cited in UWS Media Unit, 2010). Thus such perspectives have enabled the neglect of a gendered critique, ironically, in the name of ‘fairness’ and equity. As observed by Smith and Bollen (2009, p. 99) however, whilst it may indeed be simplistic and unproductive to rely on generalisations about men, it is ‘equally dangerous to ignore the influence of gender’. Paradoxically then, the effect of NMHP efforts to ‘more effectively reach and engage males’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 20) by avoiding gender stereotyping, is to reinscribe these. In this respect, the categories of ‘men’ and ‘masculinity’ are treated as if they constitute ‘stable and static cultural traits’ (Lohan, 2007, p. 498). In its emphasis on ‘male friendly’ practices, for example, the NMHP relies upon ‘narrow and stereotypical assumptions about what it means to be a man’ (R. Williams, et al., 2009, p. 480). In using the term ‘male friendly’, the NMHP thus fails to acknowledge, both, the heterogeneity of ‘men’ and the
‘importance of social context, social relationships and social determinants in shaping men’s health experiences’ (p. 484).

The NMHP’s problematisation of men’s health as, essentially, an access and equity issue can thus be seen to effectively close off a gendered critique of the relationships between practices of masculinity and men’s health. Instead it focuses on improving men’s ‘good health’ by tailoring services to make these ‘more accessible’ for men whilst ensuring that the ‘range of gender-related barriers to health care’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 26) are addressed. Accordingly a substantial proportion of the NMHP is concerned with encouraging ‘health services to be responsive to male needs and aware of health barriers they face’ (p. 8). Specifically, of the six priority areas for action and associated strategies, four encompass a specific focus on ‘male-focused’, or ‘male-friendly’, service delivery. In this context, the term ‘gender-neutral’ is used to refer to the ‘de-feminisation’ (or re-masculinisation) required to ensure a ‘male-focused’ environment. Tellingly, the range of ‘barriers’ and access issues identified as relevant to men reflect a markedly narrow conceptualisation of masculinity and of ‘male roles in the community’ (p. 28). Recommendations for action include that services introduce extended opening hours ‘so that employed males can more easily access services’, minimise wait times for men (for example, ‘Receptionists could encourage males to phone before leaving work or home to see if the doctor is running late’, p. 26), and provide ‘information and services in settings which are frequented by males, such as the workplaces, clubs, sporting events, churches, pubs, service stations, rural shows and community centres’ (p. 26). Posters and magazines ‘suited to males’, male-only clinics and employing male staff are all suggested, without irony, as ways to create a ‘more gender-neutral environment’ that is ‘male friendly’ (p. 27). Other identified barriers to health care, such as ‘out-of-pocket expenses that cannot be readily met’ and ‘long distances to travel to health services’ (p. 26), seem more straightforward however it is difficult to see how these can be any more relevant to men than to women, outside, that is, of a ‘men as breadwinners’ view of the world.
Broom's (2009b) discussion of the background of the men's and women's health movements in Australia provides an important context for, and, indeed confirms, the observations made here. As Broom notes, the Australian women's health movement is well-developed, both politically and theoretically (Broom, 2009b, p. 269) and, in contrast to the men's health movement, has its origins in a 'broad political base in which health was only one component' (p. 271; see also J. A. Smith, 2007a). The political base for the men's movement is less clear and encompasses both pro-feminist and anti-feminist perspectives. In Broom's explanation, this is not surprising given the 'absence of a full-blown male cognate to feminism' (p. 271). Lumb (2003) has also commented on the lack of a 'broad, sustaining [men's] social movement with an underlying coherent social justice ideology' (p. 4). As he observes, this has resulted in a men's health movement based on 'simple appeals to equality so that men can share the gains that women have won' (p. 4), rather than one centred on working towards social change (see also Keleher, 2009). This has been complicated by the prominence of gay men's coalitions in Australia, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS, this contributing to the view that men's health is a 'territory populated by gay men' and is, thus, 'tainted territory in dominant discourses of heterosexual masculinity' (p. 6). In the NMHP, the lack of attention to gay men's health issues and concerns, along with the marginalisation of these as concerning only those groups of men with 'particular needs', confirms this distancing strategy.

Given recognition of the 'social gains of masculinity' (Doyal, 2000), as noted earlier, it cannot be assumed that men (or women) share an 'automatic identity of interests', particularly with regard to the 'reform of gender relations' (Doyal, 2000, p. 937). Crucially, because the men's health movement emerged, at least in part, in response to the women's health movement, it has come to be associated with a 'language of competitive victimisation [...] positioning the sexes in a national hierarchy of suffering' (Broom, 2009b, p. 270). This culture of antagonism, as evident in the NMHP, diverts attention from the critical observation that the
current health system is not adequately meeting the interests of many people, whether men or women, thus highlighting the ‘futility of arguing over which gender has the advantage in health’ (Broom, 2009b, p. 271).

1.2. Policy solution: Promoting positive images of men

The health of Australian males is critical to their wellbeing and that of their families and friends [...] and enables them to fulfil important roles in Australian society (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 9).

A strong emphasis on valuing men and the ‘important roles that they have in families, the wider community, and the social and economic life of Australia’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 3) runs throughout the NMHP. This is reflected, in particular, in Priority areas 1.1: ‘Increase recognition at all levels of society of the valuable roles males play in family and community life across Australia’; 3.1: ‘Actively promote and value, at all levels in society, the role of males as fathers, recognising the critical role males play in the lives of children’; and 6.1: ‘Encourage health service providers to deliver services in ways that are responsive to male needs and that take account of male roles in the community’. In addition to more general references to men’s roles as ‘fathers, partners, providers, carers, sons, brothers, grandfathers, uncles, friends and role models’ (p. 10), the NMHP stresses the importance of positively recognising men as fathers and workers. It advocates, for example, that the role of men as fathers, especially as ‘role models for their sons’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 16), be ‘actively promote[d] and value[d]’, whilst also acknowledging ‘the critical role males play in the lives of children [...] whether as grandfathers, brothers or uncles’ (p. 19). Particular attention is paid to men’s ‘unique contributions’ as fathers, such as through ‘interactive rough-and-tumble play that provides children with bursts of physical and social stimulation’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 7), thereby positioning men and woman as essentially different in their parenting. In valuing men as fathers, services should be ‘openly inclusive of fathers’
and ‘actively encourage’ their involvement. The media should also be involved in ‘promoting males as positive family members’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 19).

Men as workers are a dominant theme throughout the NMHP. Men, it is emphasised, make a ‘significant contribution to our society in paid work [...] and] also contribute substantially to the Australian economy in unpaid work’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 10). In this there are clear links between the NMHP and the federal government’s overarching Social Inclusion Agenda for ‘a stronger, fairer Australia’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) in which economic participation is narrowly conceptualised as the key to social inclusion and participation. As observed by Fawcett, Goodwin, Meagher and Phillips (2010, p. 160), the ‘dominant and often unquestioned assumption that paid employment for all is the route to inclusion and therefore the solution to achieving greater equality’ provides the foundational underpinnings for this initiative. In this context the focus on men as workers highlights the interconnections between population health concerns and economic productivity. By way of contrast, no part of the NWHP addresses women specifically as workers. Women’s role as carers, both in the context of unpaid work and parenting/family responsibilities, is however implicit throughout. Here, women’s health is uncritically linked to the ‘health and wellbeing of families and whole communities, through [women’s] caring, nurturing and educative roles’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2009, p. 2). The NMHP similarly positions women as the primary providers of ‘emotional and physical support’ in its reference to the role of women in ‘monitoring men’s health and encouraging men to visit a doctor’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 7).

As noted by Williams, Robertson and Hewison (2009), policies are ‘designed to complement the market’ (p. 479) and not the other way around. Thus men continue to be defined by ‘their instrumental roles’, by ‘what they do’ (Robertson, 2006, p. 448), and changes in employment patterns, such as the diminishing reliance on physical labour associated
with technology growth and globalisation, have not, it seems, lessened the perceived importance of (paid) work for male identity construction. The \textit{NMHP}, for example, is emphatic in its focus on the importance of employment for men, pointing to the ‘significant impact’ of unemployment in terms of ‘the ability of males to fulfil the role of family provider […], which is for many males crucial to a sense of health and wellbeing’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 5). Such a claim makes sense from the perspective that identity in contemporary society is ‘constructed as much through consumption as through production’. Self esteem, then, is gained through both the ‘actively consuming body’ and the ‘productive working body’ (Robertson, 2006, p. 449). Hence, to be employed is to be ‘healthy’ and, following this conceptual logic, to be unemployed inherently ‘unhealthy’.

The \textit{NMHP} focus on promotion of ‘positive images’ of men is problematic in a number of respects, both in itself and in relation to the promotion of ‘good health’ in particular. The focus on ‘men’s strength’, as in the NHMP subtitle, \textit{Building on the strengths of Australian males}, for instance, reflects a stereotypical notion of maleness which constitutes the policy’s organising theme. The \textit{NMHP}’s emphasis on ‘messages that taking care of personal health is a sign of strength’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 3) might, in principle, be important to counter a limited focus on ‘men behaving badly’. However, to the extent that these neglect ‘wider notions of gender, and the links between masculinities and other structural social and economic factors’ (R. Williams, et al., 2009, p. 484), the approach taken here fails to address these broader issues. Rather, being positive about men is presented as an end in itself, as a necessary measure to counteract women’s (health) ‘advantage’.

Robinson and Robertson (2010) provide a useful critique of the tendency, in the health context, to use ‘homogenised images of hegemonic masculinity’ (p. 50) to influence men’s behaviours (see also J. A. Smith, 2007b). ‘Social marketing’ campaigns, they argue, with their ‘strong consumer focus’ (p. 54) based on ‘blokey’ imagery, draw upon the ‘very
same behavioural norms associated with hegemonic masculinity’ (p. 51) and, as such, have become a popular governmental strategy for engaging men in relation to health issues. The basic premise underlying these is that, rather than trying to ‘change masculine cultures’ which, after all, encompass ‘positive male value[s] and role[s] within society’, health promotion approaches should aim to engage with men ‘on their own level’ (p. 57). By selectively appealing to certain ‘ascribed male values’, however, such approaches ‘tacitly reinforce unhealthy male gender stereotypes’ (M. Robinson & Robertson, 2010, p. 51). Importantly, health campaigns tend to mobilise ‘reductive repertoires of gendered resources’ (M. Robinson & Robertson, 2010, p. 58) such as mateship, male reticence, stoicism, and overestimate social norms around, for example, ‘sex, drink and cars’ (p. 57). Program exemplars cited in the NMHP, for example, include the ‘Men’s Preventive Health project’ which ‘appeals to the male sense of community and relationship’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 21); Men’s Sheds which provide ‘opportunity for men to enjoy the company of other men […], through activities such as making toys and furniture, building or fixing things’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 16); and the ‘Pit Stop’ program (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 26). The Pit Stop program, described as a ‘mechanical health package for men’ (WA Country Health Service, 2006), vividly illustrates the mobilisation – and entrenchment - of hegemonic ideals. Based on the claim that ‘mechanical concepts provide a comfortable and masculine backdrop while introducing an element of humour’, the program comprises a series of ‘pit stop station’ analogies such as ‘chassis checks (hip to waist ratio), exhaust (smoking), fuel additives (alcohol consumption), spark plugs (testicles), duco (skin cancer)’, and so on. Reflecting a stereotypical appeal to men’s supposed affinity with car mechanics, the Pit Stop program objectifies the male body ‘as an assembly of car components’ (M. Robinson & Robertson, 2010, p. 54) and, thus, is premised on ‘instrumental rather than experiential understandings of the male body’ (p. 55).
Closely aligned with the imagery of men’s strength is the policy emphasis on individual action: the NMHP, it is claimed, is a ‘practical policy’ with ‘practical suggestions’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 30) for men ‘take charge’ and ‘act to improve’ (p. 21) their health. As has been observed by Williams, Robertson and Hewison (2009) in the UK context, this reflects the ‘increasingly individualistic nature’ (p. 479) of health policy in general, and of men’s health policy in particular, based upon a ‘curious amalgam of biomedical, neo-liberal and psychological ideas’ (p. 480). NMHP references to ‘individuals tak[ing] action to improve their own health’ (p. 7) and ‘Australians work[ing] together’ to ‘build on the strengths of Australian males’ (p. 30), for example, reflect a clear focus on individual behaviour and individual choice.

As ‘key element[s] of neoliberal ideology’ (Broom, 2008, p. 134), individualism and rational choice enable constant reinstatement of the ‘default option of the individual as author of their own destiny’ (p. 131). Thus the NMHP emphasis on individual ‘risk-taking behaviours’, ‘preventable health issues’, and ‘lifestyle modifications’ positions men as the ‘sum of their individual “behaviours”’ rather than ‘people living in complex sets of social relationships’ (R. Williams, et al., 2009, p. 479). The inclusion of the supporting documents ‘Healthy routines’ and ‘Healthy limits’ as ‘Actions Males Can Take Now’, highlights the central governing role of ‘moral discourses around health’ (Robertson, 2007, p. 45), particularly in terms of (self) surveillance and regulation. In this context, ‘recognising one’s limits’ represents ‘correct moral behaviour’ (p. 45). Accordingly, the role of the neoliberal state is to provide information, through policy, ‘on which individuals can choose (or not) to act’ (p. 45). This implies that such choices are both ‘rational’ and straightforward, thereby ‘stigmatising the sick, occluding structure, and increasing surveillance’ (Broom, 2008, p. 130).

2. Policy problem: Some males are more disadvantaged than others

Whilst the NMHP and NWHP both acknowledge health inequities between as well as within particular population groups; that ‘certain groups have
worse health than others’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010d, p. 7), each deals with this in different ways. In the NWHP ‘diversity’ is named and centrally positioned as one of four ‘key social determinants of health which can influence women’s health and wellbeing’ (p. 8). A range of groups are identified as at ‘greater risk of poor health’ including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (AATSI), women with a disability, women in rural and remote areas, migrant and refugee women, women as carers, older women, and lesbian and bisexual women (p. 18). In contrast, the NMHP refers more obliquely to ‘health equity between population groups of males’ as one of its six ‘priority areas for action’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 13) but does not identify diversity, in and of itself, as a ‘social determinant’ of men’s health. The NMHP’s list of identified ‘priority groups’ is less comprehensive than the NWHP and includes AATSI males, males ‘from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds’, males in rural and remote areas, males with a disability and males ‘from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds’ (pp. 11-12). The NMHP makes general reference to ‘other groups of males that may be marginalised or have particular needs’ such as those ‘who are gay, bisexual or transgender, or from intersex groups’, veterans, ‘socially isolated males, and males in the criminal justice system’ (p. 12), however, given that there is no other content that addresses the specific issues for these groups, this appears to be little more than a token gesture. AATSI men are the only group addressed directly in the NMHP, with ‘injustice experienced by AATSI peoples’ named as a ‘key determinant identified in the [NMHP] consultations’ (p. 15). Indeed a substantial proportion of content is devoted to discussion of the issues facing AATSI men, as discussed next.

2.1. Policy solution: Health equity

The NMHP clearly positions AATSI males as a disadvantaged group, with ‘lower levels of education, employment and income than Australians in general’ and poorer ‘health outcomes’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 5). Interestingly, the limited references to violence in the NMHP relate overwhelmingly to AATSI people, specifically the ‘high level of
violence in Indigenous communities’ (p. 9). Cultural difference is thus discursively linked with crime and disorder, with a strong emphasis on substance use including petrol sniffing, child abuse and neglect. Moreover, despite nominally recognising the broader context of Indigenous ‘injustices’, the NMHP links (health) inequities with ‘different cultural attitudes’ and the ‘health-damaging behaviours freely chosen’ by ‘culturally different’ individuals (Lohan, 2007, p. 498). In this respect the NHMP links directly with the aforementioned Social Inclusion Agenda and, in particular the Closing the Gap: Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage policy.

Especially interesting, for the purpose of this thesis, is the emphasis that the NMHP places on the specific impacts of injustice on ‘the roles played by males’. AATSI men, it is noted, “have lost the roles that generated prestige and self esteem”, including the ability to provide for others, which “confers honour and respect” (Department of Health and Aging, 2010b, p. 16, citing Adams 2006). Curiously, despite asserting that ‘many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are fulfilling important roles and responsibilities as elders, husbands, fathers, sons, grandfathers, grandsons, brothers, uncles, nephews, providers, teachers, mentors and custodians of the land’ (p. 6), the NMHP nonetheless proposes that AATSI males be provided with ‘support and services’ in relation to ‘their role as fathers and partners, grandfathers and uncles’ (p. 16). Specifically, it is recommended that priority be given to funding services ‘of a positive nature, such as positive parenting or family wellbeing’ (Priority Area 2.3, p. 17). Implied as the policy problem here, then, is AATSI men’s failure in these roles, and the ‘solution’ that government support be provided to enable them to become ‘better’ fathers, partners, and so on. Less overt, but equally powerful, is the suggestion that the ‘problem’ of poor health outcomes, both in relation to AATSI health and more generally, is attributable, at least in part, to men’s position in families.

Notwithstanding its stated concern with ‘health equity between population groups’ (Department of Health and Aging, 2010c, p. 7), one of the most remarkable features of the NMHP is its explicit heterosexism and, in
particular, its disregard of homosexual men. The claim that ‘good relationships are vital for the health and wellbeing of males’ (p. 7) is a core theme of the NMHP: ‘relationships’, in this context, includes ‘well functioning and stable marriage or committed couple relationships’, fathering, and ‘social networks’ (p. 7). Whilst the term ‘committed couple relationship’ could, potentially, encompass that between same-sex partners, the way that this is used within the NMHP and associated documentation clearly links it with heterosexual relationships, not least given the reference here to women’s role in providing men with ‘emotional and physical support’ (p. 7). ‘Normal’ masculinity thus presupposes heterosexuality. As argued by McCann, Plummer and Minichiello (2010, p. 520), ‘fears about proper gender performance permeate much of the discourse of masculinity’ and homophobia is central to ‘these gender fears’. The narrow construction of masculinity embodied by the NMHP both relies upon and reinstates a hierarchised masculinity in which ‘gay masculinities become subordinated to the hegemonic standards against which they are measured and found wanting’ (Robertson, 2007, p. 53). In this sense, there can surely be no more powerful communication of one’s worth than that of utter disregard; through their very absence homosexual men are clearly identified as ‘an opposed group of social outsiders’ (Tomsen, 2003, p. 96). Thus heterosexuality is both normalised and made invisible, thereby shutting down the potential to reflect upon the interconnections between sexuality, masculinities and men’s health.

Autonomy - the ‘establishment of a heterosexual relationship and becoming a father’ - is, as emphasised by Smith (2007b, p. 22), a key marker of ‘successful hegemonic masculinity’. The positioning of heterosexuality and fatherhood as central, if not defining, themes of the NMHP is therefore indicative of a particular – and particularly problematic - discourse of masculinity, one that relies upon fixed notions of what it means to be a ‘man’. The existence of differing versions of masculinity is largely overlooked as is the importance of power relations - the complex relations of dominance and subordination (Connell, 2000, p. 69) - which underlie these. Masculinities, however, are diverse, heterogeneous and
hierarchical, and social power, relational and contested. Because gender intersects with social class, sexuality, and race relations, inequitable social relations depend upon the preservation of dominant constructions of masculinity (see Connell, 1996). Dominant discourses, as observed by Bacchi (2009, p. 139), ‘provide resources for making particular kinds of demands’; in this case, in relation to what men are, can, and should ‘be’. In this context then ‘health becomes what is required to make governing possible and successful’, most significantly, as evident in the NMHP, in relation to the maintenance of ‘order and economic security’ (p. 129).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the discourses of gender and difference drawn upon, mobilised and reproduced in and through Australia’s National Health Policy. I have shown that whilst the policy documents - the NMHP and, to a lesser extent, the NWHP - which make up the National Policy fail to specifically name and address violence, each embodies particular discourses of gender which fundamentally limit the subject positions made available to boys and girls, men and women. In the NMHP this is especially evident in the links made between its core problematic, that of men’s disadvantage, and societal change. In this context, women’s supposed advantage has come about at the expense of men; hence the imperative to reassert – and reinscribe – the ‘naturalness’ of sex/gender difference. In this sense, the obligation to be ‘free’, as a key imperative of neo-liberal governance, involves making the ‘right’ (‘healthy’) choices from within the relative confines of a gendered notion of responsibility and selfhood. Discourses of health then, including the naming of ‘healthy’ (‘good’) and ‘unhealthy’ (‘bad’) behaviours and bodies, are bound up with discourses of gender, difference and identity. This chapter’s examination of Australian federal policy representations of gender thus provides a critical foundation for the analyses of policy representations of violence in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER 7: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the federal government’s National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2009-2021. Building upon the previous chapter, with its emphasis on the discourses of gender drawn upon, mobilised and reproduced through Australia’s National Health Policy, the specific focus of this chapter is policy representations of violence. Here, as in the previous chapter, Bacchi’s notion of policy as discourse is applied as an analytical tool to explore (domestic) violence policy in Australia with particular reference to the ways in which discourses of violence rely upon and reinstate particular gender constructions. Thus the aim of this chapter is to highlight the ways in which certain representations of gender and violence are problematised in and through social policy, illustrating the exercise of power, through discourse, in shaping Australian government responses.

I begin this chapter with an overview of the background to the National Plan including consideration of its precursor report, Time for Action, developed by the government appointed National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (NCRVAWC). Next, following a brief description of the National Plan itself, I consider its preventive and ‘evidence-based’ emphasis as a crucial context for its particular approach to understanding, problematising and addressing violence. The remainder, and primary focus, of this chapter explores key themes in relation to the conceptualisations of gender and violence underpinning the National Plan. Two interrelated themes are examined: firstly, the Plan’s conceptualisation of violence as a social problem; and, secondly, the particular understandings of ‘gender’ and ‘equality’, and specifically the positioning of men and masculinity, which frame the problem of violence as it appears in the National Plan.
Time for action?

The intention to develop and implement a national plan to reduce violence against women and children was announced by the Federal (Labour) Government, via the Minister for the Status of Women, on 18 November 2007. This initiative was positioned as ‘part of a broader framework of social inclusion’ on the basis that ‘healthy communities’, that is, those in which there is ‘maximal participation in the nation’s social and economic opportunities’, generate a ‘healthier web of relationships’ (Rudd, 2008). Other, linked, federal projects which have evolved over the period since November 2007 include the government’s ‘new approach to homelessness’ (The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness), the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children, and the ‘Closing the Gap’: Indigenous Reform Agenda.

A National Council (NCRVWC) was established to oversee the development of a national plan, with membership announced in May 2008. Council members were selected on the basis of ‘their extensive knowledge, expertise and networks in the fields of sexual assault and domestic and family violence’ (NCRVWC, 2009, p. 11). This was followed in September 2008 by the announcement of $2 million funding for research into community attitudes on domestic violence and sexual assault. Time for action: The National Council’s plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children 2009-2021 (NCRVWC, 2009) was launched a little over a year later, on 24 April 2009. In response the Federal Government allocated funding, totalling $42 million, for five ‘immediate actions’ identified in the report as ‘urgent priorities’, these including:

- $12.5 million for establishment of a new national online and 1800 (toll-free) service for victims of violence and their families as well as provision of backup support to workers. 1800 Respect, a 7 day/24 hour ‘telephone counselling service for Australians who have
experienced or are at risk of physical or sexual violence’, was subsequently launched on 5 October 2010.

