Challenging Pedagogy: Emotional Disruptions, Young Girls, Parents and Schools

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Abstract

This paper follows on from a research project which explored the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics of young girls' friendship groups. This initial study received considerable media attention in the UK, Europe and Australia and consequently came to the attention of a wider audience beyond the academy who were thus given an opportunity to engage with the research findings. Having previously explored and analysed the emotionally disabling everyday practices experienced by the girls in the initial research project, the voices of these other adults offered a possibility to explore, examine and analyse the experiences of their daughters and themselves and as a result offered insights that challenge the day to day practices in the classroom. The focus of this paper therefore, is to explore the emotionally raw moments as articulated through the stories told by these adults and to examine what meaning and sense is conveyed about the prevailing norms and values of the school underpinning their pedagogy and practice. We contextualise emotions within a theoretical framework of Sara Ahmed and bell hooks that views emotions in terms of power and culture. The data analysed include contributions from the public to a radio phone-in as well as email responses. The analysis makes explicit the dynamics of power in girls' friendship groups revealing action/inaction by parents and their accounts about teachers which either disrupt or reinforce dominant practices that pertain. We advocate hooks' concept of engaged pedagogy to challenge current practices underpinned by neo-liberal assumptions.

Keywords: Girls' Friendships; Engaged Pedagogy; Inclusion/exclusion; Dynamics of Power; Parents, Other Adults and Teachers; Feminism, Pain, Anger and Wonder; Emotions

Introduction

1.1 This paper speaks directly to the issues and concerns raised in the one day seminar that was organised to address Modern Girlhoods. We explore the enduring concerns that have persisted into the 21st Century within the context of formal schooling for generations of girls. As the paper will show, despite the broader changes that have occurred in the wider society schooling continues to exert and maintain a set of practices that can impact negatively on girls' friendships.

1.2 We consider the reactions of parents and other adults to the media's portrayal of findings that arose out of a larger longitudinal study on girls' friendships. What is specifically addressed in this paper began with an article published in the Guardian Education Supplement in early 2011 which dealt with aspects of this research; namely the downsides and negative consequences of friendship amongst girls within friendship groups. The article in The Guardian generated a wave of interest from radio and television which elicited a significant response from listeners and viewers who identified with the underlying issues that were discussed and aired. The responses ranged from the contribution made by callers to a phone-in programme and also from other viewers, listeners and readers of The Guardian article who responded through emails. The stories they told made us aware of how the emotionally disabling practices that characterises the negative side of girls' friendship groups resonated with many adults, parents and carers.

1.3 We focus in this paper on how sense and meaning can be made of these emotionally raw moments as

articulated in the adult's accounts and consider what this might possibly tell us about the underlying norms and values of the schools that they or their daughters attended. In order to make sense and meaning of the pain, anguish and concerns expressed, we argue that an understanding of the concept of emotions is essential to valorise these people's experiences. We have chosen a feminist theorisation of emotions as an intellectual framework within which experiences of those adults can be contextualised, viewed and understood. In juxtaposition to this, we critique the current policy response and practice in schools to disruptions in classrooms as manifestations of undesirable behaviour which must be managed. During the last decade and more there has been an explosion of interest shown by the education industry in promoting the 'emotional literacy' of children in schools and classrooms. The apparent acknowledgement that children are 'emotional' subjects has arisen through the adoption of the work of Daniel Goleman (1995) a psychologist. His influences have led to a view that children with greater emotional intelligence (EQ) learn better, have improved conduct and experience in general a greater sense of well-being. Conversely, those children who are disengaged from schooling, possibly violent and impulsive are viewed as unable to recognise, address and control their emotions (Gillies 2011). We would argue therefore, that despite this apparent approach to emotional intelligence or emotional literacy taken by schools, the pain and emotion that characterises the downside of girls' friendships is rarely recognised. This is because the intention of behaviour management as perceived and practised is designed to ensure that the classroom environment remains fit for the purpose of producing a human resource output that can be tailored to the demands of a neo-liberal agenda. We accept that there are localised practices that seek to challenge this narrow and instrumentalist view of schooling but we would argue that the task of reversing the current hegemonic discourse around behaviour management is beyond the resources of the few.

