

6. Interpretations of Violence and Their Handling from a Difference-Sensitive Perspective

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Various studies suggest that different forms of boundary violations against children and adolescents occur in everyday school life – for example in the form of sexualized violence (Glaser et al., 2025) or psychological violence (Piezunka and Richter 2026). These are experiences that impede or prevent participation in education and can also affect students' well-being beyond everyday school life (Zerillo and Osterman 2011).

With a view to the 2027 annual conference in Salzburg, we would like to propose as a topic: Interpretations of violence and their handling from a difference-sensitive perspective.

Regarding interpretations: which experiences are understood and classified as violence in school practice? This connects to the fact that, while there are definitions that provide guidance for various forms of violence – for example, Prenzel (2019) describes patterns of disregard in relation to psychological violence – practice nonetheless shows that there are many situations in which classifying the respective incidents in relation to violence is perceived as challenging (e.g. Piezunka and Richter 2026). With a view to a theoretical engagement with violence, it is important to take different interpretations from practice into account.

Regarding handling: how can these experiences of violence be addressed and dealt with in different school contexts and situations? How are individual experiences – for example those of students – made visible, what spaces are created for this (Lundy, 2007), and how do schools and educators deal with it? Addressing these situations requires corresponding professionalization of teachers, already during their studies or through further training – for example with regard to sensitization to students' experiences of violence, as well as reflection on and processing of educators' own potentially violent experiences.

Regarding power relations: furthermore, certain power relations in school have an effect that enables violence (Schäfer & Bengel, 2026; in press) and become particularly apparent when focusing on certain orders of difference and their intersectional overlap (Crenshaw 1991; Heidrich 2021) – for example disability, gender and socioeconomic status (Gusfre et al. 2023; Schäfer et al., 2026; Scharpf et al. 2023; Schröttle et al., 2012). This perspective opens up space for analyzing and discussing the significance of different orders of difference and their overlaps, both on a theoretical and a school-practice level – for example in the development of protection concepts. Which students are considered, who is addressed, what remains unaddressed.

In the context of the working conference, we would like to make diverse perspectives visible – that is, to invite people from practice and research who consider both different forms of

violence and different orders of difference and their overlaps. The perspective of self-advocates also plays a decisive role for us here.

With regard to the theoretical engagement, we draw on work in the context of violence (Sutterlüty 2017; Vorobej 2019; Staudigl 2014), discrimination (Scherr et al., 2017), doing difference (e.g. West and Fenstermaker 1995; Diehm et al. 2017), exclusion (Kronauer 2015; Bräu et al., 2024) and power (Fricker, 2007).

Connections to practice can be made, for example, in relation to the development of protection concepts in schools. In addressing current discourses and developments, it is important for us to consider international perspectives. The question of addressing relations of violence in school in the context of teacher education programs and/or continuing professional development can also be discussed.