- $26 million for primary prevention activities with a ‘focus on changing attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence’ (Rudd, 2009), including $9 million to ‘improve the quality and uptake of Respectful Relationships programs’ in high schools and other ‘non-school settings’, and $17 million for a national social marketing campaign ‘focused on men and boys’. The resulting social marketing campaign, *The Line*, ‘promoting respectful relationships among Australia’s youth’, was formally launched by the government on 20 June 2010.

- $3 million for ‘research and innovation’ with a particular focus on evaluation of best practice in relation to perpetrator treatment programs.

- Appointment of a Violence against Women ‘Expert Advisory Group’ responsible for the provision of ‘expert advice’ regarding implementation of the National Plan. Membership of this group was announced in September 2009.

- Changes to occur ‘within the legal system to ensure perpetrators are held to account and victims have access to justice they deserve’ (Rudd, 2009) including examination of the interaction between Federal, state and territory laws. As an example of the latter, a joint investigation regarding the harmonisation of domestic violence and family laws was announced in July 2009 as a collaboration between the Australian and NSW Legal Reform Commissions (ALRC and NSWLRC).

The National Council’s report was subsequently referred to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) for establishment of an agreed upon National Plan through consultation with state and territory governments. A
Ministerial Council on Family Violence was later established by COAG, in July 2009, to ‘take Time for Action to its next step’.

The primary focus of this chapter is the final, COAG endorsed, *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children* (NPRVAWC). Before moving on to this more in-depth analysis, however, I will briefly comment on a number of aspects of the National Council’s (proposed) plan in order to illustrate as problematic the basic assumptions linking the two documents (refer to Appendix A for an overview of specific claims and critiques).

**Time for action: The National Council’s plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children 2009-2021**

The 204 page *Time for Action* report, according to the National Council (NCRVAWC, 2009, p. 7), was developed through a process of ‘validating emerging trends, repeatedly testing ideas and solutions against the best available evidence, and building on the experience and wisdom grown from practice’ (p. 13). As a ‘framework for social change’, it is structured around six outcomes’, namely that communities are safe and free from violence; relationships are respectful; services meet the needs of women and their children; responses are just; perpetrators stop their violence; and systems work together effectively.

The *Time for Action* report is set out as a recommended ‘agenda for actions’ (p. 20) based on a ‘comprehensive architecture’ (p. 21) consisting of 25 strategies and 117 actions (p. 20). Interestingly, the federal government had already committed to a number of the actions recommended in the report well in advance of its April 2009 release. In his ‘Remarks to the Inaugural Meeting of the NCRVWC’ (Rudd, 2008), for example, Kevin Rudd, Australia’s then Prime Minister, discussed the government’s intention to implement the Respectful Relationships (schools) program, support White Ribbon Day (by $1 million to support education activities in rural and remote areas), fund research into ‘international best practice’ in working with perpetrators of violence, review
relevant Family Law/Domestic Violence legislation, and boost funding to the Australian Institute of Criminology’s (AIC) homicide monitoring program. Those National Council priority actions taken up by the government can thus be seen as representing, largely, an extension of existing ideas and preferences rather than ‘new’ or radical directions.\textsuperscript{10}

**Problematising violence against women**

The National Council’s failure to reflect upon the links between power differentials and other forms and manifestations of violence is perhaps the most notable feature of the *Time for Action* report. Thus whilst acknowledging the importance of ‘obvious and covert expressions of inequality in the community’ (NCRVAWC, 2009, p. 37) it does so only in relation to sexual assault, ‘domestic’ and family violence. Men are firmly positioned as agents, that is, as either ‘violent’, whether potentially or actually, or ‘non-violent’, and the latter group situated as responsible for ‘efforts to end violence against women’ (p. 44). Accordingly, particular emphasis is placed on ‘perpetrator’ responsibility (Outcomes 4 and 6) and, in the neoliberal tradition, the report individualises violence by constructing it as a rational and deliberate choice. In doing so, it draws upon men’s ‘masculine’ qualities, of strength, rationality and control, as the means through which men should manage and control their violence. Women, in contrast, are joined with children in a position of victimhood, again as either actual or potential victims, forever vulnerable to (some) men’s violence.

The National Council links its second proposed outcome, that ‘communities are safe and free from violence’, to the premise that ‘respectful relationships form the basis of a safe community’ (NCRVAWC, 2009, p. 11). Notwithstanding the more immediate questions raised by such a statement, in relation to, for example, what ‘community’, an ambiguous

\textsuperscript{10} Fawcett, Goodwin, Meagher, and Phillips (2010, pp. 28-38) provide an interesting overview, and critique, of the mechanisms for participation in policy-making. In particular, and of note here, they canvass the concern that contemporary decision-making has come to rely ‘too heavily on appointed technocrats and expert in closed policy communities’ (p. 38).
and fraught concept, might mean in this context, the foundational assumption here – that violence means, or represents, disrespect – and implication that violence is caused by ‘poor’ relationships, demands analysis. This is particularly so given that the term ‘respectful relationships’, as used throughout the Report, primarily in the context of ‘Respectful Relationships education’ and skill development for children and young people, refers specifically to male-female relations. There is no discussion of male-male relations nor reflection on the possible connections between violence and ‘disrespect’ in male friendships/relationships, whether in the context of same-sex relationships or more generally. Hence the suggestion that ‘respectful relationships form the basis of a safe community’ - or conversely, that unsafe communities represent the sum total of disrespectful relationships - is fundamentally flawed in that ‘safe’/safety, in this context, is not seen as applying to everyone. Significant also is the recommendation, as set out in Strategy 2.3 ('Support Effective Parenting'), that ‘parents and primary caregivers [be assisted] to provide positive parenting by supporting their children to develop respectful relationships’ (p. 68). Implied here is that disrespect, and following the National Council’s logic, violence, is a result of poor parenting. Hence the policy ‘solution’ proposed in relation to the problem of violence is, at least in part, that governments intervene to ensure that parenting is ‘positive’. Violence is, thus, individualised and linked to particular ‘types’ of people, families, and parents/ing, thereby shutting down reflection on more difficult questions concerning gender, power relations, identity and difference.

That perpetrators ‘be held accountable for their behaviour’ and ‘accept the consequences of their violence’ (NCRVAWC, 2009, p. 19) is the basis of the National Council’s proposed Outcome 5 (‘Perpetrators stop their violence’). Implying that perpetrators have _not_, heretofore, been held to account for their violent behaviour, the recommended ‘solutions’ include the establishment of a ‘Perpetrator Research Agenda’ (p. 143) in relation to ‘what works’ in stopping violence, and government investment in the design, implementation and evaluation of perpetrator treatment programs.
Primacy is thus accorded to ‘scientific’ – expert – knowledge as violence is linked to individual difference, deviance and/or pathology. Violence, in this perspective, is atypical (read, ‘bad’, deviant); non-violence, then, is a choice that is available to all ‘perpetrators’, requiring little more than the will to change and the ‘help’ of experts. Through its emphasis on changing perpetrators’ ‘violence-supportive attitudes’, producing ‘positive change in perpetrators’ behaviour’ and encouraging ‘them to redefine themselves as non-violent’ (p. 133), the National Council thus firmly positions individual perpetrator attitudes as the cause of (individual) violence. Violent/violence, here, represents the other half of a dichotomy, the polar opposite of ‘non-violence’ and, as such, something that one either is or is not. Thus the National Council reinforces a narrow view of violence as something that some people (that is, some men) do to others (specifically, to women and children), overlooking, and thereby obscuring, the complexity and pervasiveness of violence as productive of gender, difference and identity.

**National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022**

The COAG endorsed *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* (NPRVWC) was released by the Federal government on 15 February 2011, over three years from the initial announcement in November 2007. Despite the National Council’s recommendation in their *Time for Action* report, two years earlier, that an ‘integrated, comprehensive response endorsed by all levels of government’ (Recommendation 6, NCRVAWC, 2009, p. 26) be produced by early 2010, no explanation has been provided to account for this delay.

With a number of notable exceptions, the COAG endorsed *National Plan* is relatively consistent with the National’s Council report. For example, as shown in Table 2, of the ‘six fields for improvement’, or ‘outcome areas’, identified by the National Council, one has been deleted, one added, and some subtle changes of wording have been made (as indicated in italics). In the COAG endorsed plan, however, two out of the six outcomes relate
specifically to justice concerns such as enhanced legal responses, perpetrator accountability, consequences for behaviour, and so on. This strengthening of focus on perpetrators as knowable, identifiable, and responsible is an important feature of the *National Plan*, explored further throughout this chapter.

Table 2: Comparison of recommended (National Council) and final (COAG endorsed) outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>National Council’s <em>Time for Action report</em></th>
<th>COAG endorsed <em>National Plan</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communities are safe and free from violence</td>
<td>unchanged</td>
<td>unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships are respectful</td>
<td>unchanged</td>
<td>unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services meet the needs of women and children</td>
<td>unchanged</td>
<td>unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses are just</td>
<td>wording changed to: <em>Justice responses are effective</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrators stop their violence</td>
<td>wording changed to: <em>Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems work together effectively</td>
<td>omitted</td>
<td>added: <em>Indigenous communities are strengthened</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before moving on to the core analytical themes around which this chapter is structured, I consider, next, the ‘evidence-based’ preventive approach embraced by the *National Plan*, as indicative of a particular mode of governance within the context of neo-liberal rule.
Preventing violence

The National Plan is unprecedented in the way it focuses on preventing violence by raising awareness and building respectful relationships in the next generation. The aim is to bring attitudinal and behavioural change at the cultural, institutional and individual levels, with a particular focus on young people. (p. 10)

Primary prevention and a youth focus are strong, indeed overriding, themes of the National Plan. The notion of ‘prevention’, however, is not neutral but rather, as suggested by Bacchi (2009, p. 130), represents a framework for interpreting the social world. In this respect, it is important to consider, both, ‘what kind of a problem prevention is represented to be’ and, moreover, what ‘follows from these particular understandings of ‘prevention’. The discourse of prevention adopted in the National Plan is consistent with that of public health. This is most evident in the emphasis on the economic costs of violence and associated ‘burden’ on the Australian economy and health system, (see, for example, Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 2), this being a key factor used to justify the development of a national plan. Neoliberal, or market-driven, governance is associated with the minimisation of state responsibility and involvement in social problems. Evident in preventive approaches, such as that underpinning the National Plan, neoliberal rationalities emphasise individual accountability by seeking to extend ‘market rationality to all spheres, by the focus on choices of individuals and collectives, and by the establishment of a culture of enterprise and responsible autonomy’ (Dean, 1999, p. 210). Neoliberalism is, however, a ‘highly specific rationality’ rather than a ‘more or less constant master category’ (Rose, O’Malley and Valverde (2006, p. 97). Thus I refer here to the range of government rationalities associated with a particular conceptualisation of ‘that which is to be governed as a society of interdependent citizens and interconnected social and economic processes that are amenable to knowledge and planning’ (Rose, et al., 2006, p. 98).
As a broad orientation to the logics and techniques of governance, neoliberalism represents those ‘more marketised, entrepreneurial, consumerist forms of social organisation’ (D. Garland, 1997, p. 183) associated with westernised societies such as Australia. The assumption that ‘the real is programmable by authorities’ is fundamental to neoliberal governance: as observed by Miller and Rose (2008, p. 211), ‘the objects of governance are rendered thinkable in such a way that their difficulties appear amenable to diagnosis, prescription and cure’. It is in this sense that the National Plan’s appropriation of a preventive, public health approach to violence reveals a neoliberal orientation towards ‘governing at a distance’ in which ‘the regulation of conduct becomes a matter of each individual’s desire to govern their own conduct’ (p. 215). Neoliberal governance is thus concerned with the ‘activation of subjectivity’ (p. 217), with governing ‘through the regulated and accountable choices of autonomous agents’ (p. 216).

In the National Plan violence is analogous to disease with a focus on generational ‘contagion’ (children should be ‘protected from the damaging effects of exposure to violence’, p. 29); symptoms or ‘indicators’ (‘early indicators of violence’, p. 31); early intervention (‘intervene early to prevent violence’, p. 29); risk (‘some men are more likely than others to act violently towards women due to health, behavioural or other complex risk factors’, p. 29) and ‘protective’ factors. ‘Solving’ the problem of violence is thus constituted through a narrow framework in which expert intervention can prevent individuals from perpetrating and/or becoming a victim of, violence by influencing the choices they make. Key also is the reliance on, and privileging of, ‘scientific’ knowledge and the entrenchment of expertise via the ‘surveillance practices of professionals’ (Bumiller, 2008, p. 95). Domestic violence, then, becomes a disease that must be prevented and ‘managed as a threat to public health’ (Bumiller, 2008, p. 79). Moreover, in ‘turning the marks of violence into symptoms of a disease’ (p. 79), the surveillance associated with a preventive health approach is directed towards ‘all women as potential victims’ (p. 80, original emphasis) but only certain groups, or ‘types’, of men.
Violence against women, then, is depicted in the *National Plan* as preventable in the same way as ‘other complex social or health problems such as drink-driving and smoking’ (p. 14). For instance, in promoting the Plan, the (then) Minister for the Status of Women Tania Plibersek discusses drink driving as an example of a successful public intervention:

Our efforts to change violent behaviours have to [...] mirror our efforts in changing attitudes to, and incidence of, drink driving. Drink driving kills and maims. As a community we decided to save lives by banning drink driving. We sent a message as a community that this behaviour is completely unacceptable. It took a few years before this really sank in, but the days of crawling out of the club and into the car are mostly, thankfully, behind us’ (Ministerial Statement, 25/11/2009, p. 4).

Thus the key elements of a ‘successful’ campaign, according to Plibersek, are education, policing and strong laws; in short, sending a ‘strong message’ that ‘if you do this crime you will be caught and you will be prosecuted’¹¹ (p. 4). The drink-driving analogy used here is particularly interesting given the implication that it is the *combination* of drinking and driving that is the problem, not drinking itself. Similarly, violence is constructed as problematic only in terms of its context, that is, the nature (read: sex) and ‘vulnerability’ of the victim.

The *National Plan* has a strong focus on ‘youth’¹², ‘developmental pathways’ and, accordingly, the importance of education. National Outcome 2 (‘relationships are respectful’), for example, has a substantial focus on ‘changing and shaping attitudes and behaviours of young people’ (p. 18), primarily via school-based ‘respectful relationships education’. Bacchi (2009, p. 206) notes that education has come to be seen as the

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¹¹ Reflecting a basic utilitarian approach, alà Jeremy Bentham, based upon a deterrence model of punishment as prompt, certain and consistent.

¹² Note Bacchi’s observation that the category of ‘youth’ is used in policy ‘as if it refer[s] to a distinct minority group, rather than to a phase of life we all live through’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 59)
‘solution’ to a vast range of social problems. As an ‘investment in public health’ and ‘solution to disadvantage’, a ‘good’ education is seen as providing the ‘best start in life’. In this context, individuals are expected to ‘become “experts of themselves”’ by adopting an ‘educated and knowledgeable relation of self-care in respect of their bodies, their minds, their forms of conduct’ (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 215). Crucially, this enables the ‘problem’, in this case the problem of violence, to be represented as caused by a lack of education, thereby overlooking, and diverting attention from, the ‘deep structural asymmetries of power’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 207) running throughout society.

‘Evidence-based’

The discourse of prevention relies upon an acceptance of positivist, that is, scientific and ‘evidence-based’, knowledge as authoritative and value-free. Evidence-based approaches, including those with an actuarial/risk focus have, as noted by Bacchi (2009), come to assume ‘near-hegemonic status in a wide range of policy areas’ (p. 252). Such approaches are based on the claim that it is possible to scientifically ‘know’, predict and quantify human and social behaviour. To a large extent, the ubiquity of evidence-based approaches is related to the way in which they can be represented as existing outside of politics. ‘Science’ and ‘evidence’, in this context, are code-words for ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’. Knowledge, however, as was shown by Foucault, enables the exercise of power, or put another way, power works through knowledge. Disciplinary power is implicit within ‘scientific’ knowledge, particularly in terms of the authority to define, control and observe individuals. In evidence-based policy approaches then, such as the National Plan, ‘objective “problems” are presumed to exist, separate from power and contestation, waiting only upon “evidence” about “what works”’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 253). Thus evidential knowledge comes to assume the status of apolitical ‘truth’ and is able to evade political scrutiny. Moreover, the emphasis on policy as informed by evidence diverts questions regarding the ‘arrangements by which governments seek or solicit research “evidence”’(Bacchi, 2009, p. 144)
and the filtering processes through which evidence may be selected to suit ‘particular policy agendas’ (p. 137).

Parliamentary debates concerning the prevention of violence against women provide an important context for the National Plan, reflecting the extent to which violence is understood as a poor lifestyle choice (Bacchi, 2009) made by rational individuals. For instance,

Eliminating violence against women [...] is like eliminating crime or getting rid of drug addiction. There will always be a small element within our community that engages in criminal and harmful behaviour (Mirabella, House of Representatives, Official Hansard No. 18, 2009, p. 12871)

Violence is thus conceptualised as atypical and violent men as an identifiable group; as ‘other’:

[It is necessary to] address the issue of hostile gender norms and the sexist attitudes that exist in some corners of our communities (Hanson-Young, Senate, Official Hansard No. 13, 2008, p. 7345, my emphasis).

[For all the failings of these agencies we should never forget the origins of these crimes. The perpetrators are the bad people here ... (Simpkins, House of Representatives, Official Hansard No. 5, 2010, p. 3238, my emphasis).

Here a focus on identifiable ‘categories or aggregates of potential or actual deviants’ (G. Robinson, 2002, p. 6) is clearly evident, consistent with an actuarial, or risk-based, approach to governance. Originally used in the insurance context, actuarialism refers to the ‘calculation of probabilities of risks being realised’ (Hudson, 2003, p. 193). In essence, it involves categorising people into groups on the basis of their possession of certain characteristics and estimating, or predicting, the ‘riskiness’ of these groups. Individuals are not regarded as unique cases but rather as
members of high-risk or low-risk groups. In this context then, risk is a ‘particular way of envisioning problems and forming the techniques of governance to deal with them’ (Hannah-Moffat & O'Malley, 2007, p. 14). The National Plan’s focus on the reduction and management, rather than elimination, of violence against women, along with its emphasis on individual/relationship ‘risk factors’ and its targeting of ‘high risk’/problem groups, rather than the societal/structural context for violence, can thus be read as an exemplar of a neo-liberal approach to the governance of violence.

Risk-based knowledge is ‘productive’, in the Foucauldian sense, in that it is associated with the elevation of the ‘role and importance of certain types of “expertise”’ (Hannah-Moffat & O'Malley, 2007, p. 17). Moreover, because risk is ‘shaped by, interacts with and (re)produces’ inequalities, it is inevitably bound up with gender and, to this extent, ‘subjectivities and categories are constituted by risk thinking’ (p. 26). Understandings of who and what constitute risk are thus linked to ‘gendered knowledges, norms and hierarchies’ (p. 5). Risk discourses both ‘fracture and create’ (p. 25) gendered, classed and raced subjectivities, thereby (re)producing and reinforcing structural inequalities. In the National Plan, for example, this is evident in the positioning of (all) women as potential victims in a way that, not only, homogenises ‘women’ as a category but also makes women responsible for avoiding their victimisation. Men, however, are positioned as either violent or non-violent. In this respect the positions made available to the ‘violent’ (male) subject, though mutually constitutive, include the rational individual who ‘chooses’ violence and is capable of making different choices and thus changing his behaviour; and the ‘out-of-control’ monster whose violence separates ‘him’ from ‘normal men’13. As a policy with a broadly preventive focus, the National Plan is thus oriented towards coercing ‘some people into behaving in prescribed ways’ and excluding ‘those individuals who do not’ (Martin, 2007, p. 22). This can also be seen as consistent with the government’s Social Inclusion Agenda in which the

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problem focus is on those who are ‘excluded’ and their obligation to become ‘included’ (see Fawcett, et al., 2010). In this way then, ‘contemporary social divisions and the marginalisation of some sections of society’ is legitimised on the basis of ‘pejorative assumptions about the behaviour and morality of some sections of society’ (Martin, 2007, p. 22).

Interrogation of the ways in which certain representations of gender and violence are problematised in and through social policy is a central aim of this thesis and constitutes the specific focus for the remainder of this chapter. In the next two sections I reflect upon the ways in which, firstly, violence is conceptualised as a problem and, secondly, gender(ed) discourses are mobilised, within the National Plan. A more detailed overview, with specific examples of the ways in which the National Plan problematises and represents violence, is provided in Appendix B.

**Key Theme (1): Problematising violence**

Violence against women is represented in the National Plan as a complex, national problem and ‘public concern’: a ‘burden on society’ which weighs on the ‘conscience of the nation’(Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 14). Whilst at one level, the focus on violence against women and children is straightforward enough, in that this is the policy ‘brief’, broader references to ‘violence’ throughout the policy render this more problematic. For instance, the inclusion of statements such as ‘all violence is unacceptable’ alongside discussions of violence against women and children, suggests that, either, the term ‘violence’ is used here as a kind of shorthand for violence against women and children, or that violence between/against men is not considered violence and/or does not warrant a response. In either case ‘violence’ is used in a way that renders violence between men invisible and, certainly, unproblematic whilst also fixing the subject positions ‘woman’ and ‘man’ in a way that associates the need for protection from violence with the former and not the latter. This is an issue to which I will return in the sections that follow.
The Plan’s emphasis on the unacceptability of ‘all violence’ is further undermined by its limited vision with respect to the scope of the proposed ‘solutions’. For example, positioning the plan as an attempt to reduce rather than eliminate violence against women and children, as is the policy title, reflects a level of ambivalence, even pessimism, which conflicts with the otherwise assertive tone of the report. More likely, this reflects the influence of neoliberal, risk-based thinking, as discussed in the previous section, as well as the limitations associated with the policy-development process, particularly in terms of the tensions between the ‘big ideas’ vision of consultation and the quantifying, ‘nuts and bolts’, focus of policymaking. Certainly the Plan’s emphasis on management and regulation and its tendency to minimise the complexity of social problems is consistent with the broader context of neo-liberal governance in Australia, as is the devolution of responsibility associated with the conceptualisation of violence against women as a ‘community problem’ requiring a community-wide response in which ‘men and women tak[e] responsibility for the problems and solutions’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 11). Thus, rather than a societal problem, with structural underpinnings, violence against women and children is recast as both a problem of, and solution for, the community, seen here as a collective of individuals.