1.4 It is beyond the scope of this paper also, to provide specific strategies for countering the current focus and dominant practices in 'behaviour management' but instead we offer bell hooks' 'engaged pedagogy' as an alternative conceptual framework that not only challenges current orthodoxies but in our view provides transformative potential.

The initial study

2.1 One of the authors of this paper (George 2007) conducted the foundational qualitative research project which explored the emotional and social dynamics of preadolescent girls' friendship groups as they transferred from primary to secondary schools. Within that transitional phase of schooling, previous research undertaken by other scholars on girls' friendship (Fine 1981; Nilan 1991) had, in contrast, focused on girls' collaborative style of working in classrooms, their willingness to conform to school structures and organisations and on adult-child relationships. We would argue that the qualitative longitudinal study that this paper builds on broke new ground in examining the complex process whereby friendships are constructed and sustained (George 2007)). In addition, it focused on the constitution of the groups, questions of 'leadership' and 'popularity' and in particular, interrogated the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics operating within these friendship groups. That earlier foundational study also sought to problematise a taken for granted reality which said 'girls will be girls', 'this has happened since time began', 'this is something that doesn't affect young girls' 'what's new about this?', and in Freirian terms, make those taken for granted assumptions problematic (Freire 1972).

2.2 In that initial research project the girls' narratives were interrogated, analysed and interpreted through the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis and it became very apparent that everyday occurrences and practices within the school usually led to the 'popular' girl or girl leader being noticed and therefore given voice within her friendship group and this was often reinforced through the institutional arrangements and structures of the school as we discuss later in the paper. The research also revealed that the other girls' voices within the friendship group were consequently muted and at times even silenced depending on their position within the group. The behaviour that is witnessed by teachers and other adults in the classroom often failed to detect the subtle inclusionary and exclusionary practices that operated under the gaze of adults. Detecting those 'below the radar' practices within the dynamics of girls' friendship groups has remained problematic and poorly understood particularly when framed by the hegemonic cultural understandings of femininity. As McRobbie's (1991) work has revealed there is an idealised notion of what it is to be feminine, which assumes cooperation and caring, constraining girls from outward displays of disagreement in public or aggressive competitiveness.

2.3 The initial study was concerned with power and positionality and how those dynamics operated within friendship groups to shape the identities of group members. The study and its findings have been disseminated and published in conferences and refereed journals. However, the media exposure arising out of the article in the Education Guardian which subsequently elicited the enormous response from members of the public was unexpected as was the overwhelming pain and anger expressed by the listeners and viewers to the experiences that their daughters and/or they as schoolgirls underwent. In that initial study emotions were considered only as a part of the larger tapestry but we consider an understanding of emotions is paramount in taking this current project forward.

Understanding emotions

3.1 Sara Ahmed maintains that emotions are associated with women in a gendered discourse that positions them as less able to transcend the body through intellectual behaviour and judgement (2004). She argues that emotions are situated within social hierarchies which consider displays of emotion as signs of weakness. Instead, her theorisation as a feminist focuses on understanding emotions in terms of both power and culture thus rejecting the crude dichotomy between emotion and rationality. She states:

Feminists who speak out against established 'truths' are often constructed as emotional, as failing the very standards of reason and impartiality that are assumed to form the basis of

'good judgment'. Such a designation of feminism as hostile and emotional, whereby feminism becomes an extension of the already pathological 'emotionality' of femininity, exercises the hierarchy between thought/emotion. This hierarchy clearly translates into a hierarchy between subjects: whilst thought and reason are identified with the masculine and Western subject, emotions and bodies are associated with femininity and racial others. This projection of 'emotion' onto the bodies of others not only works to exclude others from the realms of thought and rationality, but also works to conceal the emotional and embodied aspects of thought and reason (p. 170).

