

YOUTH WORK with BOYS and YOUNG MEN as a means to prevent violence in everyday life



by
Gavan Titley

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introduction



1.1 ASPECTS OF AWARENESS

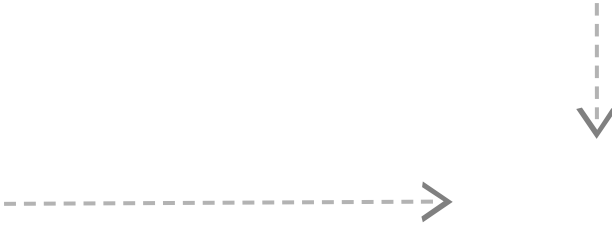
This publication is intended as an awareness-raising report, and as such poses a couple of immediate questions. Whose awareness is in focus, and awareness of what exactly? To deal with the first part first, it would seem as if young men and violence are rarely out of a certain kind of awareness. As I wrote this report, I became conscious of the news stories that constantly featured in my chosen channels and newspapers; a tense public discussion of immigrant youth in urban France and proposed new criminal legislation, ongoing concerns in Irish cities arising from increased alcohol abuse and violence among young people during a prolonged period of economic boom, and the spectre of fan violence returning to football stadiums in the UK. And beyond the news headlines, engaging with these issues over a sustained period of time re-directed my eye to images and representations that had become to a large extent taken-for-granted.

In these contexts known to me, young men are regularly discussed in the public sphere as a *category*, and any cross-section of the images that swirl around many contemporary societies propose particular relationships between men and violence, masculinity and action. Prevalence and visibility then is clearly not the same as awareness. Violence is all around; while I have mentioned only mediated experiences, many of the people who gathered in Budapest for this seminar know only too well the realities of violence as victim and perpetrator. This seminar aimed to explore the dimensions of young men's involvement in violence, the reasons and factors that motivate it, and the actuality of many young men as not just actual or potential perpetrators of violence, but as victims of many types of violence themselves.

Awareness raising is crucial if this last point is not to become potent material for political capital; the authoritarian mantra of 'understand less and punish more' could have been devised for young men as a 'social problem', and it is a popular refrain in some European political contexts today. Participants at this seminar united in moving past hierarchies of condemnation to ask what motivates violent behaviour, and how can alternatives to violence be fostered and legitimised? The experiences of many present spoke to the fact that not only can violent behaviour be unlearned and the beliefs that often underpin it challenged, but that many young men can become advocates of non-violence in turn.

Raising awareness of the roots of violence led seminar participants to discuss at length their experiences of masculinity in what were commonly held to be changing societies, and to examine the ways in which culturally constructed and regulated notions of 'what it is to be a man' often implicitly legitimise and even celebrate certain forms of violence. Male identities have historically been constructed in relation to power, control and esteem in the public sphere, and ideals of physical, economic and sexual prowess were regarded as remaining central - if complex - for many young men today. For various combinations of factors however, many of the ideals of masculinity are challenged and unavailable to young men, and are in tension with their needs, competences and attempts to negotiate adulthood in complex societies. Violence, which intrinsically involves power over another, may be partially seen as an expression of frustration and a re-assertion of control within challenged masculinities. Working with boys and young men means addressing their masculinities; a second dimension of this report is the need for an awareness of this, and the types of education, training and support that are and





can be provided. That young people will become adults, in one way or another, and that boys and young men will become *men*, in one way or another also, can be seen as a statement of fact. Yet it is also a challenge for educators, youth workers, families, peer groups, and that most elastic of categories, society in general.

Transcending this analysis was an awareness among participants that violence is the most common form of human rights violation affecting many people in many different contexts. As one participant put it with devastating simplicity, *my violence infringes your human rights, full stop*. On the street or in the home, in the school or army, with victims defined as different or as just being in the wrong place, dealing with violence and its consequences is a part of the everyday reality of many young people. Working towards nonviolence is human rights work, and working with boys and young men on the bases of and alternatives to violence needs to be seen as a central pillar of human rights education. The work represented at this seminar fits exactly into a description offered at the Forum on Human Rights Education at the European Youth Centre Budapest in November 2000:

In youth work and youth activities, there is the responsibility to develop, through programmes, a space for young people, educators and others to realise their Human Rights and to develop a cognitive understanding of them. In this respect, Human Rights Education is about building relationships with oneself, with others and within and across communities.¹

The second dimension of awareness raising is identifying those who are in need of it and have a role to play in addressing the issues documented in this report. On one level this may be everybody who is or has come in contact with a man, and indeed many participants noted how gender often only operates as a synonym for women's issues, or feminism. Widespread discussions of changes in male identities were held to be limited, half-hearted, or sensationalist. Beyond a general interested readership, this report and its recommendations stresses the necessity of this work to non-governmental organisations and their programmes, to relevant policy-makers and to the national governments of the Council of Europe. It also centrally addresses what is often termed the wider youth work community; those, like me, who have been active in youth work for a long time without giving much thought either to boys' work or the educational impact and subject of masculinity. This form of youth work exists in different forms in different European contexts, but this seminar identified a need to develop and support a specific focus on work with boys and young men.



1.2 THE YOUTH PROGRAMME ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

This seminar took place in the context of a human rights programme that stresses the potential of the individual to be both a protector and potential victim of violation. This programme seeks to address issues of major concern to young people in today's Europe, and to increase their involvement in and commitment to human rights as a foundation of

¹ Englert, A., & Flessenkemper, T., *General Report of the Forum on Human Rights Education*. EYCB, Hungary 2001.



society in Europe. The programme works in synergy with other educational priorities in the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe, and aims to support the ongoing work of peer education initiatives and a range of other youth and youth organisation based projects tackling human rights issues.