Despite its focus on addressing ‘gender inequality’, which in this context means inequalities between men and women, the National Plan leaves gender itself, particularly in its relationship to violence, largely unanalysed. Moreover, the overall significance of power relations is generally overlooked. Instead, in its insistence on the importance of awareness-raising, education and skills, violence is positioned as an effect - or symptom - of poor (individual) communication and interpersonal skills. Here, ignorance, not power, is the issue, this implying that if men knew better they (or, at least, most of them) would not be violent and, presumably, women wouldn’t ‘put up with it’. The strong focus on ‘positive parenting’ with regard to the development of ‘healthy social behaviour skills and healthy relationships’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 18), further decontextualises violence by reinforcing the notion of violence as a
learnt behaviour. It further suggests that violence is worthy of attention because it is seen as unsettling families and harming children rather than that it is problematic in and of itself, thus highlighting the strong connection, as observed by Bumiller (2008, p. 12), between the ‘state’s interest in controlling violence [...] and social control priorities’. The invocation of discourses around health, as in the emphasis on ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ behaviours and relationships, is also significant and indicative of the Plan’s reliance on, both, a preventive public health perspective, as discussed earlier, in which violence is akin to other ‘risky’ behaviours such as drink-driving and speeding, and a dichotomous conceptualisation of (individual) choices as ‘good’ or ‘bad’.

**Ways of naming and conceptualising violence**

The naming of violence is a political act (Evans, 2008) because of the ways in which ‘terms signify and denote short cuts to the nature of violence’ and imply ‘who is doing what to whom’ (M. Jones, 2004, p. 87). Historically, the ‘naming and framing’ (Howe, 2008) of violence against women and children in particular, has been fraught with difficulty and controversy. The naming and renaming of violence against women and children as a social problem, as observed by Howe (2008), has resulted in ‘a complex web of competing discourses’ (p. 184), reflected in the various use of a range of terms including ‘domestic violence’, ‘family violence’, ‘intimate partner violence’, relationship violence, ‘gendered’/‘gender violence’, and so on.

‘Violence against women and children’ is the primary expression used throughout the *National Plan*. Whilst ‘violence against women’ is conceptualised broadly here, the plan justifies its direct focus on domestic violence and sexual assault on the basis that these are ‘the most pervasive forms of violence against women in Australia’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 2). The terminology used throughout the policy document alternates between an unqualified ‘violence’; ‘violence against women’ indicating a direct acknowledgement of women as victims of violence as reflected in the inclusion of the UN Declaration on the
Elimination of Violence against Women definition of violence against women (p. 3); and ‘domestic violence’ defined as ‘acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship’ (p. 3). The tendency to use terms interchangeably and, largely, uncritically has been observed elsewhere, for example, in the ‘slipping and sliding’ from ‘violence against women’ to ‘domestic violence’ in UK government policy approaches (Howe, 2008). The implication of this practice is that the opportunity is missed to incorporate and make connections between different forms of violence against women (Howe, 2008, p. 192) whilst also reducing multiple forms of violence against women to a ‘domestic’ problem (p. 199).

Since its emergence in the 1980s, the term ‘domestic violence’ has been criticised for its ‘sanitising’ effect in obscuring the detail with regard to ‘who is doing what to whom’ (M. Jones, 2004, p. 87). Whilst ‘relatively benign’ (Howe, 2008, p. 181) – or, perhaps, because of this – it is argued that the terminology of domestic violence has a ‘domesticating and trivialising effect’ (p. 184). Similarly, the term ‘family violence’ is said to degender violence by implying that it could be perpetrated by any family member, thereby ‘concealing the profoundly sexed symmetry of interpersonal violence’ (p. 184; see also Morley & Macfarlane, 2008; Murray, 2005; Phillips, 2006). ‘Gender violence’, or ‘gendered violence’, has also been used in the international and United Nations context within a human rights framework that emphasises government accountability for the protection of women and of their entitlement to ‘full enjoyment of their human rights’ (Howe, 2008, p. 202). ‘Violence against women’, whilst expressing ‘an overtly linear picture of violence being done to women’ (Evans, 2008, p. 62), nonetheless offers the advantage of reflecting a broad recognition of

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14 In Australia, the term ‘family violence’ is frequently used in reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the basis that it better reflects the ‘range of relationships within families and communities in which violence can occur’ (Hovane & Cox, 2011, p. 3). Moreover, according to Hovane and Cox, its use is significant in this context because it ‘highlights the disruption of the relationship between spiritual, cultural and environmental dimensions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life that has taken place since colonisation; dimensions which are critical elements for understanding violence in these communities’ (p. 3).
the ‘whole range of other forms’ of violence (Howe, 2008, p. 212). Nayak and Suchland (2006), however, highlight the ways in which the term violence against women ‘delimit[s] the concept of gender violence’ by narrowing the scope of its experience and implications (p. 268). The term ‘gender violence’, it is argued, better captures the complexity of violence as a ‘contested concept’ and, in particular, the ways in which ‘naming certain experiences/practices […] may in fact delimit those experiences’ (p. 268). A number of other naming practices exist. Howe (2008), for example, advocates use of the term ‘sexed violence’ on the basis that this directs attention towards the ‘taken-for-granted ways in which sexed and gendered relations are represented in accounts’ (p. 7) of violence. Building upon Butler’s (1990b) theorisation of gender as performativity, Howe is referring here to the problematic binary of sex/gender and the tendency to reduce ‘sexual politics’ to gender difference: ‘far too much attention has been paid to gender’, she argues, ‘and far too little to sexed bodies, not all of which are clearly articulated to gender identities’ (p. 51).

‘Gendered crimes’ in the National Plan, including domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault, are those that have an ‘unequal impact on women’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 2). Thus ‘gendered’ is used here in the context of a victim focus, specifically to designate the sex of the (female) victim. Moreover gender is invoked in a way that tethers it to women so that ‘gendered’ refers to the impact for women as victims rather than the differential impacts of violence upon male and female bodies. In doing so, the Plan overlooks both the material, in terms of the experience of violence, and discursive effects of violence, thereby failing to acknowledge that ‘what we expect of men and women in terms of their behaviours, violent and otherwise, is limited by the meaning(s) ascribed to male and female bodies’ (Shepherd, 2009, p. 211). Responses to ‘gendered’ violence, as observed by Hearn and McKie (2010, p. 149) and evident in the National Plan, ‘continue to be largely about women - as victims, survivors, and activists’. Opportunities for critical analysis, for example in relation to sex, gender, masculinity and femininity as social and cultural constructs, are thus closed down. Gender, as it is used in the
National Plan, is something that we are, rather than something that we do. The physical body is seen as providing the basis, or the raw material, for gender; gender, here, is (a) given, rather than enacted (Butler, 1990b). Representing a simplistic, binary view of gender, this fails to recognise gendered identities as the ‘products of power-laden social practices’ (Coleman, 2007, p. 205) which exist in hierarchical relations and may or may not correspond neatly with male and female bodies. This is consistent with a neoliberal construction of sex and gender which as argued by Griffin (2007), ‘insists on the duality of man and women’ (p. 224) and merges sex (male, female) with gender (masculine, feminine).

Binaries or dichotomies play a crucial role in modes of governance, enabling the simplification of complex social relations (Bacchi, 2009). Neoliberal discourse, as a mode of governance, ‘articulates human identities through apparently coherent gender norms in which the oppositions “feminine” and “masculine” can only be understood as the expressive attributes of “male” and “female”’ (Griffin, 2007, p. 224). Thus, through the establishment of ‘hierarchies based on implicit norms’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 184), ‘woman’ is positioned as the lesser ‘other’ in relation to ‘man’. In contrast, Butler's theory of gender as ‘performative offers significant challenges to this discourse: rather than the expression of a deep-seated inner nature or underlying essence, gender here is understood as a ‘regulatory fiction’ creating the illusion of stable, unified and, above all, natural gender identities’ (Gunn, 2006, pp. 147-148). Whilst the ‘acts’ and ‘gestures’ associated with gender ‘produce the effect of an internal core or substance’, this is produced only ‘on the surface of the body’ (Butler, 1990b, p. 136, emphasis in original); hence, the ‘distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all’ (p. 7).

The National Plan’s reference to ‘gendered crimes’ is problematic in its conceptualisation of ‘gendered’ violence as representing only certain practices and experiences (Nayak & Suchland, 2006). By reducing ‘gender’ to ‘women’, and ‘gendered violence’ to ‘violence against women’, the ‘problem’ of violence is rendered manageable and conducive to
governance. Crucially, attention is diverted from the ways in which gender is ‘made’ through violence, thus failing to recognise that violences are both gendering and gendered. Discourses of gender, as argued eloquently by Shepherd (2009, p. 212), are embodied or ‘given physical form’ through ‘material acts of violence’. In representing gender relations as an effect of violence against women, that is, as ‘reliant on the subordination and abuse of women’ (Shepherd, 2010, p. 152), the Plan glosses over the ways in which violences are productive or ‘constitutive of subjectivity’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 240). Moreover, as observed by Nayak and Suchland (2006, p. 470), by fixing ‘particular meanings and practices’, violence ‘accomplishes certain things’ and, in this sense, is ‘constitutive of the hegemonic projects of the state’ (p. 475). Violence, then, is not only an ‘example or effect of domination’ (p. 467); rather it ‘constitutes and is constituted by power relationships’ (p. 468) thereby enabling the (re)production of categories of difference. Limited understandings of gender violence, such as those upon which the National Plan is based:

unintentionally keep the topic of gender on the sidelines of political science. If gender violence is just an effect of power and does not substantively contribute to how we understand the operations of power, then the issues that gender violence raises may be dismissed as “women’s issues”. (Nayak & Suchland, 2006, p. 472).

Thus critical scholars such as Nayak and Suchland (2006) advocate a considerably more challenging and transformative response to violence, one that acknowledges violence as ‘contested, productive and coterminous with power’ (p. 471).

My chief concern in this section has been with the ways in which the terminology of violence functions as exclusionary: ‘conversely signifying what is not, and who is not being implicated in the experience of violence’ (Evans, 2008, p. 63). Violence against women, as used in the National Plan, represents a limited perspective in its focus on women as the victims
of violence while rendering ambiguous both the perpetrators of violence and the gendered dynamics of violence in general. Thus the issue is represented as one of violence against women, rather than violence by men (Murray, 2005, p. 31; see also Bacchi 1999). A focus on ‘violence against women’, as observed by Shepherd (2007), is connected with the tradition of activist-feminist research concerned with women’s ‘lived experiences’ of violence. This work has been crucial to advancing — indeed, instigating — the academic study of violence against women, not least in terms of its ‘explicit challenge to the self-proclaimed objectivist and value-free research programmes of mainstream social science’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 243). The discourse of violence against women, however, tends to assume that gender ‘can be read unproblematically from sexed bodies’ (p. 246), thus conceptualising women as ‘coherent and stable subjects whose life experience can be ameliorated by appropriate policy practice’ (p. 243). Further, such approaches tend to assume, and thus fail to problematise, the link between masculinity and violence (Shepherd, 2007), perpetuating the ‘social truth’ of violence as fundamentally, and inherently, ‘masculine’ (FitzRoy, 2001, p. 283) and of masculinity as ‘belonging’ to men (Greig, 2001b). In contrast, a critical focus on ‘gender violence’ offers the potential to move away from an understanding of gender as ‘a transhistorical or universal system of identity production’, and instead emphasise the performative nature of gender, acknowledging the ways in which ‘sexed bodies are gendered in accordance to variable matrices of gender norms’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 246).

Like Nayak and Suchland (2006), Shepherd (2007) argues that thinking about ‘gender violence’ allows for a more nuanced perspective of violence, particularly with respect to the representation of men and women as subjects. However, given the implicit understanding of gender as embedded in power, such approaches may still fail to ‘fully problematise the links between masculinity and violence’ (p. 245). Shepherd thus proposes a different approach, this focusing on the ‘violent reproduction of gender’, in which gender violence, ‘of which violence against women is a
part', is conceptualised as ‘violences that are both *gendered* and *gendering*’ (p. 248, my emphasis). By focusing on gender as performative (Butler, 1993), rather than simply constructed, attention is thereby directed towards the ‘ways in which culturally and historically specific narratives or discourses produce particular understandings of notions of violence, gender and power’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 248). Violence, in this perspective, is the ‘site at which genders are reproduced’ (p. 249). Other Foucauldian-inspired feminist scholars have also taken this position; Mason (2002b), for example, emphasises the ‘embodied and mutually constitutive’ (p. 10) relationship between violence and difference. Violence, therefore, is not the product of ‘natural’ bodily characteristics, such as those associated with the male body, but rather ‘emerges from the hierarchical differences *between* certain bodies’ (p. 10, emphasis in original). Thus in the policy setting, as observed by Shepherd (2007, 2008) and depicted below, foundational concepts are ‘both produced by and productive of policy’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 252), enabling the production of subjects through certain representations of gender and violence.

**Table 3: Policy representations of gender and violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
<td>Empirically identifiable gendered entities and the violences they experience</td>
<td>Sovereign individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Violence</td>
<td>Constructed gendered entities and the violences they experience</td>
<td>Constructed individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Reproduction of Gender</td>
<td>Discursively constituted gendered entities and the function that violence performs in (re)producing these discourses</td>
<td>Performative individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Shepherd (2007, p. 251). See also Shepherd (2008).
Problem violence as violence against women

Despite its claim that ‘everyone regardless of their age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, culture, disability, religious belief, faith, linguistic background or location, has a right to be safe and live in an environment that is free from violence’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 11), the National Plan represents a partial focus, rendering visible the violences experienced by certain groups but not others. Men’s diverse experiences of violence are wholly absent, present only within the context of the perpetration of violence against women and children. This is despite the recognition, in the Plan’s Introduction, that men are ‘more likely to be the victims of violence from strangers and in public’ (p. 2). Framed here as a ‘different type of violence’ requiring ‘different strategies’, gender is rendered invisible through use of the term ‘stranger’ and male-to-male violence is effectively obscured; it is not referred to again. Questions such as why this ‘type’ of violence is different, how it might be addressed, by whom, and so on, are left un-posed and certainly unaddressed. Man-to-man violence is thus unproblematised, both in the sense that it is not questioned and, more significantly, that it is not named as a problem. In this context, the demarcation of public/private and failure to recognise these as ‘both material social arenas and ideological constructions’ with inherently ‘different forms, meanings and significances for different social categories’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 140), produces – indeed is built upon – silences in relation to social, and in particular gendered, hierarchics. As has been observed by Phillips (2006), this enables a policy focus on (domestic) violence ‘as a private sphere or individualized relational issue’, thereby obscuring ‘structural and/or power relations’ (p. 195) between men and women as well as between men and men.

The stated vision of the National Plan is that ‘Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities’ (p. 10). ‘Safety’ is thus linked to some groups and not others, suggesting that there is no contradiction between ‘safe communities’ and violence between men. Men, though highly likely to experience violence, are nonetheless ‘safe’.
Moreover, violence between men is explicitly separated from violence against women and children, implying that there is no connection between the two. In this view, violence ‘happens to women, […] and is] perpetrated by men’ (Shepherd, 2010, p. 155). As argued by Shepherd (2010) this rests upon an understanding of gender and biological sex as inseparable, of men and women as ‘constrained, almost defined by their bodies: (male) fitness/aggression/power in opposition to (female) weakness/passivity/lack’ (p. 154). Instead, recognising that gender relations are ‘violent by necessity, indeed by nature’ (p. 155) draws attention to the limited ‘discursive and material opportunities available’ (p. 155) to men and women and the associated restriction of agency, in particular through the linking of victimisation and femininity. The National Plan’s depiction of violence thus obscures consideration of the ‘ordering function’ performed by violence in producing and reproducing gendered subjects (Shepherd, 2007, p. 250). Violence, as suggested by Mason (2006, p. 175), ‘makes a “statement” that marks the bodies of its victims with signs of vulnerability’.

The right for everyone in society ‘to be safe and live in an environment that is free from violence’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 11), then, is one of the guiding ‘values and principles’ of the National Plan. While framed as a universal ‘right’, however, the very existence of the plan implies that the government only has a responsibility to intervene to protect this right in certain circumstances, on behalf of some groups and not others. That is, in addressing, and indeed naming, ‘only the wrongs done to women and not the socially produced capacity for women to be wronged, to be victims’, the ‘naturalness of gender subordination’ (W. Brown, 2003, p. 11) is left unchallenged and, moreover, is positioned outside of the realm of policy/government intervention. Critical questions regarding notions of vulnerability and risk are obscured and hence, are not asked. This includes questions concerning who is deemed worthy of, or in need of, protection; which violences are, and are not, deemed problematic; what safety ‘means’ and how this is constructed differently for (and between) men and women, and so on. Indeed, as noted by Kinsella
(2003), it is this very ‘insistence on the particularity’ – vulnerability, difference, marginality - of women that ‘facilitates and secures the representation of masculinity and men as universal’ (p. 295). It is in this sense that ideas about gender are, not only, ‘violent in themselves’ but are also ‘productive of violence’ (Shepherd, 2009, p. 214), thus highlighting the need to ask why certain violences ‘fall outside the traditional parameters of study’ (p. 214) and, hence, policy attention.

**Key Theme (2): Discourses of gender**

This section extends the preceding discussion to consider the specific ways in which gendered meanings are put to use in the *National Plan*. Firstly, I consider the reliance on particular understandings of ‘gender equality’ as a crucial context for, not only, the Plan’s conceptualisation of the problem of violence but, more importantly, the ‘solutions’ proposed. Secondly, I explore the gendered subject positions implied by, and made available within, the Plan, specifically the emphasis on men’s agency and the associated normalisation of women’s vulnerability.

**Gender Equality**

Discourses surrounding gender equality provide a crucial context for the construction and representation of social problems. In this regard, Hearn and McKie (2010) distinguish between ‘gender neutrality’ and ‘gender equality’ approaches: the former associated with an emphasis on equal opportunities and the latter with the realm of social needs and issues ‘as manifest in the public and economic spheres’ (p. 145). Each approach is problematic, both conceptually and in its material effects, in its own way. An emphasis on gender neutrality, for example, fails to acknowledge gendered assumptions and, accordingly, to engage critically with gender and with men’s practices in particular. Associated more commonly with neoliberalism, gender neutral perspectives are individualistic, relying heavily on the notion of the rational subject and on the constructs of free will, individual choice and responsibility. Thus, while promoting ‘a neoliberal notion of equality of opportunity’, such policies are generally
based on unacknowledged ‘gendered and social assumptions, such that equality of outcomes is virtually impossible to achieve’ (p. 151).

Gender equality approaches, whilst ostensibly focused on gender, similarly fail to acknowledge, and certainly to challenge, the ways in which gender reflects and shapes social relations (Hearn & McKie, 2010, p. 145). The National Plan’s emphasis on public forms of equality, as evident in the inclusion of such strategies as the improvement of ‘women’s economic participation and independence’ and the participation of women in leadership positions’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011. pp. 15-16), can thus be seen to have a degendering effect. In Hearn and McKie’s (2010) explanation, the focus on gender equality ‘acts as a wholly or partially degendered gloss on the very gendered, indeed gendered violent, social realities’ (p. 149). Moreover, the public ‘flavour’ of the gender equality agenda privileges public safety, lending itself to a concern with violence as public disorder as, for example, in the context of ‘crowd behaviour’, sporting events, the ‘night-time economy’, and so on. This further undermines a critical, gendered, focus on men, masculinity and men’s practices.

Both approaches, emphasising gender neutrality and gender equality, are evident in the National Plan. The plan incorporates a direct focus on gender equality through the inclusion of Strategy 1.3: ‘Advancing gender equality’ in relation to the Outcome: ‘Communities are safe and free from violence’. Actions specified here relate to the enhancement of women’s ‘economic participation and independence’ and access to leadership positions as well as workplace support for female victims of domestic violence (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 16). Interestingly, ‘legal literacy’ for migrants in relation to ‘Australian law and gender equality principles’ (p. 16) is also included here as a ‘high priority’ action, suggesting that gender inequality is aligned with cultural difference and those who ‘don’t think like we do’. While justifying its commitment to gender equality on the grounds that ‘the level of equality across our society as well as within individual relationships’ (p. 5) is important for
reducing violence against women, the plan nonetheless (and simultaneously) dilutes the clarity of this position by referring, without explanation, to the need to improve gender equality ‘for all Australians’. Elsewhere, however, gender equality is reduced to being simply concerned with male-female relations and, in particular, improving the status of women, thereby overlooking the cultural – gendered – coding of ‘constructs, categories, subjectivities, objects, activities and institutionalised practices’ (S. V. Peterson, 2005, p. 517). Thus gender is deployed as an empirical rather than analytical category such that it functions as a ‘synonym for “women”’ (p. 517) and for women’s difference from men. In this way gender (in)equality is represented to be a problem associated with women’s disadvantage: women are constituted ‘as “needy”, and as needing “preferential treatment” in order to “succeed”’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 197). This, not only, positions women as in need of ‘protection’ but also – and crucially – obscures, men’s collective advantage as well as the extent to which men’s privilege is ‘contingent on women’s “disadvantage”’ (p. 197).

The Plan’s incorporation of ‘gender neutral’ themes is evident in its emphasis on ‘violent behaviour’, holding ‘perpetrators to account’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 29), risk reduction, ‘early indicators of violence’ (p. 31), and perpetrator intervention. Men are not named in the Plan, however, statements such as ‘the majority of men are non-violent’ (p. 18) and references to the need to support men ‘to take a leading role in discouraging violent behaviour’ (p. 14) make it clear that men are being addressed as both perpetrators and change agents. Such statements sit, without apparent contradiction, alongside references to the non-gendered ‘people’ involved in and victimised by violence. The overriding theme of the Plan is the need to address violence by holding individual perpetrators to account via ‘strong laws’, ‘zero tolerance’, ‘stronger policing’, ‘consistent sentencing’ and ‘serious consequences’ (p. 29). Indeed ‘holding perpetrators accountable’ is seen as the ‘most effective way to deliver an immediate reduction in violence and enhance community safety in the long term’ (p. 29). The Plan’s focus on the liberal, rational and responsible
subject, ‘under the cloak of assumed equality’, thus ‘perpetuates a kind of
gender blindness’ (Bacchi, Eveline, Binns, Mackenzie, & Harwood, 2005,
p. 52).

Neoliberal individualism and ‘populist anti-elitism’ provide a critical context
for Australia’s conceptualisation and articulation of ‘gender equality’
(Bacchi, et al., 2005). As observed by Bulbeck (2005a, p. 151), the
‘capacity to formulate gender equality policies in this environment is
limited’. In this respect, by failing to acknowledge social inequalities as,
first and foremost, power relationships, the ‘ways in which dominant
groups benefit from the inequality or oppression of others’ (Morley &
Macfarlane, 2008, p. 33) are obscured. That is, the focus of attention
remains fixed on the disadvantage of some rather that the structural
advantage – and profound privilege – of others. The ‘flipside of gender
discrimination’, as observed by Flood and Pease (2005, p. 119), is both
the privileging of men and the range of ways in which this privilege is
‘institutionally produced and supported’ (p. 120). Gender equality, in this
context, refers to the equivalent treatment of men and women ‘rather than
a reflection on gendered power relations’ (Phillips, 2006, p. 194). Thus
focusing on gender equality as, solely, discrimination against women fails
to recognise the role of men in this regard; that ‘gender inequality is in part
a problem of men – of men’s practices and relations’ (p. 120). In this
sense, the notion of ‘privilege’ provides a foundation from which to
consider the ways in which men resist gender equality, this being a critical
prerequisite for dismantling privilege.