3.2 Ahmed thus considered emotions in a range of manifestations as being central to how we made sense of the world and importantly, to provide an understanding on how it could be changed. Emotions in the form of anger and pain are seen as integral to recognising, reading and challenging injustice in order to change accepted 'truths'. The necessity to consider and reflect on the politics of pain and how that is enmeshed with the relation between feminism and anger leads her to state how:

... embodied subjects come to be wounded in the first place, which requires that we learn to read that pain, (her emphasis) as well as recognise how the pain is already read in the intensity of how it surfaces. The task would not only be to read and interpret pain as over-determined, but also do the work of translation, whereby pain is moved into a public domain, and in moving, is transformed (p.173).

3.3 Ahmed acknowledges the influence of bell hooks when she suggests that in responding to pain it is insufficient to simply name the pain; for it we would suggest, becomes subsumed within the neo-liberal discourse of contemporary times where the blame for the pain is individuated and redress 'personalised'. Instead, hooks maintains that pain can only be transformed when it is moved into a political space that connects to an 'overall education for critical consciousness of collective political résistance' (hooks 1989: 32). hooks argues for a recognition of the relationship between emotion and structure which breaches the wall separating the individual from others. Thus the need for social and political transformation rests with a call for action which is underpinned by a legitimised anger that questions what is happening as socially unjust; an outrage which has to be challenged and addressed.

3.4 We embrace this analysis as advocated by Ahmed and hooks and consequently take the view that the pain and anger expressed by the listeners and viewers in such strong emotional terms requires a response that is both visionary and bold and provides a challenge to current practices and understandings. This struggle takes place in schools and at the classroom level. Assuming that preadolescent girls are likely to be either future mothers and/or teachers it seems crucial that the relationship between girls and their teachers are closely scrutinised so that the cycle of pain, anguish and silence is broken.

3.5 We are conscious of the enormity of this task and aware that taken for granted assumptions that have been handed down through the generations cannot be reversed in a few pages though we are reminded by Ahmed that:

what feminists share is a concern with the future, that is a desire that the future should not simply repeat the past, given that feminism comes into being as a critique of, and resistance to, the ways in which the world has already taken shape (p. 183)

3.6 We propose the need for viewing afresh the problem of uncovering, challenging and ultimately transforming unquestioned and accepted classroom culture and practices. We draw on Ahmed's concept of **wonder** (*our emphasis*) which in our view, she has skilfully and persuasively woven together the historic work of Marx and Engels (1965) and Descartes (1985) as well as the more recent work of Irigaray (1993). Putting forward the concept of wonder she states that:

Historicity is negated by the assumption that the world is 'already there', whereby its 'thereness' is taken for granted as the background of action in the present. To see the world as if is to notice that which is there, is made, has arrived, or is extraordinary. Wonder is about learning to see the world as something that does not have to be, and as something that came to be, over time, and with work. As such, wonder involves learning. (Ahmed 2004: 180)

3.7 The stories relayed by the parents as discussed later in this paper bring into focus, their sense of anger, rage and injustice. Their accounts also revealed feelings of helplessness about how schools as organisations dealt with the concerns raised and furthermore, how they were considered an encumbrance disrupting the accepted order. Ahmed's concept of **wonder** as outlined above, we contend, will provide parents and carers as well as the girls involved and very importantly their teachers, the opportunity to recognize and accept that **wonder** can and should be about a real sense of engagement with deconstructing and challenging norms. As Ahmed further argues:

It is through wonder that pain and anger come to life, as wonder allows us to realise that what hurts, and what causes pain, and what we feel is wrong, is not necessary, and can be unmade as well as made. Wonder energises the hope of transformation, and the will for politics. (2004: 181).

3.8 The engagement with this concept cannot be taken lightly especially given that what happens in schools and classrooms becomes inscribed, part of the normalising process where all involved perform their respective roles. These roles reinforce handed down assumptions such as, 'this is how girls are', 'it's just part of growing up'. In Ahmed's terms these are the spaces and moments when change and

transformation can come about through *wonder*. In rising to this challenge we offer as a possible way forward the consideration of adopting the paradigm that bell hooks (1994) defines as 'engaged pedagogy'.

