

# The persistence of violence and implications for change

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# Two key questions

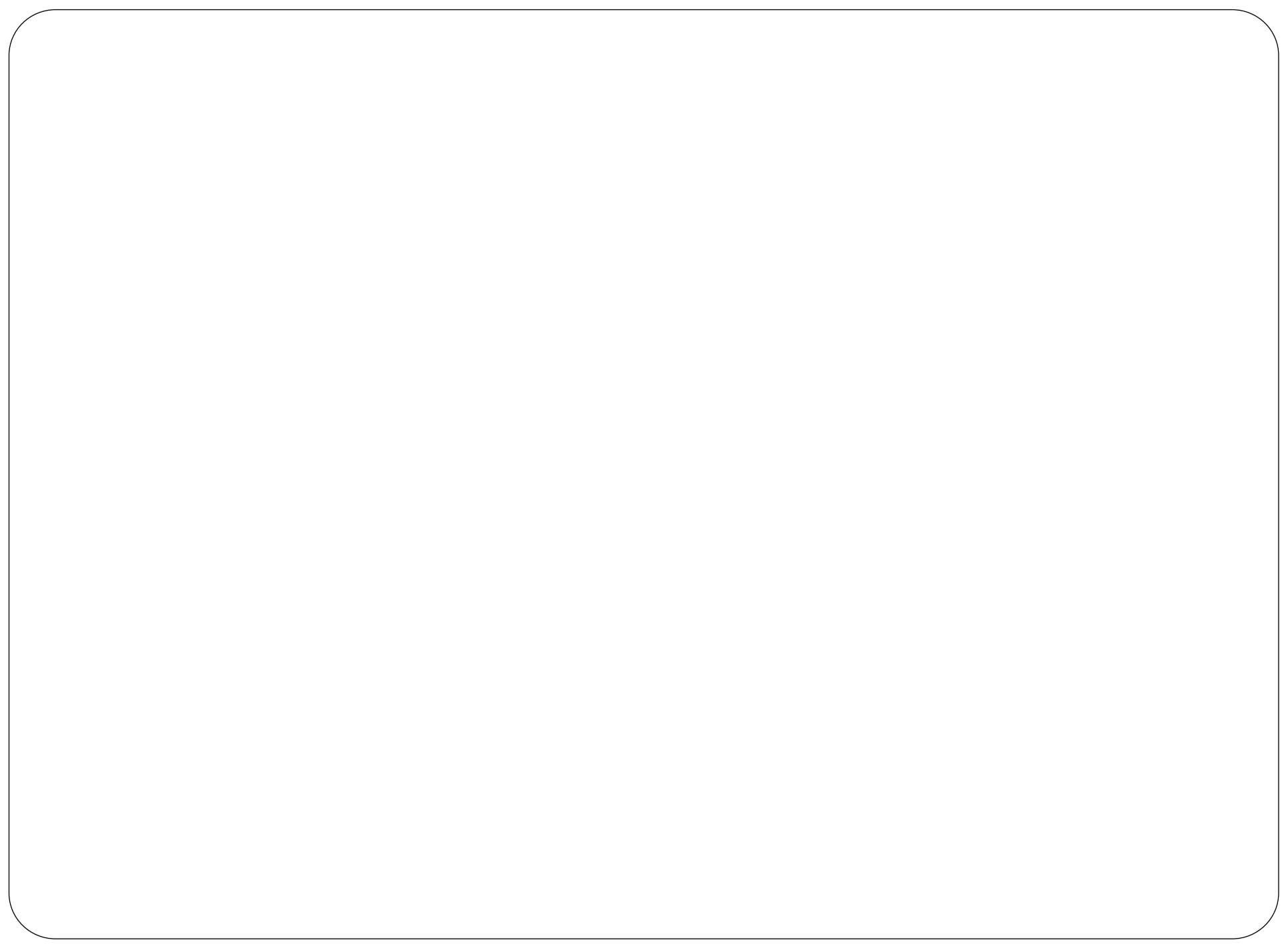
- Why nearly 20 years after democracy we are having to deal with such high levels of violence?
- Can understanding its persistence help us understand how to address it in education?