Dominant understandings of gender inequality continue to be underpinned
by the ‘cultural code of feminisation’, this enabling and naturalising the
devaluation of all that is feminine/ised. Men and women are thus
positioned in opposition to one another, diverting attention from the
gendered hierarchies of masculinities and femininities in relation to which
both men and women are differentially situated. The pervasive devaluation
of ‘feminised bodies, identities and activities’, as Peterson (2005, p. 507)
observes, does not affect only women but also ‘feminised others’ including
‘racially, culturally and economically marginalised men’ (p. 508). Inequality then, concerns the ‘exploitation of all whose identities, labour and livelihoods are devalued by being feminised’ (p. 518, emphasis in original). In this sense, popular understandings of ‘equality’ are based upon the escape from otherness, specifically from the feminised body (Lee, 2001). In its emphasis on the advancement of gender equality, the National Plan thus relies upon a narrow dichotomy of men and women (S. V. Peterson, 2005).

**Men and masculinity**

Masculinity, as highlighted throughout this chapter, is depicted in the National Plan as something that belongs to men. This is not unique to the Plan but rather is pervasive throughout much of the ‘gendered violence’ and violence (read: violence against women) prevention literature. Hence the solution commonly proposed to the problem of (male) violence, especially in the context of (pro)feminist perspectives on violence, is to redefine masculinity. Flood (2003), for example, is a key advocate for approaches that aim to change or ‘re-script’ dominant constructions of masculinity. Outcome 6 of the National Plan, that ‘Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account’, is the section that most directly addresses men as perpetrators of violence. It is however markedly short on detail, simply stating that ‘perpetrators need assistance to end their violence’ (p. 29). Indeed, as a whole, the Plan makes little reference to gender and no mention at all of masculinity. Whilst oblique references are made to ‘violence-supportive attitudes’ (p. 14), ‘traditional gender stereotypes’ (p. 14), ‘social norms, attitudes and beliefs’ (p. 14), ‘rigid or narrow gender roles’ (p. 15), and ‘macho, aggressive and ultimately violent behaviour’ (p. 15), these are not named as, nor linked to, (hegemonic) masculinity or men’s practices more generally. In the precursor Time for Action report, the National Council took a stronger position on this, referring to the need to address ‘community and societal ideas of what it

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15 Interestingly, as has been observed in the UK context, statistical evidence - that is, in relation to reported incidents - indicates that the ‘erosion of gendered roles has not resulted in a reduction of men’s violence to women or to men’ (Whitehead, 2005, p. 412, my emphasis).
means to be a man’ (p. 37) and ‘attitudes that support the notion of male privilege’ including “macho” constructions of masculinity’ (p. 37) whilst promoting ‘expressions of masculinities that are non-violent’ (p. 51). Both policy documents, however, represent masculinity and men as inextricably connected. Gender is implicitly understood as a ‘fixed category or quality’ rather than a way of critiquing ‘relationships between categories of men and women’ (Milner, 2004, p. 95). Such an approach, as observed by Greig (2001), remains within a ‘binary logic of gender’ and identity which is inherently violent in its ‘definition of self through the negation of the Other’ (p. 10). In emphasising the possibility of ‘new and improved’ masculinity/ies, the Plan perpetuates the oppositional construction of man/woman and thus reaffirms the ‘necessity (and violence) of that negation’ (p. 10). Moreover, as argued by Hearn (2010), ‘everyone can be “against” hegemonic masculinity’ as a cultural ideal, but ‘critiquing men is more delicate’ (p. 173, my emphasis).

The National Plan relies upon and hence fails to address the ‘discursive construction of a shared social fabric’ (FitzRoy, 2001, p. 283) in which hierarchical power relationships both inform ‘choices’ and normalise the use of violence ‘by some people against inferior “others’” (p. 283). It further overlooks the ways in which gender shapes understandings and theorisations of violence (Greig, 2001a, 2001b). The legitimisation of certain forms and bodies of knowledge, including the delimitation of meanings and containment of critique, thus has the effect of ‘taking the politics out of policy’ by both obscuring and suppressing ‘contestation over competing values’ and interests (Newman & Clarke, 2009, p. 27). This is evident in the failure of the National Plan, and to a large extent, the National Council’s Time for Action report, to acknowledge, let alone engage with, the breadth of critical studies in relation to men, masculinities and men’s practices, particularly those concerning men’s uses of violence. This gap between critical work on men/masculinities and policy work has been observed elsewhere. Hearn and McKie (2010), for example, note that despite increased attention to women as victims of (men’s) violence, ‘critical studies of men have not had the impact on policy work that might
be anticipated’ (p. 141). Further, policies that focus on men generally address men as *offenders*, as in the National Plan, and are thus ‘premised on a narrow base, namely the identification of perpetrators’ (p. 141) within the context of criminal justice responses. In this respect, the ‘violent man’ becomes ‘the brutish perpetrator, an atypical man with substance abuse or chronic behavior problems’ (p. 145). Violence is thus framed - and quarantined - as a problem of ‘atypical men’ (p. 149).

Domestic and family violence in the context of lesbian relationships, or ‘same-sex attracted women’, is (marginally) acknowledged in the plan as relevant to ‘recognis[ing] the diversity of the needs of women’\(^6\) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 2). Domestic violence between men in same-sex relationships, however, perhaps due to the government’s specific focus on violence against women, is not mentioned. Indeed the statement in the Plan’s introduction that ‘a small proportion of men are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault’ (p. 2) seems curiously ambiguous, especially in its reluctance to take this any further. It is nonetheless difficult to get past the allusion, whether intentional or otherwise, to (highly contentious) claims regarding women who perpetrate domestic violence against their male partners. Further, the plan’s (limited) recognition of diversity amongst women is not matched in its treatment of men; men are generally under/un-theorised and represented as a monolithic category (Carver, 1996), thereby obscuring the ‘competitive and hierarchical character of dominant masculinities themselves with respect to men who do not exemplify them’ (p. 681). Crucially this positions ‘masculine hierarchies of power and control’ as a consequence of maleness (Carver, 2006, p. 456). By naturalising ‘manhood’, the ‘constructed nature of dominance is made to disappear’ both theoretically and politically, thus masking the ‘hierarchical, competitive, and oppressive’ (Carver, 1996, p. 681) construction of gender/ed difference. By focusing

\(^{6}\) Whilst ‘same-sex attracted women’ are mentioned, once, in the Plan’s Introduction (p. 2) and, once, in the overview of ‘National Outcome 5: Services meet the needs of women and children experiencing violence’ (p. 26), none of the ‘measures of success’ or ‘strategies’ refer to the specific needs of, or contexts for, women experiencing violence within homosexual relationships.
on and emphasising the differences between men and women, the Plan makes gender difference its ‘starting point for the analysis of gender’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 245). In this context, maleness is, in effect, a non-identity, or at least a non-marked identity (see, for example, Carver, 2006; Hekman, 2004). Gender difference is thus (re)produced whilst the work performed to make this happen is ‘obscured from critical attention’ (Shepherd, 2007, p. 245).

**Men as agents**

The majority of men are non-violent, but they need to be supported to speak out against violence against women (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 18).

Social policy mobilises and reinscribes particular, gendered, subject positions. Dominant discourses, as argued by Taylor (1998, p. 348), are invoked in the ways that subjects are positioned ‘in terms of a set of ascribed characteristics which account for, or totalise identity by making those ascribed characteristics “stand for” the complete identity of the subject’ (emphasis in original). The logic of the National Plan relies upon an essentialist view of bodies that is based on a rigid binary of gender difference. Men’s bodies, in this perspective, are (naturally) ‘strong and impenetrable’ whilst women’s bodies are vulnerable – or, in McCaughey’s (1993: 37) words, ‘breakable [and] takeable’. The Plan enables - and is enabled by - the privileging of a particular gender identity, embodying a ‘logic of masculinist protection’ in relation to which ‘women and children are articulated together as one collective subject’ (Coleman, 2007, p. 210). Women are thereby infantilised and children feminised as a collective subject – dependent, subordinate, and in need of protection (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010). Thus women’s safety, in the National Plan as in broader society, is inextricably linked to men and, in particular, to men’s willingness to control, protect and defend. In this context, the normalisation of women’s vulnerability and fear of violence both relies upon and (re)produces a particular conceptualisation of gendered difference.
Notions of risk, dangerousness and fear, as argued by Lee (2001), are central to subject formation, ‘constituting or inscribing subjects with gendered characteristics’ (p. 141). Indeed, research on fear of violence, especially that in relation to violence in public areas, has focused primarily on women; in contrast, ‘men’s fear in general has rarely been a topic of research’ (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010, p. 4). Masculinity is inextricably linked to men’s capacity for violence and their potential dangerousness. Hollander’s (2001) focus on the centrality of beliefs about vulnerability and dangerousness to the construction of gender is instructive here, highlighting the critical link between gender, difference and violence. As shown by Hollander, vulnerability and dangerousness are embodied and, as such, are inseparable from (embodied) social positionings. Hence gender, age, race, and ethnicity are ‘translated into vulnerability through the body’ (Hollander, 2001, p. 105). Fear, then, particularly that associated with public violences, is ‘a key mechanism through which race privilege is constructed [...] [serving] to maintain and justify exclusion and racial oppression’ (Day, 2008, pp. 84-85), thereby contributing to fixed notions of ‘who is “dangerous” and who is “safe”’ (p. 101).

VicHealth’s (2010) National Survey on community attitudes to violence against women 2009 provides important context for the National Plan’s focus on ‘challenging the attitudes and behaviours that allow violence to occur’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, Foreword). The survey was commissioned by the (then) Prime Minister in February 2009 prior to the release of the National Council’s report, with the intention that this function as a ‘benchmark’ for the measurement of outcomes in relation to subsequent government initiatives. The ‘measure of success’ in relation to National Outcome 1 (‘Communities are safe and free from violence’), for example, is ‘an increase in the community’s intolerance of violence against women’ (p. 14), to be assessed through implementation of the National Community Attitudes Survey on a four yearly basis. The report of the original survey places particular emphasis on ‘violence-supportive attitudes’, defined as ‘attitudes and beliefs which justify, excuse, minimise,
or hide physical or sexual violence against women’ (VicHealth, 2010, p. 15). Whilst it does not specifically refer to men’s attitudes to violence, the National Plan draws upon this report in making the connection between ‘low levels of support for gender equality’ and ‘violence-supportive attitudes’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 14). From my perspective however, it is equally important – and, I think, more interesting – to critically reflect upon the widespread, and vehement, condemnation of violence against women. Men in particular, perhaps spurred on by media campaigns, seem to specialise in the brand of ‘tough talk’ that goes along the lines of ‘real men don’t hit women’. In this regard the ‘wrongness’ of violence towards women is generally explained through reference to women’s relative weakness; their smaller bodies, lack of strength, and so on. Indeed the schoolyard refrain ‘pick on someone your own size’ is indicative of the potency of ideas regarding what constitutes a ‘fair fight’. From this perspective being violent towards someone who is smaller and weaker is the epitome of bad behaviour.

The idea of women as vulnerable is pivotal to masculine identity/lies (Day, 2001). This is particularly so in relation to the ‘construction of physical mastery and fearlessness as a legitimate or necessary part of “being a man”’ (Mehta & Bondi, 1999, p. 76). In this sense the National Plan vividly illustrates the policy framing of domestic violence ‘in terms of “good” men’s chivalrous protection of “weak” women from “bad” men’ (Bulbeck, 2005a, p. 149). This brings us to the nub of the issue, the great taboo: statistics show that men are, and continue to be, violent towards women in all kinds of ways – no matter what they say – but it has become ‘unmanly’ to admit this. Closely linked is the tension between ‘legitimate’ violence such as that associated with sport, army training, self-defence and a ‘fair fight’ and ‘illegitimate’ violence as irrational and an ‘indication of lack of (emotional) control, particularly “uncontrolled” anger or frustration’ (Mehta & Bondi, 1999, p. 76). A ‘good’ man – a ‘real’ man – does not hurt women, treats women with respect, protects and ‘stands up’ for women, and so on, because women are weak(er) and, following this logic, it’s the ‘right’ thing to do. The good man/citizen is ‘autonomous, rational and in control’;
control in this context is ‘represented principally in relation to capacity for violence’ (p. 77). Crucially, this position ‘confers material and social benefits’, not the least of which is the ability to distance oneself from ‘the negative associations (of weakness and inferiority) of being out of control’ (Mehta & Bondi, 1999, p. 79). The denouncing of violence against women, along with silence regarding other forms and uses of violence, can thus be seen as a key gendering strategy, a means of shoring up the division between, not only, men and women but also between ‘good’ men and ‘bad’ men.

Masculinity then, as evident in the National Plan, is associated with control, authority, physicality and strength. Men’s ‘leading role in discouraging violent behaviour’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 14), for example, is one of the Plan’s dominant themes. Men’s violence, however, is, in itself, largely unquestioned: the ‘natural’ association of masculinity with violence implies that to be a man is to be violent but that such violence should be controlled/able. Vulnerability does not fit here: it is ‘not part of shared cultural conceptions of masculinity’ (Hollander, 2001, p. 85). Closely linked are the (symbiotic) notions of the ‘[racialised] male stranger’ and the ‘male partner’, the former constructed as ‘potential threat’ and the latter as ‘potential protector’ (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010, p. 10). Invoking the ‘threat of an aggressive, less self-controlled, subordinate masculinity’ from which women and children need protection, thus enables the dichotomous construction of the ‘protective masculinity of the state’ (Coleman, 2007, p. 210). In this respect the ‘cultural shift from the direct, private power of the father to the publicisation of such power, [...] to collectivist fathers’ (Milner, 2004, pp. 81-82), embodied through experts, ‘the professions’, and so on, is indicative of the contemporary shape of ‘patriarchy’, within the context of a neoliberal state (see also Hearn, 1998). The National Plan’s singling out of family violence in Indigenous communities might, in this context, be seen as an instance of ‘state opportunism’ in its “racialisation” of family violence “as Aboriginal”” (Phillips, 2006, p. 209). Thus, as highlighted by Bacchi (2009), the stigmatisation of some subjects as ‘troublesome’ (violent, dangerous) is a
crucial strategy of governance, facilitating the 'governing of the majority' in this case, those 'non-violent', 'right-thinking' men, 'who see themselves as unlike the targeted group' (p. 115).

Whilst in a different context, namely the institutional adoption of 'anti-racist and anti-discriminatory values and practices', Ray, Smith and Wastell's (2003) work highlights the problems associated with 'broad brush', zero tolerance approaches. They observed that the targeting of 'racist offenders', that is those who expressed 'racist attitudes and opinions', resulted in their demonization as 'extremely violent political extremists' whilst allowing the 'ordinary' racism of others to 'remain unchallenged' (p. 217). Crucially, Ray, Smith and Wastell's study demonstrated how the 'category of the "racist violent offender" made it possible to establish a moral pariah' whose behaviour was then contrasted 'with the ideal subject of anti-racist discourses' (p. 225). Campaigns such as White Ribbon Day which is supported by the federal government and strongly emphasised in the National Plan, might be seen as serving a similar purpose in this regard. Each year in parliament, for example, White Ribbon Day is associated with a flurry of private members' motions, speeches and proclamations of support, of which the following excerpts are indicative:

Today is an opportunity for all right-thinking men in our nation to stand shoulder to shoulder and condemn those who perpetrate violence against our mothers, our sisters, our wives and our girlfriends (Chester, House of Reps Official Hansard No. 17, 2008, p. 11350, my emphasis)

I'm going to encourage every honourable gentleman to take the White Ribbon oath (Rudd, Keynote address at the White Tie Dinner for the White Ribbon Foundation, 10 Sept 2009, my emphasis).

Indeed, parliamentary speeches in relation to violence in general are imbued with unquestioned assumptions regarding gender,
(hetero)sexuality, the nuclear family and ‘good citizenship’, as illustrated in these extracts from the Official Hansard:

I would like to see a time when the big, tough alpha male has absolute respect for the partner, the woman, that he is with [...] that is part of what being a real man is, to be confident enough about the person that you are not to have to physically overpower someone who in most cases is not as physically powerful as you (Mirabella, House of Representatives, Official Hansard No. 18, 2009, p. 12872, my emphasis).

We as men are responsible for looking after our households. We are the primary provider. It is our responsibility to take care of our wives and take care of our children. That is what sets the tone and solidifies the family unit in order to move forward. That solidarity makes families the basic building blocks of our community. [...] [Violence] reduces the importance of the wife in the relationship. The husband should value the wife’s contribution to the relationship because it is a partnership, It is not me lording it over my wife; it is a partnership where we work together to achieve more than we can as individual entities. And that is the value of a marriage relationship, whether it is a de facto or a married couple. Violence of any sort in that relationship breaks that down and reduces the effectiveness of that partnership. I do not think it is a coincidence that in parts of our society where these issues are more relevant – and there are more obvious problems – the ability for those families to be successful and generate wealth or hold down jobs and contribute positively to society is reduced (Van Manen, House of Representatives, Official Hansard No. 5, 2010, p. 3310, my emphasis).

Calls for ‘male protection’ based on the construction of women as fearful, physically weak and vulnerable – particularly within the context of the nuclear family – can therefore be seen as playing a critical role in the performance and representation of gender. The performance of ‘chivalrous
masculinity' (Day, 2001) thus allows ‘men to amplify their image as fearless’ (p. 122) by shifting the focus towards women’s ‘vulnerability’ whilst also enabling the performance of femininity via the reinforcement of ‘traditional feminine identities that emphasise fragility and dependence’ (p. 122). As the ‘fearing subject’ then, woman is constructed in opposition to man, the ‘feared subject’ (Lee, 2001, p. 97).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ways in which the social problem of violence/a are made ‘manifest, nameable, and desirable’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 41) in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children 2010-2022. Power, as the exercise of government, is exercised through the ways in which ‘certain persons, things or forms of conduct come to be seen as problematic’ (Rose, 1999, p. xi). Hence, as noted by Stanko (2003, p. 12), ‘[n]ot all violence is condemned; not all forms of violence are punished; [and] not all forms of violence receive widespread disapproval’. The critique offered here thus demonstrates the power effects, as evident in Australia’s National Plan, through which ‘certain subjects become objects of knowledge and at the same time objects of domination’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 153). The partitioning of certain behaviours as representing particular types of problem (‘domestic’ violence), and particular types of people (‘perpetrators’) is neither incidental nor inevitable but, rather, enables the obscuration of critical questions concerning gender, violence, and vulnerability. Emphasising the gendered nature of (some) violence rather than the violence of gender (Shepherd, 2009, p. 214), as in the National Plan, thus works to conceal the ways in which understandings of violence reflect, embed, and reinforce gendered discourses and vice versa.

The indivisible discourses of gender, difference, violence and (power/)knowledge are further explored in the next chapter. Here I focus on the ways in which violences are – and are not - defined, identified,
explained, addressed and, most critically, gendered in and through the
National Safe Schools Framework.
CHAPTER 8: ‘SAFE’ SCHOOLS

Introduction

In this chapter I continue to interrogate the ways in which violence is constructed and represented as a social problem through analysis of the federal government’s (revised) *National Safe Schools Framework*. Here, as in the previous chapter, I focus on the reliance of discourses of violence on particular gender constructions in order to highlight the ways in which certain representations of gender and violence are problematised in and through social policy. Thus this chapter further draws attention to the importance of discourses of gender, difference and identity in enabling violence to be represented as the problem of (gendered, classed, raced) ‘others’. In this context, policy representations can be understood as playing a crucial role in the (re)production and maintenance of inequalities via hierarchical dominance and privilege.

This chapter consists of three main sections. Firstly, I examine the notion of safety underpinning the *National Safe Schools Framework* with particular reference to its invocation in relation to some groups and not others. The second section focuses more specifically on the conceptualisation of bullying - and representation of bullying as distinct from violence - framing the Framework. Lastly I examine the ways in which ‘bullies’ and ‘victims’ are characterised in the Framework via the mobilisation of gendered/raced/classed imagery. I begin this chapter, however, with a brief orientation to the *National Safe Schools Framework* and the background of its development.

The National Safe Schools Framework

The *National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF)* is an ‘agreed set of national principles to promote safe and supportive school environments and appropriate responses schools can adopt to address issues of bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect’ (DEEWR, 2011, p. 7). Jointly endorsed by federal, state and territory governments, it was
originally established in 2003 before being reviewed in June 2009 and re-released in its current form in 2011. The decision to review the original NSSF was triggered by the finding that ‘70% of schools were unaware’ of its existence (Gillard, 9 April 2010). The review also took into account the ‘recommendations from two [commissioned] research reports […] into the prevalence and human dimension of covert bullying, including cyberbullying’ (p. 7). The re-release of the Framework thus occurred in the context of the government’s stated ‘determination to provide leadership to tackle the bullying problem’ (Gillard, 9 April 2010) by establishing an ‘intensive education campaign’ to ensure its implementation. To this end,

(DEEWR, 2011, p. 8), with the expectation that all schools will, ultimately, have their own ‘safe schools plans’ (Gillard, 9 April 2010). The framework has a strong focus on the ‘school environment’ based on, what it asserts to be, the ‘crucial connection between a student feeling safe at school and doing well at school’ (Garrett, 18 March 2011b). Key emphases include ‘community’ (as in ‘safe and supportive school communities’, p. 2), ‘student safety and wellbeing’ (p. 3), ‘respectful relationships’ (p. 2) and ‘evidence-informed practices’ (p. 2).
The problem of bullying

As its name suggests, the focus of the (revised) NSSF is ‘safe schools’, however, the ‘real problem’ with which it is concerned is bullying. In this sense, and applying Bacchi’s WTP approach, the NSSF represents school bullying as the ‘problem’ and ‘safe schools’ as the ‘solution’. Whilst ‘student safety and well-being’ is foregrounded throughout the NSSF, in its title, introduction, ‘vision’ and so on, the bulk of its content concerns bullying, implicitly positioned here as the opposite of safety. Thus ‘safe and supportive learning and teaching environments’ are those that are free from ‘harassment, aggression, violence and bullying’ (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 2). Bullying, according to the NSSF, is a ‘societal problem’ (p. 7) with ‘serious short term and long-term psychological and social consequences’ such as those associated with alcohol and substance abuse, anti-social behaviour such as violence and crime, and ‘other forms of aggressive or abusive behaviour’ as adults (p. 10). Hence the problematisation of school bullying in the NSSF relates directly to the claim that it is a precursor for adult ‘problem behaviours’ including aggression, violent offending, and domestic violence.

The NSSF begins by powerfully invoking the imagery of ‘bad schools’ as the very antithesis of safety. Schools, it asserts, are potential ‘breeding grounds for a process whereby the more aggressive and powerful dominate the less powerful, a process that underpins violence, domestic abuse and child abuse’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 7). Thus the ‘solution’ to bullying relies on the establishment of ‘safe and supportive school communities’ (p. 2) because students who ‘feel satisfied with their quality of life at school […] are less likely to bully, less likely to be bullied and more likely (if bullied) to seek support’ (p. 14). As discussed in the next section, this emphasis on the connection between ‘student well-being’ and safety is generally problematic given the various silences and gaps in terms of what – and who - is excluded from the policy focus. In other words, the focus on safe learning environments ignores the crucial role of social difference and the associated ‘social issues and tensions’ (Walton, p. 7) in understanding
bullying. Moreover, bullying and violence are positioned as individual behaviours to which some students (and not others) are prone and which can be avoided given the ‘right’ attitude and/or disposition. As shown in this chapter, this fails to recognise, and indeed obscures, the range of taken-for-granted ‘exclusionary and injurious practices’ (Ringrose & Renold, 2009, p. 575) which constitute the broader experience of, and context for, bullying. Further, the concern for student wellbeing is pursued not as an end in and of itself but rather in relation to students ‘doing well at school’. This is exemplified in the statement by the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth that ‘wellbeing is absolutely crucial to our broader education agenda […] in order to make sure that kids are able to reach their full potential’ (Garrett, 18 March 2011b). The discourses of bullying and those associated with the neoliberal ideal of freedom can thus be seen as intimately connected, highlighting the extent to which, as vividly expressed by Davies and Bansel (2007, p. 258), ‘neoliberalism both competes with other discourses and also cannibalizes them’. In this context, freedom – or the fulfilment of one’s ‘full potential’ – ‘frequently dissolves into a failure of the self to adequately take up the burdens of being the appropriate(d) subject of individualism and responsibilization’ (p. 256).