3.9 In considering 'engaged pedagogy', hooks' draws on two people who have influenced her thinking. Firstly, she embraces Paolo Freire's concept of *conscientization* where every member in a class for example, would be encouraged to be an active participant where each voice is recognized and valued. Secondly, she draws inspiration from the work of Thich Nhat Hanh (1998), whose approach to Buddhism promotes both 'action and reflection on the world in order to change it'. This engagement between the individual with the world they seek to change is for hooks contingent on learning being connected to the lives lived in and by her students. Engaged pedagogy allows students in hooks' (1994) terms to *self-actualize* and to make a direct link between 'the will to know with the will to become' clear and explicit and, for pedagogues to interact with students in a holistic manner so that they are treated as embodied individuals rather than disembodied minds. Engaged pedagogy offers opportunities to consider emotions as imbued with thought and reason and thus reveal the hidden and unquestioned assumptions that have historically closed down spaces for disputing accepted norms. hooks acknowledges not only the learning space of the classroom but also its bodily space and given that the encounters that take place in classrooms are neither abstract nor theoretical but in reality what occurs between actual bodies, hooks is arguing for a fundamental shift from the currently accepted relationships between pupils and adults claiming:

I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions--a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom (hooks 1994: 17)

We will return to engaged pedagogy in the context of what happens in the classrooms later in the paper but turn our attention to data generated as seen through the responses from parents and other adults.

Viewed through the parental lens: discourses of powerlessness

4.1 The reactions of parents and other adults arising from the media coverage were an indicator of the pain and anger felt either on behalf of their daughters or in remembering their own childhood experiences. Such data provide a lens, a device, through which the power dynamics operating in the classroom could be read and analysed. The data are principally derived from the interview for the BBC Greater London Radio programme (2011) hosted by Vanessa Feltz and from the huge number of callers who contributed to it and also emails received. The accounts foreground the personal stories of these adults which enabled us to analyse their narratives and contextualise them within the broader social and cultural contexts of schools and schooling. The stories revealed the overwhelming desire by these individuals to know how they might be enabled to negotiate and resist the norms and regulatory frameworks of the system that failed to provide the space for either their voices or the voices of their daughters to be heard.

4.2 The themes of exclusion and rejection recur in the narratives given by the adults. For this paper, we have selected three accounts. These accounts exemplify the chasm that exists between the pain and anguish and the sense of injustice expressed by them as individuals and the practices that existed in the schools concerned. Their claims of teacher complicity both at a conscious or unconscious level, conveyed to us their real concerns about their daughters' loss of participation and therefore lost opportunities for formal learning.

4.3 In the following exchange with Vanessa Feltz, Mark called and described the experiences of his 9 year old daughter and his subsequent actions and interactions with his daughter's school. He said:

...there were no ifs or buts she was singled out by this particular kid who had her little gang and I was completely shocked at how she [his daughter] was treated and how cruel girls could be. Me and my wife we did everything properly we went up to see the headmaster, the head of the governors and spoke to other parents and it was well known that this ring leader had been doing this; kind of carte blanche, for years and it was very distressing. What's so important to take on board is these poor kids they've had their self-esteem completely kicked out of them and are so lacking in confidence... on the other hand these victims are so brave because they go back into school day after day..... They need support from their parents, teaching staff and they need support from the headmaster which they don't always get and in fact in our situation it came out that it was the ring leader who was the victim and not our daughterbecause she had a history of problems at school and it didn't help that her father was a parent governor and it was very complicated. And what made it worse for our daughter was that it was suggested that she should move class and that our daughter felt that she was the one who was being punished and if anything she was the trouble maker