# Where did thinking go wrong?

- Aurora Systems, Marikana the demonstrations of the failure
- Was there a problem in the 'struggle' theory?
- Was there an assumption that because Apartheid was a violent system, the problem of violence would go once there is liberation?
- Does not help when the rhetoric of struggle prioritises violent over nonviolent struggle
- Lack of understanding of the nature and extent of social transformation

# Two ways of seeing violence

- The **intentional** use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group of community, that either results in or had a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.  
WHO, 2002
- Interpersonal violence  
Assault, Corporal punishment  
Killing, Sexual assault  
Robbery, Verbal abuse
- Institutional violence  
Family, Economic  
Military, Religious,  
State
- Structural violence  
Includes racism, sexism, homophobia, as well as terrorism and counter-terrorism  
Barak, 2003



# Is violence necessarily intentional?

- Does not being aware of the violence we cause make it nonviolent?
- The WHO definition puts emphasis on the intentionality of the individual rather than thinking through the ways that individual actions relate to social structures and to socialisation of people

# Two approaches

- Politically – why does the society stay so violent?

‘Chronic violence’: towards a new approach to 21<sup>st</sup> century violence. Tania Adams, 2012

- Personally – why do people stay so violent?

Draws on a line of theorists from Fanon to Valerie Walkerdine, including psychoanalytic theorists

# What is 'chronic violence'?

- Measured across three dimensions of intensity, space and time, where
- rates of violent death are at least twice the average for the country income category
- these levels are sustained for five years or more
- acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death are recorded at high levels across several socialisation spaces, such as the household, the neighbourhood, and the school, contributing to the further reproduction of violence over time.

# What causes it?

- “... new patterns of social inequality and gender socialisation; disjunctive processes of democratisation; illicit trade and other adverse effects of globalisation; and the perverse effects of the mass media.”
- Transition to democracy does not bring less violence, partly because not all institutions are aligned to the new democracy.
- Consumerism drives increased sense of desperation, not least because of high unemployment.

# The language of bad and good people

- Scapegoating and xenophobia are key elements, pinning explanations for the violence on specific groups (foreigners, migrants)
- Violence in turn justifies the use of extreme violence against the 'other'

# Implications

- Chronic violence is unlikely to be reversed in the near term and hence must be addressed as a long-term, perverse kind of “normality”.
- Chronic violence must be addressed through intersectoral and interdisciplinary approaches (e.g. schools, police, justice system, NGOs, researchers)
- This conference seen as one part of a broader process of strengthening networks

# Why do people stay violent?

- We are in a context historically of structural, institutional and interpersonal violence
- The context shapes people, and people in turn shape the context. Fanon developed the term 'internalisation'
- Relationships of domination and subordination are caught up in our sense of who we are and who others are – by race, gender, sexual orientation, etc
- Transformation means both changing the structures of society and changing oneself

- Violence is thus an aspect of our connectedness with others in a society that is inherently unequal
- Changing ourselves is part of changing society
- ‘Ourselves’ though is not just our cognitive or even spiritual selves; it is also our physical and sensory selves
- Nonviolence thus means that we lose our attachment to some things that we have felt we needed to hold on to; processes of unlearning, as much as processes of learning

# What does this mean for education?

- Walkerdine: how can we provide the safety within which such unlearning and new learning can take place?
- Critical that education provides spaces of safety and does not simply reflect the violence of society
- The potential is for education to enable both unlearning and learning at a deeper level than we have thought of

# What does this mean for teachers?

- “... a position where the teacher is him- or herself involved in a process of education that is inscribed in ambivalence” (Soudien, 2012)
- Teachers need to see schools as a place for our own learning, including our own unlearning
- These are not places for reproducing what was done to us

- If we can create such spaces within education, there will be new learning that we cannot anticipate
- Such learning is necessary for human society to address its survival – environmental, social and economic