1. Safe Schools?

The NSSF is founded upon a particular understanding of safety. Claims about ‘safe schools’, as argued by Walton (2011, p. 136), are essentially ‘political statements designed to convey the message that something is being done about school violence’. Recent media attention to bullying in Australia coupled with high profile school homicides in North America have contributed to a context of heightened public concern within which school violence is, politically, a ‘hot topic’. I considered the discourses of safety invoked by the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children in the previous chapter. There I noted that ‘safety’ is used in a way that links it with some groups and not others. A similar practice is evident here. For example, in its differentiation of ‘bullying’ as the misuse –
and therefore unacceptable use - of power, and ‘non-bullying’ including ‘fights between equals’ and harassment, the NSSF draws a distinction between ‘safe’ and ‘not safe’ (or ‘dangerous’) and, accordingly, between vulnerability and strength, victims and aggressors, and so on. Even on the kindest reading, it is hard to get past the implication that fighting – or, filling in the (gendered) gaps, violence between boys - and harassment are compatible with a ‘safe’ school environment. The inclusion of statements such as ‘schools are among the safest places in the community for children and young people’ (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 2) further trouble the notions of ‘safety’ and ‘community’ underpinning the NSSF, as discussed next.

‘Community’

The term ‘community’, as has observed in a range of different contexts, is often used in a way that suggests ‘consensus, general social approval, and positive outcomes’ (White & Perrone, 2005, p. 270). Bryson and Mowbray (1981, 2005), for example, have written about the ways in which community can be seen as an ‘aerosol word’, invoked as a ‘spray-on solution’ for any number of social ills. The self-evidence of ‘community’ as unproblematic ‘good’, however, belies its very contestedness, particularly in its ability to obscure complexity and homogenise diversity. The ‘reality of community’, in Worrall’s (1997) view, is its exclusivity this reflecting the insecurity of broader society which is ‘suspicious of, and hostile towards, anything and anyone who is different’ (p. 58). Community, in this sense, ‘effectively defines itself, by those whom it excludes’ (Faulkner, 2004, p. 9). Further the sense of community tends to be constructed on the basis of ‘risk of victimisation’ rather than through ‘bonds of commonality, trust, sharing, equality, and recognition of difference’, (D. Brown, 2005, p. 13). Thus, in schools as in broader society, ‘community’ is accomplished via the establishment of clear boundaries between victims/bullied and offenders/bullies, these ‘representing the two caricatures: the violating offenders and the violated victims’ (Sandor, 1994, p. 156).
The appeal to ‘community’ is especially significant in neoliberal – market-driven – governance, associated with the minimisation of state responsibility for social problems. As noted by Crow and Maclean (2000, p. 236), the notion of community is politically useful in its evocation of ‘idealised social arrangements in which people of different classes, genders and ages come together in pre-set, traditional ways where everyone “knows their place”’. Combined with the neoliberal emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency and competiveness, this has resulted in an increasingly divided society. In the educational context, as observed by Mills and Keddie (2010b, p. 411), this has manifested in the positioning of schools ‘against each other’ and of ‘failure’ as the ‘product of receiving one’s just deserts’. The individualisation associated with neoliberalism thus works to designate some children, and not others, as a problem. Illustrating this point, Mills and Keddie discuss the ways in which ‘particular, usually Muslim, boys’ are constructed ‘as dangerous whilst valorising white/western men/boys’ (p. 411), such that some boys, generally those already ‘marginalised by class and race or ethnicity’, are seen as a ‘liability to the national economy due to their failure to engage productively with schooling’, as well as a ‘dangerous threat to the West’ (p. 417). It is clear, then, that uncritical references to the ‘school community’, with their implicit tensions, divisions and silences, as in the NSSF, should be treated, at the very least, with great caution.

‘Safety’

In his critique of Canadian ‘Safe Schools’ legislation and related policy, Short (2010) notes the existence of a continuum of conceptions of safety ranging from ‘control’ through to ‘security’, ‘equity’, and ‘social justice’. At the ‘control’ end, ‘safety’ is linked to the management of students’ identities, that is, particular groups are ‘read as dangerous’ and as ‘objects to be controlled’ (Short, 2010, p. 345). ‘Security’ approaches emphasise physical safety through implementation of measures such as surveillance, security guards, and so on. To this extent, both the ‘control’ and ‘security’ perspectives are based on the idea that it is the students themselves who represent a ‘threat to certifying the safety of the school’ (p. 345). In the
‘equity’ perspective, however, the promotion of equity between students is seen as the means to ensure safe and secure schools. Equity approaches are distinguished from ‘social justice’ approaches on the basis of their narrower remit, this reflecting a more ‘school-focused’ orientation associated with promotion of ‘respect for diversity’. In contrast, ‘social justice’ perspectives, at the far end of the continuum, are concerned with the ‘cultural transformation’ of schools; in this context schools are understood as a microcosm for broader society.

There are clear parallels between Short’s description of safety as social justice and Fraser’s (1997) ideal notion of justice as ‘recognition’ with its focus upon ‘social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication’ (Fraser, 1997, p. 4). Whilst aspects of Fraser’s work have been strongly criticised (see, for example, Bacchi, 2005a; Young, 1997), her emphasis on the recognition of ‘differences and areas of commonality among cultural groups’ (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 18, emphasis in original) represents an important insight. In this sense, Fraser’s concept of cognitive justice highlights the imperative to both ‘rethink what we mean by social justice [and] acknowledge the place of social groups within this’ (p. 18, emphasis in original). As a transformative approach, this requires beginning ‘from the standpoint of the least advantaged […] and thereby chang[ing] everybody’s sense of self’ (p. 21).

Whilst Short does not articulate this, it seems clear to me that no one school – or policy – fits squarely within any one of these points on the continuum. Rather it seems much more likely, as in the case of the NSSF, that aspects of each may be evident in different, and perhaps contradictory, ways, this reflecting the range of discourses circulating in any policy-problem area. For instance, elements of ‘safety as control’ can be discerned in the NSSF’s emphasis on the targeting of the identified/able ‘bully’. Similarly its focus on the ‘physical school environment’ (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 6), ‘personal safety’, ‘protective behaviours’ (p. 7), and ‘behaviour management’ (p. 6) is broadly consistent with a ‘safety as security’ approach. A general concern for
equity is also apparent in the NSSF’s focus on ‘student wellbeing and student ownership’ (p. 7), however this is limited by its failure to ‘account for social, systemic, cultural, and institutional discrimination, or for privilege and oppression connected to social identity’ (Walton, 2011, p. 139). An emphasis on ‘safety as social justice’ is perhaps the most obvious gap in the NSSF. Rather, in its failure to ‘delve beneath surface explanations’ and, hence, to ‘subvert normative practices’ (p. 142), the NSSF serves to maintain the (neoliberal) status quo with respect to existing hierarchies of privilege, dominance and entitlement. That bullying relies upon and is ‘violently caught up in the establishment and maintenance of privilege’ (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 258) is thus both overlooked and obscured by the NSSF, as discussed in the next section.

2. Ways of naming and conceptualising violence

Terminologies of violence, as discussed in Chapter 7, perform a crucial exclusionary function by ‘signifying what is not, and who is not being implicated in the experience of violence’ (Evans, 2008, p. 63). The Resource Manual accompanying the NSSF includes three chapters (Chapters 2, ‘Frequently Asked Questions’, 4, ‘Common Terms and Definitions’, and 6, ‘Review of the Literature’), the substantive focus of which is establishing the nature, parameters and extent of the ‘school bullying’ problem. In this respect, the attention directed in the NSSF to distinguishing between, and justifying, what are and are not policy concerns, demands analysis. Thus, perhaps the most striking feature of the NSSF is the space devoted to the precise delineation of ‘harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and conflict’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 74) and, moreover, the ways in which these respective definitions serve to circumscribe, not only, policy responses but also, and more critically, ascriptions of blame, pathology and moral worth.

Definitional games: From bullying to aggression to violence

In the NSSF, ‘harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and conflict’ are understood as distinct ‘interpersonal’ behaviours (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 74), that is, each is seen as constituting a different, and discrete,
‘problem’. Bullying, for example, is defined as a ‘sub-type of aggression’ and violence as ‘severe aggression’. Here, however, aggression does not, in itself, constitute bullying because ‘it is not necessarily repeated, nor directed to the same person each time and there isn’t always an imbalance of power’ (p. 74). Violence is thus differentiated from bullying primarily, it seems, on the basis of an understanding of violence as constituting the ‘intentional use of physical force or power’ (p. 50). Moreover, conflict, described as a ‘mutual disagreement, argument or dispute […] between people of equal physical or psychological strength’, is positioned at the other end of the spectrum – as definitely not bullying - on the basis that there is ‘no significant power advantage to one party’ (p. 75). The notion of bullying, as constructed by the NSSF, thus hinges upon four ‘criteria’: that the action/behaviour is repeated; that the actions are ‘negative’ and ‘intended to distress’; that the ‘targeted student’ experiences ‘distress/harm or fear’; and that an ‘imbalance of power’ exists ‘in favour of the person(s) taking the aggressive actions’ (p. 73). Within this framework then, ‘social dislike or social rejection’ and harassment, for example, are not considered bullying unless ‘one or more’ of these criteria is ‘present’ (p. 75). As a primary focus of the NSSF, bullying is thus positioned as a distinct/ive problem with particular features that must be present in order for it to be recognised as such.

Bullying is defined in the NSSF as ‘repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 73). In identifying the requisite elements of bullying the NSSF draws a clear line between what bullying is and is not, this illustrating the strategic work performed through the mobilisation of binary oppositions in shoring up this notion of bullying as definitive and self-evident. Foucault’s work on ‘dividing practices’, those techniques whereby ‘the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others’ (Foucault, 1982, p. 326), is especially relevant to this analysis. We see here stark evidence of the power effects associated with the ‘production of truth’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 59), this encompassing the ‘truth’ of, not only, ‘bullying’ but also,
crucially, violence - in terms of which ‘violences’ are named, noticed, and made ‘intervenable’.

My focus here on the discourses of, and around, bullying constitute an investigation into the exercise and effects of power, specifically in terms of the processes through which ‘certain subjects become objects of knowledge [as bullies, as ‘victims’ of bullying] and at the same time objects of domination’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 153). Foucault’s recognition of the ways in which the defining of delinquency, in this case, bullying, functions to construct a ‘controllable delinquency that can be used to norm society at large’ (Jacobson, 2010, p. 264) is pivotal. This will be explored in more depth, with regard to the construction of the bullying subject, later in this chapter. For now though, Foucault’s understanding of the act of defining as constituting a ‘means of perpetual surveillance of the population: an apparatus that makes it possible to supervise through the delinquents themselves, the whole social field’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 281) represents a critical starting point for this consideration of the NSSF’s definitional parameters.

Bullying is defined in a range of different ways across the published literature and policy field, this reflecting the diversity of perspectives regarding what constitutes violence within the school setting (Dunne, Humphreys, & Leach, 2006, p. 80). Understandings of ‘school violence’, as observed by Brown and Munn (2008), are ‘vigorously contested’ and range from the narrow, focusing on interpersonal forms of physical violence in the form of student on student attacks, to the broader and more comprehensive encompassing ‘incivilities, “micro-violences”, school ethos and climate, [and] symbolic forms of violence, including institutional violence’ (p. 226). The NSSF fits somewhere between these two extremes in that whilst based on a definition of bullying that clearly recognizes non-physical forms of violence, it overlooks the violences implicit within the wider school, community and societal settings. This is not to say that such aspects are ignored altogether; the achievement of a ‘supportive and connected school culture’ (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 5) is named as one of
the nine ‘key elements’ of the NSSF and ‘school factors, social dynamics and interactive processes’ as the ‘social context’ for bullying (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 86), are considered in the accompanying Resource Manual. Recognition of these factors, however, extends only so far as their role in ‘influencing how students treat each other’ (p. 86), particularly with regard to the ‘dynamics of bystander behaviour’ (p. 89). For example, ‘student wellbeing’ (p. 92) and ‘school culture’, incorporating the values endorsed by the school, ‘nature of the physical environment’, the ways in which teachers and students treat each other (p. 86) and so on, are both positioned as ‘major risk factors’ for bullying ‘over which schools have some influence’ (p. 92). Violences associated with ‘harmful institutionalised social and educational practices, including acts and processes of institutionalised racism or sexism, other discrimination, labelling and tracking, [as well as] authoritarian discipline’ (Henry, 2000, p. 18) are wholly overlooked however and, more importantly, are rendered invisible. In this sense, the ways in which bullying is positioned within the NSSF illustrates the extent to which discourses of violence, as argued by Morrell (2002, p. 43), ‘promote violence to the extent that they prevent other discourses from emerging or at least force them into the margins’, thereby limiting the possibilities for alternative perspectives to be heard.

In Short’s (2010) analysis, narrow conceptualisations of bullying include those that depict bullying as relatively defined incident/s between ‘specific, identifiable “individuals”’(p. 333) and focus largely on ‘bullying’s psychological and cognitive determinants between specific and limited numbers of students’ (p. 331). In this respect, with its emphasis on ‘subtypes’ of bullies (MCEECDYA, 2010b, pp. 81-82), the ‘characteristics of students who are more likely to frequently or persistently bully others’ (pp. 79-80) and ‘more likely to be bullied’ (pp. 82-83), the NSSF represents a narrow, and in many respects, profoundly limited, approach to bullying. In its framing of bullying in terms of ‘traditional psychological constructs, like motivation or needs, such as belongingness and caring’ (Herr & Anderson, 2003, p. 429), the ‘socio-historical context’ (p. 430) of power relations and the competitive, meritocratic conditions that form the foundation of
education are left unchallenged. This fails to recognize that schools are important sites for cultural and social reproduction and, in this sense, perform crucial work in serving the ‘needs of a neo-liberal, globalized economy’ (p. 430). In short, school violence, in the form of bullying, and ‘persistent social inequality’ (p. 415) are fundamentally and inextricably linked.

Policy approaches such as the NSSF that focus on classroom and behaviour management, teacher development, and so on, overlook the complex and multifarious ways in which inequitable social relations are reproduced and maintained. In this way, the exercise of power through even the most ‘caring’ and ‘world class’ of educational practices is obscured. The issue, therefore, is not (necessarily) one of ‘bad’ teaching or ‘bad’ pedagogy but rather the ordinary, everyday, relations of dominance and subordination. Crucial also is the NSSF’s conceptualisation of bullying / non-bullying and violence / non-violence as oppositional categories, highlighting the conditions necessary for violence to be recognisable as such, an issue to which I will return later in this chapter. Thus the assumption that ‘apparently orderly schools and classrooms’ are ‘violence-free’ (Herr & Anderson, 2003, p. 416) reflects an undertheorised (p. 416) and profoundly limited understanding of violence.

**Bullying as ‘misuse of power’**

As shown in the previous section, the NSSF specifically differentiates ‘bullying’ and ‘non-bullying’ on the basis of the presence or absence of certain elements. Of these, the most strongly emphasised is power, framed here as the misuse of, or an imbalance in, power. Hence ‘conflicts or fights between equals’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 73) or ‘between students of equal power or status’ (p. 41) do not constitute bullying. Conflict, then, is understood as ‘mutual disagreement’ (p. 43) and as inherently ‘different to bullying’ because bullying ‘always [involves] an imbalance of power’. The NSSF nonetheless provides the caveat that ‘poorly-resolved conflict situations’, such as those involving ‘friendship break-ups or romantic break-ups’, can sometimes ‘lead to either
aggression or bullying’ (p. 43, my emphasis). Hence, aggression or violence, in this respect, ‘becomes’ bullying if, and only if, a ‘power imbalance’ (p. 74) is involved. Here, ‘power imbalance’ refers to:

a situation where one person or group has a significant advantage over another that enables them to coerce or mistreat another for their own ends. In a bullying situation the power advantage may arise from the context (e.g. having others to back you up), from assets (e.g. access to a weapon) or from personal characteristics (e.g. being stronger, more articulate or more able to socially manipulate others)’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 47).

Thus power is not conceptualised as structural but rather as something individually possessed or created, this reflecting the dominant understanding of bullying as an interpersonal behaviour, based upon the mutually exclusive subject positions of bully (‘perpetrator’) and bullied (‘victim’). In this way the constructed binaries of violence/non-violence and perpetrator/victim, as a means of making sense’ of school violence, serve to pathologise and individualise bullying and violence (Morrell, 2002). Combined with the related emphasis on intentionality, that is, that acts of bullying involve an ‘intention to distress’, this enables attention to be shifted away from power relations within schools and wider society and, in particular, the ways in which these are ‘imbued with understandings of gender, sexuality, age, class and ethnicity’ (Horton, 2011, p. 269). Instead, the focus remains fixed on the identified ‘bully’ and his/her intentions, motivations and pathology.

Conceptualising bullying as a ‘breakdown in the social order’ – as something that has ‘gone wrong’, initiated by the bullying individual/s - enables important work to be done in terms of diverting attention from the very problematics of ‘social order’ (Horton, 2011). Moreover, as emphasised by Horton (2011, p. 270), power differences, such as those alluded to in the NSSF, do not, in themselves, explain power relations;
rather these should be understood as the **effects** of social relations. Because social relations, following Foucault, are produced rather than the ‘caused’ by power, power cannot be reduced to, simply, a matter of psychological or physical strength (p. 274). Power is not something one has or does but rather is exercised in relation to social position/ing such as those associated with relations of gender, class, age, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on. The naming and condemnation of (some) bullying incidents (and not others) thus fails to disrupt, and indeed reinforces, the ‘orders which they serve to police and reiterate’ (p. 270).

The **NSSF** acknowledges a broader context for bullying in its description of this as ‘most often a group phenomenon occurring within a social context’ associated with the ‘dynamic of rejecting difference and imposing conformity’ (MCEEC, 2010b, p. 11). This recognition is largely undermined, however, in the subsequent discussion of ‘social positionings’ and emphasis on these as individually chosen and performed. Social positioning, in this view, is a ‘common dynamic in bullying situations’ and ‘involves one student deciding to bully a more vulnerable student in order to enhance or maintain their own social status and attain social dominance and/or power’ (p. 11). Power, here, becomes a ‘scarce resource’ to which only some people have access; it is ‘positively enabling for those who can access it but disabling for those over whom it is used’ (Skelton, 2001, p. 68). Social status and dominance are thus conceptualised as individual possessions or achievements rather than as meaningful only within a particular context of power relations and structural inequalities.

In its focus on bullying as, essentially, an interaction between and/or within particular groups, the **NSSF** fails to acknowledge — and certainly, to problematise — the context within which such interactions take place and, most importantly, the discourses which frame evaluations of worth and status, relations of dominance and inferiority, and so on. Applying Foucault’s analysis of power, however, disrupts the straightforward allocation of the roles of ‘bully’ (‘subjugating’) and ‘victim’ (‘subjugated’). In particular, his insight that the ‘individual which power constitutes is at the
same time its vehicle’ (1980b, p. 98) draws attention to discourses as key frames of reference for social positioning/s. That is, ‘one is both subjected and at the same time made into a self-knowing subject through available discourses and positioning within these discourses’ (Bansel, Davies, Laws, & Linnell, 2009, p. 62). In other words, actions, interactions and so on cannot be fully understood outside of the ‘constitutive domain of discourses and practices [...] that precede them and make them possible’ (p. 62).

The NSSF’s conceptualisation of bullying as ‘abuse of power’ is problematic on a number of levels, most significantly in relation to its reliance on an uncritical understanding of power. Contrary to Foucault’s notion of power as diverse, dynamic and multifarious, power, in the NSSF, is a ‘thing’ - possessed, used and wielded. In its failure to recognize resistance as the corollary of power and positioning of conflict (‘equal’ power) and bullying (‘unequal’ power) as opposite ends of the spectrum, the NSSF divides the school yard into bullies/perpetrators and bullied/victims. Because resistance is seen here as embodying rather than co-existing with power, ‘visible resistance’ negates ‘the perceived applicability of the bullying definition’ (Horton, 2011, p. 271). Resisting bullying thereby transforms ‘bullying’ into ‘conflict’, defined as a mutual ‘fight between equals’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 73) and a different type of ‘problem’ (or, no problem at all). However, as observed by Horton (2011), ‘writing off’ interactions in this way, ‘based on the notion that the individuals involved were evenly matched’ (p. 271) overlooks the power relations which constitute bullying and, indeed, all social interactions. The NSSF thus treats individual students as ‘autonomous agents, good or bad’ (Bansel, et al., 2009, p. 66) rather than engaging with a more complex and complicated understanding of ‘actors and agents [as] always already constituted through multiple relations and experiences of power’. As an act/s of violence, bullying is not made up of ‘autonomous acts, free floating from their histories and contexts’ that can be linked to the ‘character of one faulty individual’ (p. 66). Instead bullying must be regarded as entirely intelligible within the context of the ‘network of practices, discourses and
relations of power through which subjects are constituted’, particularly insofar as these represent and enable dominant discourses in relation to, for example, the ‘necessity of belonging and the possibility of leadership’ (p. 67). These are clearly not unique to the school/educational setting but are certainly vividly discernible in this context with its potent mix of discourses of morality, social order and the nascence of youth.

Also missing from the NSSF conceptualisation of bullying is an acknowledgement of the power relations associated with school authority and discipline, especially those embedded within adult – child relations. Bacchi (2009) observes the tendency to construct issues associated with children and young people as a ‘distinct kind of [policy] “problem[s]” due to ‘the conviction that “character” is formed in these years’ (p. 59). Adolescence, in particular, is seen as existing somewhere between the ‘innocence’ of childhood and the “realities” of adulthood’. Adolescents are understood only in relation to adults, as ‘partial rational beings’ (p. 58). Crucially, this enables children and young people, conceived of as ‘unreliable [and] dependent’ (p. 70), to be ‘marked out for forms of illiberal treatment that would not be tolerated for adults’ (p. 58). Underpinned by the binary ‘dependent/independent’, with ‘dependence’ an implicitly ‘negative state’ (p. 68), parallels can be drawn between the policy treatment of children and ‘youth’ and that of other groups in society who are portrayed as less that fully rational. Apparent also in the National Plan, women and children, amongst others, are joined together as ‘one collective subject’ (Coleman, 2007, p. 210), inherently vulnerable and in need of protection. Policy thus functions to ‘facilitate a wide range of governmental objectives’ (p. 58), most notably through efforts to instil particular ‘norms and values’ (p. 64).