4.4 Mark's account offers a narrative in which he and his daughter are positioned in a situation which he seems unable to intervene in, let alone control. In his narrative although he had questioned and challenged the authority of the school, it was apparent that he felt powerless to intervene effectively on his daughter's behalf. The head teacher, teacher and the governing body had failed to give the support he had sought and his distrust and disdain for the situation was hard to disguise *'her father was the parent governor'*. The agents of the school were constructed as a cabal that had colluded in their 'inability' to see, understand or acknowledge his daughter's emotional upset. Furthermore, that those in authority had inverted the role and position of the girl leader into that of victim and as a solution to the 'problem' suggested that Mark's daughter was moved to another class. The message to Mark would suggest that following protocol by doing 'everything properly' was not considered adequate when the system responded and found in favour of those with power to reinforce the status quo. The message to his

daughter was that it was her fault and that she was the trouble maker and as such had to be punished for challenging the established order by possibly being moved to another class. Mark acknowledged the courage shown by those 'victims' who return to the school day by day without the prospect of that situation being resolved satisfactorily. It would seem that the school community had found ways to resist the challenge by Mark even though he had followed accepted procedures.

4.5 The inversion of roles was also the predominant theme in Parisha's narrative, another phone-in listener. Parisha reflected back on her school days and how she felt totally unsupported by her school.

I was bullied myself for the entire time in secondary school. I approached my teacher and Head of Year who said you're the one who's the problem. I think they were turning a blind eye to the whole thing. I honestly think I was lucky I was from a really strong family background. One day I walked out of my drama lesson where I was being bullied and walked right to the Head of Year's office who shouted at me for daring to come out of a lesson and I got a detention.....another time when I stood up in the class saying enough is enough I was sent out of the class for disrupting the calm atmosphere of the class and was told off and while I was being told off for standing up for myself the girls were passing notes to each other and calling me names underneath the desk...

4.7 Parisha's account also underlined the extent to which those with the authority and power positioned her as a nuisance when 'standing up' for herself and punished her with a detention to discourage her from pursuing the issue further. Parisha whilst chastised by the teacher and sent out of the class, witnessed the girl leader passing notes that went unnoticed, below the radar of the teacher. The repeated message that Parisha received from the school was to relinquish her own authority and voice. To be assertive was something that was not encouraged by her school and to them Parisha's loud and complaining voice, was considered 'emotional and irrational' and by implication that Parisha was unable to exercise sound judgement. We would argue that the lack of anyone in authority willing to engage with Parisha's pain undermined her sense of value and power as a young woman. Girls like Parisha are often likely to find themselves in conflict with their schools. Efforts to be strong, self-reliant and outspoken in her case led to isolation and emotional distress despite the rhetoric of schools which claim to encourage young women to be assertive and independent (McLean et al. 1995).

4.8 Both Mark and Parisha's experiences with the schools concerned, demonstrate that whilst emotions are usually viewed as internal involving the psychological and subjective, they are as Ahmed argues, also social and cultural. Mark's challenge on behalf of his daughter was as a parent from outside the system, whereas Parisha's challenge was as an insider. The regulatory and governance frameworks that operate would seem from the accounts provided, able to withstand both kinds of challenge and instead turned the tables on Mark and Parisha for attempting to disrupt the accepted order and practice of their respective schools.

4.9 The third account that we call upon is of Gregory and in contrast to the previous two accounts, he resists challenging the school and instead sees the issues in terms of his own and possibly his daughter's innate inadequacy:

Our children go to a small church school nearby, one form entry. Our youngest is seven and has recently being bullied, she gets comments like she smells, she's fat, and she's got horrible hair. The other day she disappeared off for half an hour and when she came back she had cut a whole clump of her hair. We don't constantly go on about this (to the school) we have just mentioned it. Fortunately she has a strong best friend who stood up to the bullies and said will you stop doing this to her and then she was told off for taking a stand... We don't want to make a fuss.... We are supporting her as best we can and talking it through. Other parents are saying they are really shocked by what's going on....It's a good school and we think a soft approach rather than storming in is best. We have to think how to take this forward we don't want to move school. We want to support the school as best we can. My wife and I were both bullied and wondered if it got passed down a particular personality type or is there a particular character type

4.10 In Gregory's narrative we hear of the potential consequences of being voiceless and powerless to intervene on behalf of his seven year old daughter. He conveyed very clearly his daughter's pain and the distress she showed through cutting a clump out of her hair which, as Vanessa Feltz commented, 'it's a cry for help'. Gregory seemed to lack the courage to challenge the school. His inability to take on the power and authority of the school and instead, seek redress through adopting a low-key non-confrontational approach is telling. It would also appear that there was another kind of inversion occurring when he said that he wanted to support the school and not 'make a fuss'. Gregory's reluctance to confront the school, whilst citing a possible culturally rooted belief that the school authorities know what's best for their children, resulted in his daughter having to be defended by another seven year old friend who he then portrayed as strong. This reveals how much he and his wife felt disempowered in seeking redress from those in authority to change the situation for the better in terms of the welfare and self-esteem of their daughter. His story clearly suggests that the emotional distress as evidenced by his daughter cutting her hair created enormous anxiety. However, feeling bereft and helpless as a parent evoked a response from him that sought to pathologise his daughter's behaviour and self-harm by suggesting it may be inherited. He assumed a docile position embodying a helplessness and acceptance of the social and institutional norms that upheld the status quo.

4.11 There is overall, a pattern of recognition and perhaps acceptance evident in the narratives of all of these adults which suggests that in the social and emotional climate of the classrooms inhabited, these intense and destructive interactions often cease to matter and become like wallpaper, always there but

rarely noticed and, if noticed, invariably ignored. As Ahmed has argued, feeling the pain is simply not enough and unless that pain is read, understood, shared and translated into political action, change will not occur, let alone transformation.

Discussion: current policy and practice; shortcomings and implications

5.1 We wish to make sense of and understand more fully the testimonies of the adults in this study. In order to do so we will consider the forces that have influenced and shaped the purposes of current education and schooling. Historically schools and other institutions have been unconcerned with the emotions of their pupils and students, for the purpose of schools was seen solely to impart knowledge, to train the mind whilst the body was viewed as problematic (Paechter 2006). This mind/body split has been long criticised by feminists (Shildrick 1997) for as Ahmed says, it creates a binary where women are unable to transcend their bodies to gain intellectual credibility.

5.2 In contrast, currently schools and teachers are increasingly tasked with preparing children and young people for a globalised, post-industrial neo-liberal economy of the 21st Century where disruptive and unruly behaviour remains a headline issue for many schools. At the same time teachers are working in an increasingly surveilled and ultra-accountable environment with an unrelenting emphasis on attainment rather than a broader range of achievement (Clay & George 2011). Consequently, there is no shortage of training for education professionals on managing behaviour. Much of the focus of this training relates to acquiring a repertoire of skills involving rewards and sanctions. The time devoted to such training outweighs the resources made available to developing curriculum and pedagogical subject knowledge particularly for Newly Qualified Teachers and other school support staff in the early stages of their careers. The amount of funding devoted to Behaviour Improvement Programmes during the past ten or more years has been considerable. The appointment of Charlie Taylor, an expert adviser on behaviour management as the first Permanent Chief Executive of the Teaching Agency (DfE – 15th June 2012) underlines this shift in emphasis.

5.3 Teachers are arguably better equipped to deal with unacceptable behaviour manifested both in and out of the classroom which impacts on whether given targets are met. Nevertheless the willingness and expertise needed to address the negative consequences and the downside of what happens in girls' friendship groups as evidenced by the stories told by the adults in this paper, seem either absent or at best woefully inadequate. There has in recent times been an increased recognition within education and wider social policy enactments that consider children and young people as emotional beings. As a consequence a new curriculum dimension in schools has been ushered in where children are seen to be infused with 'emotional intelligence', able to recognise and deal with feelings and emotions in order to cope and control them more effectively. For example, the introduction of a nationwide schools initiative; the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), tasked to provide for both primary and secondary schools in England and Wales 'a curriculum framework and resource for teaching social, emotional and behavioural skills to all pupils' (DfES 2005) has been such a vehicle.