The authoritarian nature of schools which is related to the ‘origins of mass schooling as a form of social control’ (Harber, 2002, p. 10) provides a crucial context for policy interventions regarding violence and bullying. As argued by Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2006, p. 79), ‘age/authority relations’ such as those between teachers and students ‘are a
fundamental structure of schooling’. The ‘perceived right of teachers to punish, inherent in the need to maintain control and order’ (Harber, 2002, p. 10), and related practices of rules, regimentation and monitoring both rely upon and reinscribe differentialiated power relations. It is in this sense that schooling, with its emphasis on conformity and discipline, has been conceptualised by some scholars as a ‘violent institution’ (see Harber, 2002; Herr & Anderson, 2003; Horton, 2011; Mills & Keddie, 2010a). Others, such as Henry (2000), point to the ‘harmful practices’ of administrators and school boards as well as the subtle but ‘serious and pervasive’ forms of ‘institutionalised harm’ enacted by teachers in their interactions with students, through the labelling of students, ‘inconsistent disciplinary practices, and so on (p. 24). Crucially though, the ‘social and institutional space of the school’ (p. 21) is merely a product of its social/societal context. Schools, like other social institutions, reflect and reproduce – and perhaps amplify - these broader relations.

Paying attention to the power relations associated with schooling reveals as especially problematic the NSSF’s conceptualisation of the role of teachers and other adults in relation to bullying. Adults, and teachers in particular, are positioned here as neutral mediators; as protectors of the bullied and/or interveners in relation to bullying incidents. For example, there is a strong emphasis throughout on the ways in which adults might better identify, recognise and, subsequently respond to, bullying. In referring to adults solely in terms of detecting and responding to bullying, the NSSF fails to acknowledge that both teachers and students ‘engage in relations of power by drawing on their respective positions’ (Horton, 2011, p. 274). Further, in devolving the responsibility for dealing with bullying teachers are expected to be able to discern relations of power in order to correctly ‘diagnose’ bullying as compared to ‘mutual’ conflict. Not only does this minimise the range and extent of barriers, both institutional and social, impacting on teachers’ ability to address bullying (see Meyer, 2008b) but also the complexity of identifying, in practice, what does and does not ‘count’ as bullying. Because the prevailing discourses on bullying, as reflected in the NSSF, construct only certain acts and
conditions as bullying, the task of ‘diagnosis’ presupposes the existence of recognisable ‘symptoms’, that is, of intentionality, repetition, and misuse of power, that are both unequivocal and self-evident.

Teachers, then, are positioned in the NSSF as knowing experts who are able to discover the ‘truth’ of what ‘really’ happened. This expectation is, in itself, hugely problematic however it also overlooks the extent to which all accounts are merely representations of the ‘truth’, mediated by and within discourses and complex (self/other) positionings. Teacher identities are also, of course, ‘vested in power and hierarchy’ (Morrell, 2002, p. 43). ‘Age/authority relations’, for example, such as those between teachers and students and junior and senior teaching staff, constitute the ‘fundamental structure’ of schooling whilst also interacting with its ‘gender/sexual regime’ (Dunne, et al., 2006, p. 79). That is, as ‘critical agents in the [re]production of the institutional gender regime within schools’ (p. 80), teachers both shape, and are shaped by, the ‘insidious and pervasive’ practices of gender violence that are both institutionalised and invisibilised ‘as part of the landscape of schooling’ (p. 92) and obscured, at a structural level, by the ‘prevailing rhetoric of liberal individualism’ (Meyer, 2008b, p. 587). Thus the perpetuation of gender regimes in schools, as argued by Mills (2004), is fundamentally linked to ‘silences relating to the ways in which homophobia and its counterpart, misogyny, work to construct normalised notions of teachers’ (p. 27), and, of course, students. The nature and extent of these silences, with regard to gender and gendered power in particular, is the focus of the following section.

The silence of gender

In Chapter 7 I discussed the significance of discourses surrounding gender equality in terms of the ways in which problems are constructed and represented in policy. Whereas the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, the focus of that chapter, incorporates aspects of both ‘gender neutrality’ and ‘gender equality’ discourses, the NSSF more clearly embodies a gender neutral approach in that it assumes a range of gendered ‘truths’ whilst failing to engage, critically or
otherwise, with issues of gender and gendered practices. Associated more commonly with neoliberalism, gender neutral perspectives are individualistic, relying heavily on the constructs of free will, individual choice, rationality, and responsibility. Crucially, the use of gender neutral language enables the disconnection of gender, power and violence (Kantola, Norocel, & Repo, 2011, p. 188). In the NSSF this is evident in the definitions, concepts and language as well as the psycho-social explanatory model favoured. References to gender are couched in neutral terms and words such as ‘person’ and ‘people’ are used in a way that renders them anonymous. Sexism, for example, is defined as the ‘assumption that one gender is intrinsically superior to the other gender’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 49), and sexual harassment as ‘any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature that makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended’ (p. 49). Hence, in its representation of problems as (gender, race) neutral, the NSSF implies that these occur in a ‘context that is not significantly influenced by wider social relations and economic systems’ (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 141). Similarly, in defining ‘racism and racial harassment’ as the ‘assumption that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of another race or races’ (p. 47), issues of ethnocentrism, imperialism, and white privilege are effectively avoided. In this respect the NSSF represents an incomplete picture in its isolation of gender, race and class relations and failure to recognise the ways in which these combine and intersect ‘in different ways, at different times, and in different settings’ (p. 141).

Reflecting its overall lack of critical concern for gender, the word ‘gender’ appears on only 11 occasions (excluding the list of References) throughout the 99 page NSSF Resource Manual, and not at all in the Framework itself. This is consistent with the broader tendency in the related literature, as observed by Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2006), to discuss, classify and report instances of school violence and bullying in ‘gender-neutral terms’ (p. 80). Similarly the word ‘sex’ appears only in reference to sexuality and sexual abuse and is used in an entirely uncritical manner, that is, without any associated gender analysis.
Homophobia, for instance, is defined as the ‘irrational’ fear of, or aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality’ (p. 45, my emphasis), thereby effectively foreclosing exploration of the very ordinariness of heteronormativity in the school context, as more generally, whilst also obscuring the pervasiveness of heteronormative and heterosexist discourses (see, for example, Ferfolja, 2007).

The NSSF refers to gender in only two contexts. Firstly, it is cited as a possible reason, as one amongst many, that a person might be targeted for discrimination (p. 44) or harassment (p. 45). Secondly, in discussing ‘gender patterns in bullying’ (p. 78), the term ‘gender’ is (mis)used as an empirical category for the purpose of comparing boys and girls, that is, in order to construct sex/gender difference. Keddie and Mills’ (2007) distinction between ‘transformative’ and ‘affirmative’ gender equity discourses in Australia is instructive here. The latter, with its emphasis on sex/gender differentiation and the ‘valorisation of gender specificity’ (p. 206), is readily recognisable in the NSSF and is consistent with its overall tone. Whereas transformative agendas seek to ‘disrupt and proliferate alternatives to narrow views of masculinity and femininity’ (p. 217), affirmative approaches work to ‘reinscribe essentialised constructions of masculinity and femininity and homogenise multiplicitous identities associated with, for example, sexuality, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity’ (p. 206). Thus affirmative discourses, in dislocating ‘analysis of gender from broader power relations’, as in the NSSF, overlook and therefore reinforce the ‘privileged of males and masculinity’ as well as, more broadly, the normalization of ‘inequitable understandings of gender’ (p. 207).

The experience of schooling, as has been widely observed, is profoundly gendered and is especially evident ‘through the control and use of space and resources, bullying, harassment and abuse’ (Dunne, et al., 2006, p. 92). DePalma and Atkinson (2009), for example, point out that heteronormativity is discursively maintained within the school setting in a range of ways including the assumption that ‘homosexuality is defined
exclusively by sexual acts; that homosexuals are sexually dangerous; that children are asexual and innocent; [and] that the normative is natural rather than socially constructed’ (p. 841). The ‘institutional practices that produce a gender separation and hierarchy’ (Dunne, et al., 2006, p. 81) are, in this sense, crucial to understanding bullying because, whilst implicit and often invisible – ‘buried’ in the normality of life in school’ (p. 81) – it is these conditions, like those associated with other dimensions of ‘difference’, that enable violence and bullying. The NSSF’s neglect of gender is, in this perspective, entirely consistent with its limited understanding of power as individually possessed and primarily repressive as well as its failure to embrace a broader social justice vision17. The ‘brutality of existing gender arrangements’, as evident in the construction and reproduction of ‘normalised masculine and feminine subjectivities’ (Mills, 2001, p. 77) – or, in Ringrose and Renold’s (2009) terms ‘normative cruelties’ - thus falls outside of the NSSF frame of reference, enabling attention to instead be directed towards the deficits, or deviance, of individual students. This represents a missed opportunity to examine – and disrupt - the relationship between constructs of gender and the violences of schooling, most notably in relation to the ways in which hierarchical power relationships both inform ‘choices’ and normalise the use of violence ‘by some people against inferior “others”’ (FitzRoy, 2001, p. 283). In particular, and as argued by Mills (2001, p. 82), ‘various configurations of, and conflicts within, schools’ gender regimes will impact on the availability of particular gender positions’ for both students and teachers. By failing to problematise ‘masculinity, the meanings it produces and its relationship to the production of femininities and “other” masculinities’ (p. 78), the NSSF thus perpetuates a seamless discursive framework, one in which there is little space made available for contestation of these normative truths; ensuring in other words, business as usual.

17 Here I acknowledge Mill’s (2001) insight that calls for social justice can in themselves be problematic because the language of social justice and gender equity may be used to advance (anti-feminist) claims of discrimination against boys/men ‘under a “what about the boys” banner’ (p. 134).
3: Dividing practices: Bullying and bullied

Monk’s (2011) fascinating account of the ‘discovery’ of homophobic bullying illustrates the extent to which the ‘act of naming a wrong or harm’ and identifying those responsible, is a ‘productive process that is contingent on a complex concatenation of cultural and political factors’ (p. 182). Monk’s particular focus here is on ‘what happens and what is enabled’ (p. 183). Thus narratives of bullying as ‘individualistic, depoliticised and, increasingly, drawing on pathological explanations’ (p. 197) enable a range of silences, most significantly in relation to the institutional, societal and structural investments that both shape and underlie ‘conditions of possibility’ (p. 182). For instance, conceptualising bullying as an anti-social behaviour involving the use of ‘anti-social power’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 77), as in the NSSF, masks its very (pro)sociability and the ways in which bullying ‘affords dominance and social status and is often rewarded and supported by other children’ (Walton, 2004, p. 33) and adults. As emphasised by Walton, bullying ‘may not be nice, but it is, nevertheless, very social’ (p. 33).

The NSSF presents typologies of students who ‘frequently bully others’ and ‘are frequently bullied’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, pp. 9-10). Students who bully are characterised as less anxious, less cooperative, with high self esteem, ‘high levels of egocentric reasoning’ and ‘lower levels of empathy’. They are ‘disconnected from school’ and regard ‘aggression as an acceptable way to achieve their own goals’ (p. 9). In contrast, bullied students are described as more likely to be ‘non-assertive’, to lack confidence, avoid conflict, and ‘display emotional behaviours that indicate vulnerability […] and a lack of resilience’ (p. 10). Nothing is made of the gendered character of these attributes, nor of the extent to which the ‘bully’ typology embodies those qualities conventionally associated with masculinity and specifically those most valued in schools, that is, strength, competitiveness and aggression. Disconnection from school has also been strongly associated with boys, most notably in the context of debates regarding boys’ (alleged) disadvantage in schools. Conversely, the
qualities of the student ‘most likely to be bullied’ are unmistakably feminine/ised, implying that the imagined subject is female whilst also highlighting the extent to which the feminine is devalued and the masculine privileged, with implications for both ‘nonconforming’ boys and girls (Meyer, 2008a, p. 38). In this respect, the limitations of the NSSF are built into its very foundations, in its construction of the problem of bullying as one in which the qualities that bullies are seen to embody, both in schools and in broader society, are the very ‘ones that are most valued by many and demonstrate a power that is esteemed’ (Meyer, 2008a, p. 38).

Discourses of school violence, like those of violence more generally, ‘suggest that somebody else, an ‘other’, is responsible’ (Morrell, 2002, p. 45). Bullying and, more specifically, the categorisation of those who bully and are bullied, thus ‘mirrors the dividing practices of schooling, [the] discourses and practices that create grids of value (Jacobson, 2010, p. 276). According to the NSSF, ‘all students can potentially become involved in bullying others or being bullied’ and, for most, this ‘occurs as part of their moral development or their temporary involvement with peer group dynamics’ (p. 79). In this account, then, ‘anyone’ can bully, implying that bullying is a ‘normal’ phase – something one ‘does’ and will ‘grow out of’ – rather than an identity – something one ‘is’. The NSSF nonetheless maintains a clear focus on that ‘small number of students [who] engage[s] in frequent and persistent bullying’ (p. 8). Thus bullying is simultaneously depicted as, both, a ‘particular kind of interaction between or among students’ (Walton, 2005, p. 108) and a significant problem associated with the pathology of certain individuals.

The NSSF draws upon a discourse of bullying that ‘reflect[s] constructs of difference’ (Walton, 2010, p. 141) and positions students as, implicitly, ‘good’ (‘normal’, engaging in ‘age-appropriate’ behaviour, and so on) or ‘bad’ (abnormal, anti-social, etc). As observed by Scheurich (1994, p. 308), publicly identifying “bad” groups’ enables the ‘productive behaviour of “good” citizens’ to be repeatedly reinforced. Thus the constructed problem of bullying, ‘repeatedly made real through discourse’, functions to
‘maintain the dominant social order by delineating and labelling particular children’ (Walton, 2010, p. 141). Moreover, the social regularities (Scheurich, 1994) associated with race, class, and gender are central to the ‘construction of [certain] children as representing social problems’ (Walton, 2010, p. 140). Bullying, then, cannot be read as simply a school yard behaviour; rather it constitutes, and is inseparable from, the ‘dynamics of difference that circulate throughout broader social and political spheres’ (p. 141).

The ‘sad’ and the ‘bad’

As a ‘highly visible, regulative socio-cultural phenomenon’, the discourse of bullying transcends the school/institutional context and, in this regard, the figure of the ‘bully’ operates as a crucial ‘site of intersectional otherisation’ (Ringrose & Renold, 2009, p. 574). As discussed earlier, the NSSF devoted considerable attention to explicating the characteristics of those students ‘who frequently bully others’ (MCEEDYA, 2010b, p. 9). Students who bully are further divided up into the ‘sub-types’ of those who bully ‘proactively and instrumentally’ and those who bully ‘reactively’ (p. 81). ‘Proactive’ bullies display ‘low levels of remorse and moral reasoning’, are ‘low on emotional empathy’ and bully in order to ‘achieve their goal of social dominance’ (p. 81). Typified as ‘cold and callous schemers’, they are said to have a ‘reasonable level of social competence [which] enables them to socially manipulate other students’. In contrast, ‘reactive’ bullies have ‘low levels of social competence and poor emotional control’, ‘tend to be poorly accepted’ and are ‘more likely to be quick to anger and lash out impulsively and usually with physical aggression’ (p. 81). Also referred to as ‘victim bullies’, they initially use aggression as a way of ‘countering their own victimisation’ but go on to ‘adopt bullying behaviour as an ongoing anticipatory/preventative strategy’ (p. 81).

The NSSF’s characterisation of bullies as ‘proactive’ or ‘reactive’ can, at one level, be read as a representing a crude distinction between those who are seen as ‘bad’ (‘cold and callous’ bullying) or ‘sad’ (emotional/incompetent bullying). This imagery is invoked particularly
clearly in the discussion that immediately follows, under the heading ‘Behaviour disorders’, which includes the statement that contrary to ‘society’s view of children as “innocents” [...] children are quite capable of bullying, aggression, and even violence’ (p. 82). Seeming to imply that some individuals are inherently violent, it further claims that:

Patterns of aggressive and anti-social behaviour in many adolescents can be traced back to similar, but milder, behaviour patterns in their early childhood years [...] It is not unreasonable to predict that many students who persistently bully would meet the criteria for being diagnosed with childhood psychopathy’ (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 82).

Interestingly, there is no context provided for this relatively short section (170 words in total), nor any indication of its perceived significance or broader relevance to the Framework as a whole. Nonetheless, in placing it directly after the lengthier discussion of ‘students who bully’ the NSSF makes a connection between bullying and deviance/disorder, implying that bullying is linked to individual pathology. In other words, despite earlier references to bullying as a developmental phase, here it is suggested that there is something inherently ‘wrong’ with those who bully; that what they do is essentially who they are.

In its framing of bullying as the ‘transparent actions of single individuals who can be identified as standing outside the normal order of things’ (Ellwood & Davies, 2010, p. 87), the NSSF embodies a psychosocial explanatory model based upon an understanding of bullies and victims as ‘deficient in personal and social skills and in need of explicit instruction’ (p. 90). Conceptualising bullying as ‘an incident between specific, identifiable individuals’ (Short, 2010, p. 333) with a focus on ‘psychological and cognitive determinants’ (p. 331) makes it difficult to see bullying as a ‘cultural practice guarding categories of social advantage’ (p. 338). Related to the dominance of rational humanist discourses, the reliance on psychosocial explanations further implies that every individual has an
‘obligation to take themselves up as a knowable, recognisable identity who speaks for themselves and who accepts responsibility for their actions’ (Laws & Davies, 2000, p. 4). Notions of personal responsibility, rationality, individual choice and accountability are, in this perspective, key requirements of and for (good) citizenship. Accordingly policy responses, like the NSSF, are predicated on the ‘universal’ citizen - ‘deracialised’ and ‘degendered’ (Osler & Starkey, 2005, p. 201). Thus each citizen / child is equally free to choose ‘good’ behaviour: students are ‘taught that they have choices about how to behave and that their accountability as credible and competent students will depend on learning to make the right choices’ (Laws & Davies, 2000, p. 5). Hence the failure to be a ‘good student’ constitutes a failure to achieve the rational humanist self; ‘the self that would automatically make good choices’. Moreover, to be seen as not in control of the self ‘involves the irrational’ which, in this context, is ‘read as disturbance’ thereby justifying a ‘developmental/categorising psychological discourse … [in order] to make sense of the failure’ (p. 8). Thus the NSSF vividly illustrates the ways in which discourses produce, not only, subjects but also ‘the obviousness, even inevitability of the subject’s “condition”’ (p. 3).

Definitions of bullying, as shown in this chapter, ‘work to distinguish not just the bullying behaviour from other modes of normalised violence’ but also the ‘character of the bully from other students’ (Ellwood & Davies, 2010, p. 87, my emphasis). Of particular importance, as observed by Ellwood and Davies (2010), the differentiation of ‘pathological’ bullies, or in the NSSF, ‘proactive’ and ‘reactive’ bullies, diverts attention from the ‘classic bully’ thus normalising ‘everyday violence’ (p. 93). Hence the ‘classic bully’ - a ‘powerful figure ... who is admired and feared and works to maintain the social order through aggressive behaviour toward those who fail to meet the norms of the moral ethos’ (p. 93) - is not problematised. Rather, the ‘sad’ and ‘bad’ bullies are the ones likely to ‘be caught in an unbreakable circuit’ of pathology/isation because, ironically, in order to be recognised/able as a bully, ‘one [must] already [have] been recognised as one who is likely to engage in bullying’ (p. 95). Moreover,
what is seen to ‘count’ as ‘good’ behaviour is largely dependent on the perceived ‘moral character’ of the individual; that is, with regard to ‘who the student “really is”’. ‘[A]pparently negative intentions’ as a key marker of bullying may, for instance, be negated by the ‘demonstration of a conscience’. Thus the ‘presence of a conscience’ may be seen as an ‘indicator of a nonpathological (nonbullying) individual’ (p. 87).

The naming and dividing up of ‘problem behaviours’, as discussed in the next section, is far from straightforward; rather it involves a ‘complex tension between reading violence as normal’ (Ellwood & Davies, 2010, p. 91) or pathological (‘bullying’). Burgess, Edwards and Skinner (2003, p. 207) for example, note the tendency to ‘pass off aggression as non-violent if it seen as rule-governed’ such as in the contexts of discipline, sport and war. That only certain manifestations of violence and bullying are problematised in the school setting is not surprising given the culture of hierarchical individuation, ranking and comparison, through which individual subjects are created by measuring the gaps between them (Jacobson, 2010, p. 268). In the context of a ‘marketised and neoliberal schooling system’ (Mills & Keddie, 2010b, p. 411), schools therefore play a central role in the perpetuation of inequality through the reinforcement of ‘class stratifications, dominant gender scripts, and heterosexuality’ (Walton, 2004, p. 26). As observed by Jacobson (2010, pp. 268-269), the ‘motivational discourse of schools’ is based on the idea that if one works hard ‘one will get rewarded, and that reward is significant because of it differentiation’. The ‘gaining-of-status-over-and-against-a-weaker-student’ (p. 269) is thus embedded in both the culture of schooling and of bullying; in both, it is through dominance, with respect to aspects of privilege, that ‘valued status is achieved’ (p. 271).

**The differences between girls and boys**

In its dividing up of bullies and conceptualisation of the bullying problem, the *NSSF* makes a key distinction between ‘overt’ or ‘physical’ bullying (also referred to as ‘face-to-face’ or ‘direct’ bullying, p. 75) and ‘covert’ or ‘non-physical’ bullying. Whilst the terms ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ are used in a
way that suggests that these are merely descriptive and, therefore self-evident, it is hard to see past their implicitly gendered connotations. Covert bullying, for example, is ‘subtle’ (MCEECFYA, 2010b, p. 43) and ‘insidious’ (p. 76); understood as an ‘interpersonal dynamic within the context of a friendship or friendship group’ (p. 88), it is seen as likely to consist of the infliction of ‘harm by damaging another’s social reputation, peer relationships and self-esteem’ (p. 43). Whilst neither ‘type’ of bullying is specifically named as the behaviour of boys or girls, the related discussion, both here and throughout the NSSF in general, functions effectively to make these links and does so in a way that presents sex difference as an essential ‘truth’. Boys, we are told, ‘bully more than girls and use more physical aggression’, whereas girls ‘use more covert relational bullying than boys’ (p. 8). In this context, boys’ ‘greater use of aggression’ is explained as ‘possibly because of their greater physical strength’ (p. 78), thereby rendering self-evident, both, boys’ aggression and boy’s bodily strength. The construction of girls’ and boys’ relationships, or ways of relating, as essentially different – in the association of covert bullying with girls and more ‘physical aspects [...] such as punching and overly-aggressive wrestling’ (p. 88) with boys’ friendships – further serves to position boys and girls in very particular ways. Interestingly, ‘cyberbullying’, an issue that is currently the focus of much public, media and political attention, is described as a ‘specific type of covert bullying’ (p. 76). Subsequent statements, not necessarily in the context of ‘cyberbullying’, that girls are more likely to bully ‘through the use of emails and text messages’ (p. 78), further cement traditional notions of sex difference and gender / sex roles.