5.4 Managing manifestations of poor behaviour in classrooms and schools together with a relentless focus on raising attainment across a very narrow set of measurable outcomes has had severe consequences. It has resulted in schools having to deal with disruptive and 'poorly behaved pupils' who are considered to have a negative impact on the raising attainment agenda thus requiring active intervention which is then labelled as therapeutic.

5.5 We would suggest that SEAL depends on dealing with 'emotions' as a repertoire of skills which in an outcomes-focused climate of teaching must be acquired in order to conform and comply with the needs of a neo-liberal economy. The practice in schools would therefore seem to be at odds with the notion that institutions are ready to embrace the idea of schools as reflexive sites of learning and possibly open to hooks' concept of engaged pedagogy. As hooks says;

The restrictive, repressive classroom ritual insists that emotional responses have no place. Whenever emotional responses erupt, many of us believe our academic purpose has been diminished...this is really a distorted notion of intellectual practice, since the underlying assumption is that to be truly intellectual we must be cut off from our emotions (1994: 155).

Therefore in dealing with emotions as an 'outcome' rather than part of the process of teaching and learning, would be as Ahmed argues; 'to "fill" the students with the "right" emotions, thus turning them into containers' (p.182). This would we feel severely limit the possibility for pain being moved from the individual to a collective consciousness, unable to challenge how the world has come to take the shape it has and to understand why power relations are so difficult to transform.

5.6 There have been in addition to SEAL nation-wide anti-bullying strategies and initiatives rolled out to deal with bullying, but these programmes have also failed to address the everyday low level disruption caused by the breakdown in girls' friendship networks. The invisibility of this aspect of girls' behaviour may put many teachers on uncertain ground, feeling unable and unwilling to challenge behaviour they claim not to have witnessed. As Janet, another parent, when talking about her 9 year old daughter illustrated the predicament many teachers face and said:

...much of what goes on is under the radar but quite often if a girl becomes particularly upset, the problems come to the surface. The teachers do not seem to know how to deal with these issues and try to ascribe a 'physical' cause when clearly it is far more complex. I often wonder how much training teachers have in areas such as friendship groups when it underpins so much of what goes on.

5.7 Previous research undertaken (Hey 1997; George 2007, 2010; George & Browne 2000)) strongly indicates that girls become adept in hiding or masking such painful conflicts in the school and classroom culture. Often these emotional and painful interruptions are considered by adults in the classroom as either 'unimportant' or simply 'it's what girls do' and so girls as a consequence, are unlikely to parade their conflicts or consider such behaviour as bullying as Gregory's account illustrates. Consequently, most anti-bullying programmes fail to account for the way that this complex and convoluted matrix of power is exercised and experienced, desired and expressed and are unable to address the subterfuge involved in these girl to girl interactions. In this situation girls do not benefit from anti-bullying curricula as currently conceived. To address the negative side of the breakdown in girls' friendships we would suggest requires a very different approach. The falling out of favour within friendship groups for girls, who are then pushed further away from the centre to the periphery is subtle yet painful and can go un-noticed. Being denied emotional space and affirmation is discreet and un-noisy and may not register with those who are unaware of the machinations and interactions that are being played out below the eye level or ear shot of others, particularly adults in authority. It is qualitatively different from classic bullying but subject to a display of power that disrupts identity by denying approval and undermining self-belief. For example, Parisha's self-esteem and self-worth was undermined by not only the school's dismissal of her concerns but also punishing her for challenging the accepted norms and practices of the classroom.

5.8 All the stories relayed by the adults suggest that teachers and other education professionals are in many instances co-opted either wittingly or unwittingly into seeing the leader of the group as a victim of her own popularity. Whilst others in the friendship group are considered to be envious of the leader's success and in extremis, prepared to tarnish her credentials, popularity and reputation.