The NSSF focus on sex differences in bullying is consistent with that observed internationally, in school bullying policies and related literature. In the UK, for example, Ringrose and Renold (2009, p. 577) conclude, although gender is rarely addressed in this context, that when it is, this tends to be in a way that reinvokes and/or legitimates ‘existing gender stereotypes, or essentialised norms of masculine and feminine difference’. Similarly, in the Canadian setting, Walton (2005, p. 107) notes that
conceptualisations of the role of gender in bullying ‘tend to be filtered through pre-conceived expectations of behaviours supposedly attributable to boys differentially from those of girls’ (see also Walton, 2010, 2011). Critical here is the general failure of research, as a key influence on policy, to problematise the ‘dominant logic’ of gender; that is to go beyond the surface in order to look for possibilities other than those of the ‘boys do this’ and ‘girls do that’ variation on a theme. Ringrose and Renold (2009), for instance, highlight the existence of a small, but significant, body of research which indicates, because ‘girls’ altercations’ tend to be seen as ‘less disruptive’, that they are less often constituted as a problem and thus tend to be overlooked, both in terms of their existence and their significance (p. 578). Recognitions such as this feed directly into the question of which violences ‘count’ and are seen as warranting intervention, this being the core problematic of this thesis.

The NSSF’s positioning of boys and girls as essentially different, both in terms of their ‘bullying behaviours’ and more generally, functions to trivialise and obscure gender, particularly insofar as this constitutes the beginning and end of the ‘gender analysis’ therein. ‘[V]alorised constructions’ of masculinity and femininity, based upon the ‘valuing of [certain] dispositions’ (Keddie, Mills, & Mills, 2008, p. 193), reflect ‘powerful cultural binaries’ (K. H. Robinson, 2005, p. 35); bullying, then, can be seen as just one way in which gender is performed, in a Butlerian sense, and policed. Moreover ‘other forms of identity’ (Kane, 2006, p. 674), and specifically the ways in which constructions of race, class, ethnicity, culture, able-bodiness, and sexuality impact upon gendered relations, are wholly overlooked. Given that bullying may be understood as a ‘powerful means of reinforcing culturally dominant relations of gender across [such] intersections’ (K. H. Robinson, 2005, p. 23), this is a crucial omission. Discourses of solidarity or belonging – of ‘self’ and ‘other’ positionings, in the context of a fundamentally divided and unequal society, are central to the ways in which people make sense of who they are and the way that the world is. Identity, then, is based upon marking the ‘difference’ of others and, as such, requires the exclusion, by a range of

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means, both violent and otherwise, of the 'gendered other', this including both girls and women as well as, in Connell's (1995) terms, subordinated and marginalised masculinities.

The NSSF therefore downplays the structural and institutional foundations of school bullying and, in its psychologised and individualistic focus, fails to account for the profound effects of the 'limiting and damaging constructions' which both shape, and are shaped by, broader societal, power differences (Mikel Brown, Chesney-Lind, & Stein, 2007, p. 1268). Specifically, the NSSF's degendered conceptualisation of bullying serves both to obscure gender, for example, in its failure to 'appreciate or unpack the differential impacts of gendered insults' (p. 1264); and deny its significance, such as in its failure to 'consider the ways in which adolescent boys (and adult men) unmercifully police each other' (p. 1261). Moreover, in its emphasis on individual bullying/bullied behaviours, the NSSF largely ignores social differences, thereby overlooking the critical role of (unearned) social privilege and (undeserved) marginalisation in terms of the social purposes served by bullying in 'reinforcing hierarchies of power and privilege' (Walton, 2011, p. 140). In a crucial sense then, the NSSF does more than 'just' overlook gendered, classed, raced relations of power; rather, by doing so, it serves to 'unwittingly reproduce social hierarchy' (Mikel Brown, et al., 2007, p. 1266). The decontextualisation of bullying, by framing it as, primarily, individual acts of deviance or 'bad' behaviour, thus enables it to be represented as something other than what it is, namely, violence against difference: an 'expression of power mediated by constructs of social difference', and, as such, a central 'mechanism of social control' (Walton, 2011, p. 140).

Conclusion

In this, the final policy analysis, chapter I have explored the ways in which gender and violence are problematised in and through the federal government's (revised) National Safe Schools Framework. My specific focus has been on the particular discourses of gender, difference and
identity which the NSSF draws upon in its construction and representation of 'problem' violence/s. For example, in highlighting the substantial work undertaken to delineate the precise nature and parameters of bullying, it is possible to see the ways in which definitions function to, not only, circumscribe policy responses but also, and more critically, underlie ascriptions of blame, pathology and moral worth. In this sense, narratives about bullying and violence, as evident in the NSSF, are based upon, and thus enable, a range of silences which, in turn, shape, the 'conditions of possibility' (Monk, 2011, p. 182), profoundly limiting the subject positions available. As discussed in the previous chapter, the compartmentalising of certain behaviours as representing particular types of problem (in this case, 'bullying', 'violence', etc), and particular types of people ('bullies'), obscures critical questions concerning gender, difference and, in particular, the tendency to equate difference with inferiority. Thus certain policy representations, as I have shown here, make it possible for violences to be represented as the problem of (gendered, classed, raced) 'others', diverting attention from the fundamentally divided and unequal nature of the society within which we live. In this context, policy representations can be understood as playing a crucial role in the (re)production and maintenance of inequalities via hierarchical dominance and privilege.
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION:

Australian policy responses to violence

This thesis has explored the discursive construction of the relationship/s between gender and violence. It has focused on the ways in which gender and violence are conceptualised and has identified the existence of a range of silences and gaps in this regard. Specifically, it has drawn attention to the ways in which certain representations of gender and violence are problematised in, and through, Australian social policy. Thus, rather than a study of violence this thesis constitutes an interrogation into the concept(ualisation) of ‘violence’. Following Lee (2001, p. 6), I have not aimed to definitively ‘know’ violence as an ‘object’ but, instead, to ‘observe it with all its contradictions and incompleteness’. Nor have I sought to develop a ‘new’ theory of violence; to do so, as emphasised by Lee (2001, p. 46), would mean confining this work to the very academic traditions that I wish to problematise. In exploring the complex relationships between conceptualisations of gender and violence, I have highlighted the ways in which the governance of violence relies upon and, hence, (re)enforces particular discourses. The thesis should not, therefore, be ‘read as a final or even authoritative word’ (Lee, 2001, p. 46) on violence; rather it proposes ‘new questions, parameters, and dilemmas’ (p. 46) that, I argue, are crucial for advancing our understanding and responses to violence.

In the final chapter of this thesis I draw together the various threads of this investigation. I begin by reflecting on the research questions with which I began this journey. Whilst the breadth, depth and nuances of the issues associated with these questions have been explored in the body of this work, I endeavour here to signpost the key aspects of my argument including the significance of particular issues in terms of my overall thesis. I follow this with an account of my thoughts, in simple terms, what I make of all of this, encapsulating the core problematic/s that animate, and lie at the heart, of this thesis.
Revisiting the research questions

The mutually constitutive relationship between understandings of gender and violence is the key concern of this thesis, in particular the ways in which presumptions about gender frame and inform the ways in which violence is problematised in the three Australian social policies reviewed here. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, a range of more specific questions, influenced by the analytical frameworks proposed by Bacchi (1999, 2000, 2009) and Scheurich (1994, 1997), underpin this broader concern, each drawing attention to different, but interrelated, dimensions of the construction of violence. In the following section I work through each of these in turn; here I undertake not to provide definitive ‘answers’ but rather offer a series of observations in relation to the policy analyses that constitute the body of this thesis.

How has ‘violence’ been constructed as a social problem in Australian policy discourse?

Analysis of the conditions associated with the emergence of social problems is central to Scheurich’s ‘policy archaeology’ approach: ‘[b]y what process’, he asks, ‘does a social problem gain the “gaze” of the state, of the society, and thus, emerge from a kind of social invisibility into visibility?’ (Scheurich, 1997, p. 97). Asking questions about the ‘kinds’ of violence constructed as social problem/s thus draws attention to issues relating to the delineation of ‘acceptable’ (i.e. ‘normal’/understandable) and ‘unacceptable’ (problem) violences; of appropriate (‘boys will be boys’) and unfair (‘pick on someone your own size’) violences; as well as the demarcation of violences as public or private, legitimated/officially sanctioned or illegal/criminal, and so on.

What is problematised as ‘violence’ in Australian policy? What is left unproblematic in this representation of violence?

This thesis has focused upon, both, what is and is not problematised as ‘violence’, or represented as a problem, in Australian policy. In paying attention to the violences that are
named and unnamed, emphasised and deemphasised, and acknowledged and unacknowledged, particular themes are evident. ‘Problem violence’ in this respect is, to a large extent, violence against women and children. Outside of this context, violence in and of itself is rarely named except when it is deemed significant on the basis of its association with a particular group (‘youth’, Indigenous people, ‘Lebanese gang rapists’, etc), setting (licensed premises, rural communities, public areas, etc), or victim (older people, children, etc). Crucially, violence by boys/men is seldom acknowledged as such, that is, as men’s use of violence. Constructions of violence, as argued here, thus enable a shift in policy focus away from violence per se and on to the ‘problems’ of certain ‘others’ positioned as ‘culturally different’ and socially ‘excluded’.

What violences are named / unnamed, emphasised / deemphasised, and acknowledged / unacknowledged?

The naming of violence constitutes a central theme of this thesis. In this respect, I have sought to highlight the crucial exclusionary function performed by, and through, the classificatory act/s of policy including the definition, terminology and categorisation of violences. Hence, the very act of designating ‘problem violence’ first requires that a certain understanding of violence be affirmed, that is, in relation to what is recognised and marked as ‘violent’. Definitions of violence thus play a crucial role in signifying ‘what is not, and who is not being implicated in the experience of violence’ (Evans, 2008, p. 63). The National Safe Schools Framework’s (NSSF) framing of violence, as discussed in Chapter 8, vividly illustrates this point in its differentiation of ‘bullying’ and ‘violence’. The parallels here between the NSSF’s conceptualisation of ‘bullying’ as a repeated pattern of overt or covert behaviour directed ‘towards a specific student’ by ‘someone with more power’ (p. 8) or in the context of ‘a power imbalance’ (p. 74), and the National Plan to Reduce Violence
against Women and their Children’s formulation of ‘domestic violence’ are particularly stark. This NSSF emphasis on bullying and violence as distinct phenomena is further mirrored in the National Plan’s insistence on the differences between ‘gendered violence’ (that is, violence against women and children) and ‘ordinary’ (man-to-man) violence. The policy focus on ‘violence against women’, as in the National Plan, thus draws attention to women as victims of violence whilst obscuring, both, men as the primary perpetrators of violence and the gendered dynamics of violence in general. That violence is fundamentally and inherently ‘masculine’ (FitzRoy, 2001, p. 283) and, as such, something that men do, is thus reproduced – and authorised - as a ‘social truth’ of violence.

The analytical approach taken in this thesis illuminates the central role of problematisations in governing processes (Bacchi, 2009) and, in particular, the ways in which the identification of some violences, and not others, provides a crucial means by which certain groups and behaviours are responsibilised and, thus, targeted for intervention. In the case of the National Plan, the problem becomes one of violence against women (and children) and, hence, a ‘women’s issue’, rather than violence by men. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, however, this practice is not unique to the National Plan; here and elsewhere ‘violence’ is uniformly referred to in a ‘generic’ sense, that is, as anyone’s and not specifically men’s violence. Especially significant, however, in terms of the focus of this thesis is the partial problematisation of violence, this ensuring that men’s diverse experiences of violence are overlooked as both policy and broader concerns. Thus men’s violence towards other men is not only rendered invisible but is also left unproblematised. In positioning men only within the context of the perpetration of violence against women and children, the structural and/or power relations endemic in society, both between men and women and men and men, are thus wholly obscured.
What presuppositions about gender are implied or taken for granted in this representation of the problem of violence?

The policy analyses of this thesis powerfully demonstrate the embeddedness of gender(ed) discourses and the ways in which these shape conceptualisations and problematisations of violence. The failure to incorporate gender(ed) analysis, a consistent theme across the three policies analysed here as well as the broader context of policy responses reviewed in Chapter 5, contributes to the entrenchment of fixed notions of masculinity and femininity, regarding the ‘true nature’ of boys and men, girls and women. Focusing on the subject positions created and reproduced by these discourses enables critical reflection on the mutually constitutive relationship between dominant understandings of gender and violence, this being the core problematic of this thesis.

*In what ways are conventional understandings of gender reinforced and/or challenged? To what extent is social change presented as possible and/or desirable?*

Discourses of gender are central to the ‘powerful grids or networks of regularities’ (Schurich, 1997, p. 98) that enable the emergence of particular social problems as well as the ‘range of acceptable policy choices’ (p. 99). The policies examined in this thesis rely upon and, hence, reinforce conventional understandings of gender, emphasising, for example, sex/gender difference, traditional gendered roles and responsibilities, and so on. In doing so, the possibility that things could be different - that they need not be this way – becomes unthinkable. Thus the potential for truly transformative social change is not merely overlooked but, more crucially, rendered unimaginable.

Australia’s *National Health Policy (NHP)*, the focus of Chapter 6, demonstrates most clearly the embodiment of particular discourses of gender, illustrating the extent to which these subjectify boys/men and girls/women in certain ways. The *NHP*’s conflation of sex and
gender and its focus on sex/gender difference via the invocation of the dualisms of biology / culture and nature / nurture, is particularly stark. At the most basic level, this is evident in the decision to address ‘males’ and ‘women’ as distinct groups requiring different policy responses. Australia’s public health agenda thus comprises two separate policy documents: the National Male Health Policy (NMHP) and National Health Women’s Policy (NWHP), each of which is oriented towards men and women’s ‘unique’ needs, vulnerabilities, and interests. Here, gender is reduced to the innate ‘differences’ between men and women. Lacking a critical focus on gender, the NHP thus relies upon, and reinforces, essentialist notions of femininity and masculinity.

Discourses concerning ‘gender equality’, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, are especially significant in what they reveal about the understandings of gender underpinning each policy. Whether through an emphasis on equality, as in the National Plan, or de-emphasis of gender, as in the NSSF, such approaches implicitly reinforce the oppositional positioning of boys/men and girls/women through the dualistic prisms of strength / vulnerability, powerful / powerless, protector / protectee, and perpetrator / victim. Moreover, their failure to engage with the broader context of gendered / raced / classed power relations enables the obscuration of, both, men’s collective advantage in relation to women, and men and women’s differential relationships to the hierarchies of power and privilege. Similarly, the NMHP’s focus on ‘equity’ and, in particular, the impact for men of the ‘significant social, economic and cultural changes in our society’ (Department of Health & Aging, 2010b, p. 3) further demonstrates this point. Here though, women are the implied beneficiaries of the social changes which have caused men’s disadvantage; that is, men’s disadvantage is pitched against women’s advantage. In framing men as a disadvantaged group, the NMHP enables men to be positioned as vulnerable yet does so without disrupting conventional understandings of gender. In other
words, the emphasis on men’s ‘disadvantage’ in this context is not linked to men’s ‘natural’ inferiority nor does it challenge assumptions regarding men’s ‘inherent’ strength. The overarching and gendered nature of power relations is thereby overlooked, as are the ways in which intersections of gender, sexuality, ‘race’ and class ensure the differential positioning/s of both men and women.

How/In what ways do the discourses of gender and violence intersect and overlap?

The policy analyses constituting this thesis demonstrate the deeply - profoundly - gendered nature of violence discourses. Nowhere is this more evident than in the policy distinctions drawn between perpetrators and victims of violence, represented here as specifically ‘genderised difference’ (Moore, 1994 p. 63). Discourses of gender and violence, then, are mutually constitutive: power, gender and violence ‘intersect in complex and multi-faceted ways’ (Virkki, 2007, p. 230). Gender is central to the ‘context in which violence is constructed, experienced and explained’ (Virkki, 2007, p. 229) and the ‘body and its perceived relationship to violence’ is, in turn, central to the ‘meaning and practice of gender’ (Hollander, 2001, p. 88). Policy approaches which reduce gender to the male/female binary, as evident in the NMHP, National Plan and NSSF, thus function to both marginalise gender concerns and de-gender violence/s in its myriad forms and manifestations.

I have shown that the representations of violence evident in the National Plan and NSSF – and through their absence in the NMHP – are consistent with the gender(ed) discourses upon which these draw. In particular, the self-evidence of sex/gender difference provides the basis for the understandings and theorisations of violence. The NHP’s failure to name and address violence, for example, serves to, both, silence gender critique and (re)assert gender difference as natural and inevitable. Further, in its failure to
engage with gender and, more importantly, the social construct of masculinity, the NMHP overlooks the significance of the numerical overrepresentation of males in relation to differential injury/death rates. Men’s greater involvement in risk-taking and violence is thus rendered both ‘normal’ (for men) and unproblematic.

The normalisation of men’s agency and of women’s vulnerability is evident throughout the policy analyses, thus demonstrating the potency of the aligned discourses of gender and violence. In the National Plan this is apparent in the ‘generic’ use of the term ‘violence’, both, as a kind of (unacknowledged) shorthand for violence against women and children, and as if it refers to anyone’s and not specifically men’s violence. In this context, the inclusion of statements such as ‘all violence is unacceptable’ suggests that violence between/against men is, either, not seen as violence or not considered a problem. Either way, ‘violence’ is used here in a way that renders violence between men invisible whilst also fixing the subject positions ‘woman’ and ‘man’ in a way that associates the need for protection from violence with the former and not the latter. The invocation of discourses of ‘safety’, however, in relation to some groups (women and children) and not others (men) further troubles the self-evidence of the universal condemnation of ‘all’ violence. In the NSSF this is demonstrated in the distinction between ‘bullying’ and ‘non-bullying’ behaviours, such that some acts of violence - and not others - are problematised. In this context, unmarked violences, such as boys fighting, are likely to be those that fall within the bounds of what is understood to be ‘gender-appropriate’ behaviour.

What discursive resources, or ‘knowledges’, are drawn upon in Australian policy constructions of the problem/s of ‘violence’?

Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted the ways in which the dominance of certain knowledges and ‘ways of knowing’ are linked to the emergence and dominance of particular representations of the problem of
'violence'. In Chapter 2, for example, I considered the interconnections between practitioner understandings of (men’s) violence and dominant discourses in relation to gender, violence, ‘expertise’ and knowledge. As discussed there, individual understandings of violence cannot be isolated from the organisational and, more importantly, policy, context. Rather, professional, or disciplinary, constructions of violence draw attention to discourses – and discourses of gender and violence in particular – as crucial to understanding societal responses to violence. Hence, a policy-as-discourse approach, as advocated by Bacchi and applied here, demands a broader focus on the subject positions - or ‘certain ways-of-seeing and certain ways-of-being’ (Willig, 2001, p. 107) – made available by broader discourses. In this way, individual narratives, as shown in Chapter 2, can be opened up for analysis in terms of the discursive resources, and significantly, the ‘knowledges’, drawn upon in constructing ‘problem/s’ of violence.

Which knowledges are linked to the emergence and dominance of particular representations of the problem of ‘violence’?

As a ‘mode of authority’ (Rose, 1999, p. xi) expertise, via the 'expert knower', performs a crucial exclusionary function in determining who is able to speak authoritatively about an issue, within the broader context of the national and ‘supranational’ (Hearn & McKie, 2010). Understood as ‘social regularities’ (Schourich, 1997), knowledges thus operate as ‘powerfully embedded preconceptual frames’ ensuring that certain ‘modes of thinking about social life and categories of thought are privileged as common sense or natural or the best or are just assumed’ (p. 105). Within the complex grid of social regularities, neoliberalism, associated with the minimisation of state responsibility and involvement in social problems, is a critical influence on the identification of social problems, problem groups and policy ‘solutions’. Whilst, as shown in Chapter 5, there is little consistency in the ways in which violence is conceptualised, problematised and addressed across Australia,
the extent to which these diverse approaches emphasise individual responsibility, accountability and rationality is an enduring theme. A neoliberal orientation towards ‘governing at a distance’ (Miller & Rose, 1990) is particularly discernible in preventive policy approaches such as those of the NHP, National Plan and NSSF. As shown in Chapters 6-8, these policies clearly exemplify, both, an emphasis on risk-management, decision-making and (self) control, and the failure to critically acknowledge social-structural considerations such as gender, class, and racialised differences.

In this context, who uses violence, against whom, where, and in what circumstances is closely related to the varied, and various, ways in which violence is named, interpreted and responded to in policy and practice. Also evident is the overriding dominance of psychological approaches to understanding, explaining, and intervening in violence. In this respect, the reliance on individualised, ‘expert’, approaches is entirely consistent with the ‘privileging of scientific, technocratic and economic discourses’ which characterise the broader Australian policy agenda (Morley & Macfarlane, 2008, p. 31). As manifest here, through an emphasis on individuals, self responsibility and active decision-makers/ing, the regulation of conduct becomes ‘a matter of each individual’s desire to govern their own conduct’ (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 215). Thus the governance of bodies in and through Australian policy is assured via the ‘promotion of social rights and responsibilities’ (Scott, 2003, p. 280) as well as in the marking of bodies as responsible (‘healthy’, ‘non-violent’) or irresponsible (‘unhealthy’, violent, anti-social, dangerous) and, hence, in need of intervention.

*Which knowledges, and ‘ways of knowing’, are afforded truth status?*

The policy analyses undertaken in this thesis illustrate the significance of the relationship between social science, research
and policy-making processes in the emergence of particular problematisations of violence. The consideration of Australia’s National Committee on Violence (1988-1990) in Chapter 5, as a (historical) case in point, shows the range and significance of influences on policy and the extent to which research, especially in the form of ‘policy-relevant research’ and social analysis, contributes to the authoritative defining of social reality (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 52). Similarly, the policy documents examined here rely upon particular understandings of evidence, research and what is seen to ‘count’ in this regard. The emphasis on ‘evidence-based’ approaches, combined with the tightly choreographed advisory mechanisms and consultative activities associated with the development ‘phase’ for each of these policies, can thus be seen as indicative of the ‘centralisation of policy-making’ and, as such, is ‘closely tied to the politics of a strong central state’ (Fawcett, et al., 2010, p. 38).

In this context ‘evidence-based policy’ reflects a focus on ‘scientific’ measures of validity, efficiency and effectiveness, thereby excluding alternative, more critical, approaches and ways of knowing. As shown in Chapter 8 for example, the space devoted in the NSSF to the precise delineation of the nature, parameters and extent of the ‘school bullying’ problem is indicative of the ways in which particular bodies of knowledge, based on the legitimation of certain forms of evidence, circumscribe, not only, policy responses (or lack thereof) but also, and more critically, ascriptions of blame, pathology, moral worth, and so on.

**What are the consequences – or power effects – of these representations of the problem of ‘violence’?**

Consideration of the power effects, in Foucauldian terms, of and generated by the prevailing discourses/knowledges of violence is central to the policy analysis of this thesis. In their conceptualisation of violence as a behaviour that is both freely chosen and individually willed, the
National Plan and NSSF link violence to particular ‘types’ of people, thereby neglecting more difficult questions regarding gender, power relations, identity and difference. Moreover, the NHP’s failure to name and address violence reinforces the ‘unspokeness’ of men’s violences.

Who is identified as ‘violent’ and with what effects?

The policy analysis conducted here highlights the extent to which discourses of violence enable violences to be represented as the problem of (gendered, classed, raced) ‘others’. As evident in the National Plan and NSSF, a great deal of policy work has gone into identifying those violences worthy of attention, based on the problematisation of some acts and not others. In this respect, gendered, raced and classed subjectivities are critical to the construction of risk and vulnerability and, hence, who is seen as ‘violent’. In focusing on the particular contexts or circumstances within which violence occurs, rather than violence in and of itself, the policies here enable violence to be represented as a problem presented by particular groups of people and from whom other groups need to be protected. The conceptualisation of violence as atypical and the associated identification of ‘violent individuals’ thus diverts attention from, the ‘ordinary’, unmarked, violences that both constitute and contribute to the fundamentally divided and unequal nature of society. In this sense, the differentiation of ‘types’ of behaviours and problems can be seen as key ‘governmental distinctions’ associated with the shaping of ‘social identities and relationships’ (Newman & Clarke, 2009, p. 11).

Each of the three policies reviewed in this thesis are marked by the un(der)theorisation of gender and power relations. Demonstrating the de-gendering of talk about violence (Howe, 2008), violence by men/boys, though often implicit, is rarely acknowledged. For example, whilst men are not named in the National Plan, with gender-neutral references instead made to ‘people’/persons, it is
clear that men are addressed here as both perpetrators and change agents. Men’s violence is therefore, in itself, largely unquestioned: the ‘natural’ association of masculinity with violence is left unchallenged. Crucially the policy focus on the violences associated with ‘power imbalances’, as in the National Plan and NSSF, perpetuates stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity whilst obscuring violences between men as well as the power relations that exist between, both, men and women and men and men.

How/in what ways are the ‘violent’ subject and the ‘non-violent’ subject differentiated?

In Chapter 8, I focused on the ways in which the ‘dividing practices’ of the NSSF associated with the narratives of bullying and school violence rely upon and work through discourses of gender, difference and identity. Similarly, as demonstrated in Chapter 7, the National Plan’s partitioning of certain behaviours as representing particular types of problem (‘domestic’ violence) and particular types of people (‘perpetrators’) is neither incidental nor inevitable. Rather, differentiation of the ‘violent’ subject and the ‘non-violent’ subject obscures critical questions concerning gender, violence, risk and vulnerability. Moreover, by invoking racialised imagery, policy approaches such as those implicitly mobilise populist notions of an ‘aggressive, less self-controlled, subordinate masculinity’ (Coleman, 2007, p. 210) from which women and children need protection, thereby enabling differentiation of ‘potential threat’ from ‘potential protector’ (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010, p. 10).

The neoliberal emphasis on individual responsibility, accountability and rationality provides a crucial context for the identification and targeting of the ‘violent subject’. ‘Good’ men, as good citizens, are ‘autonomous, rational and in control’; control, here, is ‘represented principally in relation to capacity for violence’ (Mehta & Bondi, 1999,
p. 77). Violence thus becomes a marker of irrationality and weakness of character; ‘bad’ masculinity as against the ‘good’ masculinity of the rational, reasonable man, the (non-violent) protector of women and children (Ringrose & Renold, 2009). Moreover, the stigmatisation of some subjects as ‘troublesome’ (violent, dangerous), such as in the targeting of violence in Indigenous communities, is, in this sense, a crucial strategy of governance.

**The violence of gender**

Focusing on the violence of identity and identification, as advocated by scholars such as Greig (2001a) and Shepherd (2007, 2008, 2010), offers the potential for a richer and deeper understanding of the ways in which violence both ‘produces and is produced by the gender order’ (Greig, 2001a, p. 18). Naming some, but not other, violences as ‘gendered’, therefore, enables the partial problematisation of violence, rendering it visible or not depending on the circumstances whilst also (re)inscribing - and reinforcing - particular (gendered) truths regarding what boys/men and girls/women are ‘really’ like. This is evident in the ways in which values associated with male aggression and competitiveness, for example, are ‘instilled in the military, competitive sports, and organisational life’ and then taken as evidence of a ‘natural male aggressivity’ (A. Peterson, 1998, p. 55). In this respect, as demonstrated in this thesis, policy accounts which emphasise the gendered nature of violence, rather than the violence of gender (Shepherd, 2008), mask the ways in which understandings of violence reflect, embed, and reinforce gendered discourses.

It is clear that policy accounts of violence are ‘moulded by’, and can only be understood within the context of, hegemonic, societal discourses (Hume, 2007, p. 150). Focusing on the constructions inherent within representations of violence, as I have done here, is crucial because it reveals that acts of violence are less important than the ‘narratives’ used to ‘explain and rationalise’ these (p. 150). As demonstrated in this thesis,
discourses of gender, violence and (power/)knowledge are inseparable. Together they function to ‘mask the power relations that determine what acts will qualify as “violence”’ (Anderson and Umberson, 2001: 367), with crucial implications for the ways in which violences are – and are not - defined, identified, explained and addressed in and through policy. Further, whilst it is clear that gender, difference and identity are key contexts for the construction, explanation, and experience of violence, the under-theorisation of these aspects serves to naturalise the hierarchical relations of dominance and associated privilege which underpin violence.

The construal of gender as relevant only to women, and to relations between women and men, as evident in all three policies, combined with the reductive conceptualisation of power as individually possessed and wielded, is predicated upon – indeed requires – the disregard of relations between men (and, for that matter, relations between women). Crucially, this extends not only to men’s experiences of violence, whether as victims, perpetrators, bystanders or spectators, but also the implications for the reproduction of violent, gender(ed) discourses. A key proposition of this thesis, then, is that men’s violence towards other men be problematised and, in so doing, ‘connected up’ with discussions of gender, ‘domestic violence’ and other forms of violence against women and children..

**Problematising men’s violence against men**

Throughout my work on this thesis and the process of reading and re-reading the array of policy documents and related literature, this is the question that has kept returning to me: Where is men’s violence against men? When it comes to policy and related discourses, violence against women is, it seems, everywhere but men’s other violences are nowhere, or more accurately, invisibly everywhere. Paradoxically, the current policy context in Australia is one which emphasises (re)directing attention towards men on the grounds that men are disadvantaged and struggling with their role within a changed society. As discussed at various points in this thesis, gender equity, in this context, has, largely, come to mean recognising and redressing the ‘equal opportunity’ barriers faced by men.
Clearly this is a worrying trend in terms of the potential for feeding into, and strengthening, a ‘feminist backlash’, thereby solidifying the ‘status quo’ and undermining efforts to address violence against women and children.

The oppositional positioning of men and women links with the conceptualisation of a certain problematic of violence, one that is based upon fixed notions of ‘us versus them’, of difference and division and conflict. In this context, the ‘men are victims too (of women’s domestic violence)’ argument (see, for example, One-in-Three Campaign, 2009; Stockdale, 1999; Woods, 2007, 2009) can be understood as having emerged as a way of countering the focus on men as perpetrators of violence towards women. The real counter-punch, the huge woolly mammoth bellowing in the middle of the room, though, is men’s violences towards other men. There are, as I have argued in this thesis, significant weaknesses inherent in the equation of violence against women and children with ‘gendered’ violence and, in this respect, the ‘what about men?’ question is, actually, crucial, although not in the way that it is often presented. No one, it seems, questions men’s violences toward each other – not even those men, such as the Australian Men’s Rights Agency, who have taken it upon themselves to ‘stand up’ for and defend men as a group. It is difficult to see how this approach – one which disregards the everyday, ordinary, insidious violences with which, surely, all men, like women, must live - can serve anyone’s interests; in short, it is not good for anyone.

It is not, I argue, nor will it ever be, ‘enough’ to focus on transforming men’s relations with women. In any case, this is surely an impossible task within the broader context of a harsh, competitive and hierarchical culture; a culture that, (it should, by now, be) needless to say, transcends individual men and women. The shifting patterns of inclusion and exclusion associated with hierarchies of difference subsume – that is, both constitute and are constituted by - their alignment with sex/gender and other axes of identity including social class, ‘race’, ethnicity, sexuality, and
so on. This is to recognise that hierarchies of difference are mutually constitutive, embodying the alignment of the feminine with innate inferiority. In this sense, class, ‘race’, ethnicity and so on are not ‘add-ons’ to gender; rather they flow into one another such that it is impossible to ‘think’ one without the other.

So long as we consider it acceptable for men to ‘roughhouse’, engage in ‘fisticuffs’, ‘size each other up’, and so on, that is, all of those euphemisms for violent masculinity, we must be resigned to remaining firmly stuck in the gendered/raced/classed status quo. It is this that enables and reinforces — indeed requires — violence: the violences of exclusion, the violences of otherisation, the violences of gender. Further, so long as we attach gender to women, and hence see violence as problematic only when it involves women as victims (‘gendered’ violence), violence will remain a ‘women’s issue’. And so long as researchers and policy-makers maintain a ‘gender as women’ mind-set, attempts at gendered critique will continue to be exercises in difference-finding and in ‘men versus women’ in relation to, for example, who is more disadvantaged, oppressed, hardly done by, misunderstood, and so on. The ‘what about women’s violence against men?’ line is just one example of this. The net result, however, is that (men’s) ‘ordinary’ and everyday violences are largely ignored. Unless violence is able to be represented as a problem associated with a particular group of men (‘violent men’, ‘other’ men), it is not named, problematised or even, it seems, noticed.

My argument, then, is not that the current focus on violence against women and children, as reflected in the National Plan for example, is misplaced or unwarranted; there can be no doubt that this is an issue of crucial concern. Similarly, the suffering caused to some children/youth by others is, without question, unacceptable. Rather, this thesis has aimed to draw attention to, both, the partiality of this approach and its profound costs. Current policy approaches, with their narrow focus on particular forms of violence, represent, metaphorically, a very flimsy bandaid in the face of a well advanced cancer. As long as the ‘problem of violence’ is
represented, narrowly, as violence against women and children, and strategies for addressing this continue to rely on fixed constructions of sex/gender, efforts to come up with ‘new’ or ‘better’ tactics can only lead to more of the same. Rather, we need to be asking different – and difficult – questions; questions of, rather than about, gender, difference and violence. Why is it, for example, that dominance and submission continue to function as the ‘primary signifiers of gender’ (McMahon, 1999, p. 165) and, for that matter, of identity? This also means asking thorny, but vital, questions about, for example, the cultures of sport, of winners and losers, of ‘healthy’ competition, and so on, which are so firmly embedded in our sense of who ‘we’ are, as Australians, as a nation and as a people.

How we might otherwise ‘be’, live and interrelate is incredibly difficult to conceptualise within the bounds of the existing ways of thinking in which we are, all of us, implicated. Yet imagining ourselves differently is exactly what is needed to extricate ourselves from this quagmire of stuck-ness. Recognising our shared responsibility, as argued by Young (2003, p. 130), ‘means, in part, that [we] challenge one another and call one another to account for what [we] are doing or not doing’. We need, in short, to challenge the ‘violence of gender itself’, with its underlying ‘logic of hierarchical and oppositional social relations’ (Greig, n.d.). In this sense, this thesis represents an attempt, however small, to shine a spotlight on the violence of policy itself with its inherent limitations and contradictions.
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Appendix One: Problem representations of violence in the *Time for Action* report.

Summary analysis of recommendations to improve responses to domestic/family violence in *Time for action: The National Council’s plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children 2009-2021*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the ‘problem’</th>
<th>Proposed ‘solution’</th>
<th>Comments: Underlying assumptions &amp; implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fragmented system</strong></td>
<td>Seamless system: integrated, comprehensive, ‘whole-of-government’</td>
<td>- Policy intent/content is basically sound; problem lies mainly with implementation of policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps between policy intent and policy implementation</td>
<td>COAG endorsement 'advance federalism' Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laws are inadequate</strong></td>
<td>Seamless system: integrated, comprehensive, ‘whole-of-government’</td>
<td>- All (problem) violence is illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(contain anomalies, are not applied in way intended, can revictimise women, are not accessible and equitable)</td>
<td>Law reform</td>
<td>- Laws/legal responses are appropriate way to address violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Failure to invest in primary prevention</strong></td>
<td>Focus on prevention</td>
<td>- Focus on family law (and children’s safety) addresses women primarily as mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(with regard to cultural and behavioural change)</td>
<td>Address ‘intergenerational cycle of’</td>
<td>- Public health model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Violence as disease/disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of emphasis on structural issues &amp; power relations associated with identity, difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Violence ‘contagious’,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the ‘problem’</td>
<td>Proposed ‘solution’</td>
<td>Comments: Underlying assumptions &amp; implications</td>
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</table>
| violence                | Focus on children & young people  
Prioritisation of needs of children who experience/witness violence  
Programs that focus on improving relationships skills  
Create ‘fairer Australia’ by challenging ‘social mores’ and creation of ‘new ethos’ | transmittable  
- Issue is poor (individual) communication & interpersonal skills  
- Gendered analysis absent  
- Structural power & power relations overlooked  
- Ambiguous (which ‘social mores’?) |
| Services are not adequately meeting needs of women and children | ‘realistic and sustained’ funding  
Investment in skilled workforce; attract & retain the ‘right workers’ with the ‘right skills’  
Cost-benefit analysis re: investment in crisis services versus early intervention |  
- Problem is financial – more money/funding is the ‘answer’  
- Current services are funded inadequately  
- Problem is a labour force/training issue  
- Workforce is not adequately skilled; ‘wrong’ workers are being hired  
- Either / or?  
- Based on economically quantifiable ‘results’ |
| Inadequate recognition of the ‘vital role of the community’ | Focus on primary prevention |  
- Indicative of ecological approach (‘no single cause ... many risk factors’, p. 37)  
- ‘Risk’ – targeting of particular |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the ‘problem’</th>
<th>Proposed ‘solution’</th>
<th>Comments: Underlying assumptions &amp; implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen community leadership &amp; awareness</td>
<td>characteristics/groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote ‘positive male behaviours’</td>
<td>Devolution of responsibility to individuals and the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target men/boys as agents and partners</td>
<td>Leadership as gendered concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘One size fits all’ approach</td>
<td>‘high quality, tailored’, ‘holistic’ &amp; accessible responses</td>
<td>Violence as atypical, associated with ‘bad’, ‘negative’ masculinities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure ‘voice of community’ is able to influence implementation</td>
<td>Dichotomy of violent / non-violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Men as active / agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of evidence</td>
<td>Draw on national &amp; international evidence re: most effective strategies</td>
<td>Who is ‘the community’? Who does this include/exclude?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish National Centre of Excellence for Prevention of Violence</td>
<td>Primacy of ‘scientific’, expert knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate monitoring and reporting</td>
<td>Establish base-line for monitoring change over time</td>
<td>Focus on quantification and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish ‘robust system’ of reporting, independent monitoring and comprehensive evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Two: Problem representations of violence in the *National Plan*

Summary analysis of representations of the ‘problem of violence’ in the *National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-2022*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the ‘problem’</th>
<th>Proposed ‘solution’</th>
<th>Comments: Underlying assumptions &amp; implications</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| All violence is unacceptable | National Plan Whole of government response | - Use of ‘all violence’ masks singular focus on violence against women and children  
- Violence = violence against women and children  
- Violence between men unacknowledged & unnamed |
| | Reduce violence | - Violence is inevitable therefore aim to reduce/manage, rather than eliminate, violence  
- Actuarial approach in context of neo-liberal governance |
| Violence against women and children is unacceptable | | |
| Violence against women is a | Community wide response Community participation: ‘men | - Violence = violence against women and children  
- Violence between/against men is not a problem or does not require a response  
- Women need protection from violence; men do not |
<p>| | | - Individual/community (rather than societal, structural) |</p>
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| Community problem      | and women taking responsibility for the problems and solutions’ (p. 11); ‘everyone is responsible’ | - Devolution of responsibility to individuals & the community  
- Treats notion of community as self-evident & non-problematic (who is ‘the community’?; who does this include & exclude?)  
- Structural issues regarding power relations, etc overlooked |
| Attitudinal and behavioural change required |                      |                                                 |
| Violence against women is a complex problem | Multi-layered, multi-factorial responses | - Ecological model (health/prevention)  
- Many factors (de-emphasises gendered and other power relations)  
- De-emphasises structural issues, power relations associated with identity, difference |
| Improving responses to women so that they can ‘return to full social and economic participation as soon as possible’ (p. 10) | | - Focus on ‘good, productive citizen’  
- Right/Responsibility discourse (right to protection, responsibility to ‘participate’)|
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| Violence is costly                                                                   |                                              | - Harm best understood in financial terms (i.e. as $ figure)  
- Seriousness of harm best represented in financial terms (i.e. serious = costly; serious because of cost)  
- ‘Cost’ of violence between men not measured or named                                                                                                                                 |
| ‘Enormous economic cost’ (p. 2) of domestic violence and sexual assault               |                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Violence against women linked to ‘unhealthy’ and disrespectful relationships           | Primary prevention  
‘The Line’ social marketing  
Improved knowledge, education and skills  
Relationship counselling services  
Respectful Relationships education (schools) | - Public Health, preventive approach (violence akin to drink-driving, speeding)  
- Violence as disease/doctor                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                                                      |                                              | - Issue is poor (individual) communication & interpersonal skills  
- Focus on male-female relationships rather than male-male relationships  
- Cond cored analysis absent  
- Structural power & power relations overlooked  
- Focus on ‘jealousy and controlling behaviour’ (p. 15) emphasises the interpersonal realm & behaviour of individual boys/men                                                                 |
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<td>Focus on ‘young people’s attitudes towards violence and risk taking behaviours such as binge drinking’ (p. 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Link between youth, violence, alcohol use and ‘risk-taking’ (as adolescent developmental ‘stage’)</td>
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<td>Community involvement to ‘promote equal and respectful relationships between women and men’ (p. 14)</td>
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<td>- Male-to-male relationships not considered</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Quality of male relationships not deemed relevant/significant</td>
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<td>Support ‘men to take a leading role in discouraging violent behaviour and challenging discrimination and gender stereotyping’ (p. 14)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Men as partners in violence prevention &amp; part of the ‘solution’</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Violent men as atypical; separation of ‘good’ men from ‘bad’ men/masculinities</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Expand men’s knowledge and skills in sustaining respectful relationships’ (p. 19)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ignorance, not power relations, is the issue (if men knew better, they wouldn’t be violent)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Implies men (rather than women) are disadvantaged by their ‘gender roles’ (i.e. emotional, relationship skills, etc); overlooks male privilege as well as that associated with class, race, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Ribbon campaign Mensline</td>
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<td>‘encourage zero tolerance through sport’ (16)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Sport as ‘healthy outlet’ for men’s ‘natural aggressiveness’</td>
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<td>- Fails to acknowledge competition, physicality, etc as key aspect of hegemonic masculinities</td>
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| Violence is associated with lack of / poor adult role models                           | 'Positive Parenting' practices in order to promote development of healthy social behaviour skills and healthy relationships (p. 18) | - Focus on individual & family  
- Violence as learnt behaviour  
- Overlooks social/structural power |
| 'Positive fathering'                                                                   |                                                                                     | - Uncritical emphasis on father-son relationships & role-modelling  
- Disregards non-family influences as well as role of mothers ('positive mothering'?) |
| 'violence free home environments' (p. 18)                                              |                                                                                     | - Violence conceptualised only in terms of 'abuse'  
- Overlooks violences inherent in discipline, parenting practices, adult-child (hierarchical) relations, etc as well as traditional gender roles & division of workload |
| Family support for the 'vulnerable and disadvantaged'                                   |                                                                                     | - Targeting of certain groups (class, culture/ethnicity)  
- Violence as deviant, associated only with particular groups |
| Alcohol ab/use leads to violence                                                        | Community initiatives to reduce alcohol & other drug use                             | - Violence as a by-product of individual alcohol ‘problems’  
- Violence ‘caused’ by other factor/s |
<p>| Focus on alcohol use in Indigenous communities                                          |                                                                                     | - Indigenous disadvantage is caused by ‘their’ alcohol use (problem with alcohol, leads to violence) |</p>
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| **Violence is linked to gender inequality** | Improve gender equality for all Australians ‘across society and within individual relationships’ (p. 5) | – Focus on ‘rigid or narrow gender roles & stereotypes’ (p. 15); highlights certain ‘forms’ of masculinity (eg traditional) associated with certain groups of men (age, class)  
– Focus on ‘equality for all’ overlooks male privilege as well as other aspects of inequality in Aust society |
| **Services to help ‘women rebuild their lives following violence’ (p. 23) i.e. health, housing, education, employment & legal assistance** | Improve women’s economic participation and independence | – Assumes that there is a ‘before/during/after’ with regard to violence (i.e. violence as an ‘event’)  
– Overlooks ‘normality’ (mundane, everyday) of violence in men’s & women’s lives |
<p>| <strong>Violence against women is a crime</strong> | Criminal justice system should protect women &amp; children | – Women need protection &amp; it is the role of the law to provide this |</p>
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<td>Improve access &amp; responsiveness</td>
<td>- Justice means <em>criminal</em> justice (bringing perpetrator to account)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stronger justice responses are required: ‘strong laws’, ‘effectively administered’, ‘hold perpetrators to account’ (p. 29) Reduce ‘risk of recidivism’ (p. 30)</td>
<td>- All violence is criminal (legally defined) - Privileges physical &amp; to a lesser extent, sexual violence - Focuses on violence as act/incident - Focuses on the deviant/criminal behaviour of individual men</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Zero tolerance’: ‘stronger (‘proactive’) policing, ‘consistent sentencing’, ‘strong penalties’, ‘serious consequences’ (pp. 29-30)</td>
<td>- Punitive - Assumes that punishment/deterrence ‘works’ (contrary to evidence)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Not just punishment; ‘perpetrators need assistance to end their violence’ Address ‘underlying causes of offending behaviour’ (p. 29)</td>
<td>- Treatment/deficit model - Violence as abnormal/atypical, linked to individual deficit - Language of risk (eg ‘some men are more likely than others to act violently towards women due to health, behavioural or other complex risk factors’, p. 29)</td>
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| **Violence against women is linked to / associated with ‘problem men’** | ‘majority of men are non-violent’ White Ribbon campaign | – Assumes clear distinction between violence/non-violence  
– *Some* men are violent; violence as something that men ‘are’ or are not  
– Violent men as atypical, the exception to the norm  
– Emphasis on physical/overt violence; overlooks ‘everyday’ violences associated with gendered & other hierarchies related to the construction of difference |
| | ‘promote positive male attitudes and behaviours’ (p. 18) | – Implies men disadvantaged by their ‘gender roles’ (i.e. emotional, relationship skills, etc) |
| **Violence is preventable** | Early intervention (‘early indicators’) | – Public health, preventive model  
– Violence as disease/ disorder and notion of contagion, etc  
– Violence as atypical/deviant |
<p>| | Risk assessment in relation to both perpetrators and to ‘identify &amp; better support victims of violence’ (p. 25) | – Actuarial approach - targeting of particular (‘high risk’) groups |</p>
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| ‘Evidence-based’ responses are required | ‘strong & lasting evidence base’ as key priority  
‘agreed national research agenda’  
Research which is ‘more responsive to policy makers’ and service providers’ needs’ (p. 33)  
National data collection and reporting framework; ‘nationally consistent data definitions and collection methods’ (p. 33) | – No rationale provided; presented as self evident ‘good’  
– Privileging of positivist science  
– Scientific knowledge as authoritative (objective, impartial, etc) |