5.9 Additionally, it is worth noting that we have become increasingly acculturated to operating in an educational policy arena where the seeking out of parent and pupil voice has become a given and is now part of the normalised ritual of accountability. However, we would argue that the premise that this is based on is one where parents and pupils are positioned solely as consumers validating or otherwise a product or a service. In our opinion this approach and practice does not take into account parents and pupils as co-constructors of knowledge with a stake and deep commitment to a productive lifelong learning journey and, as hooks' argued, in advocating the notion of 'engaged pedagogy'.

5.10 We strongly propose that accepted norms and practices are challenged if we are to make progress and bring about a different future. The asymmetric power dynamics are usually maintained by unspoken institutional norms but when these norms are disturbed or even ruptured by what could be regarded as an 'emotionally charged' moment, positions of difference and dissonance surface and it is here that challenges to established culture can happen and *'whereby pain is moved into a public domain and, in moving, is transformed'* (Ahmed 2004: 173).

Conclusion

6.1 It is essential as a first step that the issues relating to the downside of girls' friendships are accepted as a factor in generations of girls possibly failing to reach their full potential. This is a pre-requisite and part of the process of Freire's 'conscientization'. There is real pain and often accompanying anger that surfaces which brings it to the attention of teachers and other adults. In Ahmed's analysis when this occurs it provides the space and opportunity to engage with the whole process of *wonder* challenging accepted norms and values which can then be transformative.

6.2 We have reflected on our own experiences as teachers and can say without hesitation that we could have given much greater scrutiny and priority to the culture and practices that operated within our classrooms. As teachers, we regularly failed to acknowledge the painful practices of inclusion/exclusion and consequently, only the child could be relied on to come forward and explain what is happening. But if she in turn believes that her teacher will trivialise or ignore her pain or treat the problem insensitively she will remain silent for fear of making things worse.

6.3 Despite the limitations and failings of the SEAL approach and the co-option of the area of emotions for instrumental purposes, educators who believe in the power of education to transform the lives of learners should not be deterred from considering the importance of the role and place of emotions in making sense and meaning of who we are and what is possible within sites of struggle such as the classroom and the school. The pathologising of the individual under the laudable and worthy term of 'personalisation' which is justified by taking a set of 'remedial' actions, may ensure that normal order is restored for the majority who are encouraged to conform and be compliant. This flawed deficit model of locating the problem at the level of the 'inadequate' individual needs to be critiqued and challenged.

6.4 We would argue for a need to, firstly, accept that this is an issue that is both debilitating and ultimately harmful to the identity and self-worth of the girl who is at the mercy of being excluded. Secondly, it requires an engagement with the research that provides a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of how girls in particular behave and operate within friendship groups. It may as a consequence be possible to uncover the practices, allowing an insight into the dynamics of power operating in the group and consider how the action and/or inaction by parents, teachers and other adults can either disrupt or reinforce the dominant practices that pertain.

6.5 A paradigmatic shift may be required where normalised and routinised modes of understanding and practice are broken and torn up and the denial that it is not happening or that it is unproblematic has to be challenged before any meaningful change can come about. Ultimately to address these shortcomings in the system we must enable young girls to resist the roles made available to them within the normative production of classroom regulations so that they can construct an identity that is neither contingent on nor dependant on a destructive social dynamic within the classroom. Both girls and teachers need to create

and maintain a system of connection with each other that reflects the engaged pedagogy advocated by hooks.

6.6 It is important that teachers and other adults in schools and classrooms move away from seeing the struggles of girls in friendship groups as simply personal and unique to them and that they will get over it. In adopting this narrow interpretation, we do a disservice to the girls and at the same time keep alive the patriarchal order that subordinates their troubles as trivial and renders them invisible. If anger remains personal and relational there is a danger that we miss the bigger picture and thereby institutional practices and schooling go unchallenged, perpetuating the incomplete understanding of girls which ultimately have real consequences for their present and future lives. An engaged pedagogy as advocated by bell hooks that informs classroom practices and the teaching and learning in our schools is a prerequisite for transforming the lives of girls who can grow into women with unbound potential to transform their future and those of others.

6.7 *To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (hooks 1994: 13)*

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