Given these priorities, a concerted focus on violence within the framework of human rights education is crucial. "Youth work with boys and young men as means to preventing violence in everyday life" was also part of the Integrated Project "Responses to everyday violence in a democratic society" launched by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in 2001, and as such, took place in the light of other seminars that have addressed different dimensions of youth and violence over the past three years. A seminar on 'Violence against young women in Europe' took place in 2001, and many of the questions it raised concerning social attitudes to violence are taken up in this document. Similarly, a second seminar 'Youth against violence' opened up many themes that are returned to here, including what that seminar proposed in conclusion as the urgency and potential of youth work with boys and young men.

The seminar evolved in response to the evidence that measures to combat violence need to be gender specific and involve both sexes in order to meaningfully address violence. As the topics of previous seminars illustrate, combating multiple forms of violence against girls and young women has emerged as a fundamental priority of human rights work, and while significant research, advocacy and policy development have taken place, there is still an urgent need for sustainable measures. This seminar explores the role of boys and young men in this violence, as actual or potential victimisers, but also as victims of violence, and as actual or potential advocates of nonviolence and pluralised masculinity.



1.3 THE SEMINAR AND PARTICIPANTS

The objectives set for the seminar were:

- ❖ To promote greater understanding and awareness of young men's issues and needs in relation to violence.
- ❖ To exchange and develop models of good practice for 'youth work with boys and young men'.
- ❖ To explore and examine male identity and related behaviour.
- ❖ To promote youth work with boys and young men as an educational means of preventing violence.
- ❖ To contribute to the prevention of violence prevention strategies at European, national and local levels.
- ❖ To contribute to the development of the Resource Centre created in the framework of the Youth Programme on Human Rights Education by providing educational material, resources and contacts relating to youth work done with boys and young men in Europe.

53 participants came from 35 countries, and within those, from a variety of backgrounds. They came representing a wide range of NGOs and other organisations either working directly on these issues, or whose work cannot be separated from different dimensions





and impacts of violence. As is to be expected, some of the participants had very personal experiences of violence, and indeed often came to this work determined to prevent more people becoming victims or perpetrators in endless cycles of violence. Some things cannot be reproduced by ink on paper, and the solidarity tangible at the seminar is one such entity. Many participants are working in situations of adversity or apathy, and the motivating effect of this seminar was summed up by one participant exclaiming 'I'm not alone!' when she saw the range of activities ongoing in a European context. It should also be noted that the prevailing gender imbalance of European youth activities was reversed at this activity. Not only was there a majority of men, but also some female participants commented that it was interesting to have the opportunity to sit back and listen to men openly discussing aspects of masculinity.

This seminar gained a life of its own through these multiple realisations that others are working on similar issues and questions. Given the low profile, and in some cases, confusion that exists around this kind of youth work, an obvious starting point in the seminar was to ask; why work with boys and young men? Participants considered this from, as they saw it, the perspectives of their societies and the youth they worked with. I summarise their key observations here as a final introduction to what follows.

BOYS AND YOUNG MEN

- ...✚ The boys and young men that the participants work with are often simultaneously victims and perpetrators of violence.
- ...✚ Working with them involves prevention and intervention by analysing the roots of violent behaviour and facilitating an exploration of alternatives to violence. Many such boys and young men are asking for support of this kind in indirect ways.
- ...✚ Boys and young men who are involved in violence not only require self-awareness in relation to violence, but also have the possibility to become awareness-raisers in turn.
- ...✚ Approaching violence often needs to be seen in the larger context of social change, and consequent changes in the roles open to young men. An indicative question was; "Who am I and where am I in contemporary societies?"
- ...✚ Similarly, violence needs to be placed within a consideration of masculinity and expected and regulated behaviours associated with 'being a man' beyond various amalgams of stereotypes. A conflict between personal needs and pressure to be accepted was noted in many contexts.
- ...✚ An important aspect of this is a prevalent lack of emotional development and interpersonal and social skills, with negative consequences in many aspects of young men's personal lives.
- ...✚ Youth work with boys and young men can address these issues by providing support and channels of expression, advice and services, and by facilitating and training boys and young men to think and act in ways that are reflective and beneficial to themselves and others.





SOCIETY

- ❖ Boys and young men are often constructed as a 'problem' category, and even approaching them as a category is problematic. Work of this kind addresses social fears regarding young men and dealing with their issues.
- ❖ "Prevention is cheaper than cure".
- ❖ There is a pressing need to find spaces of participation for young men in terms that are meaningful to them.
- ❖ Addressing the relationship of young men to violence in situated social contexts contributes to conflict transformation and a human rights agenda.
- ❖ Engaging with masculinity and socio-cultural assumptions of male identities is central to addressing sexism, homophobia and patriarchal discourses.
- ❖ Non-formal education of this kind provides an important countervailing influence to gender stereotyping identified in many formal educational institutions, work settings, the family and in a range of mediated representations.
- ❖ Youth work with boys and young men should be seen as nothing less than a pressing task for the present and an investment in the future.



→ Section 2: Boys, Young Men and Masculinities.

---→ 2.1 WHY DISCUSS MASCULINITY?

Discussing the involvement of young men and boys in violence involves investigating the conditions, motivations and options involved in recourses to violence. Central to this investigation is considering the influences, motivations and freedom that males have in relation to the performance of manhood. Yet, as many participants acknowledged, this flies in the face of what they identified as *commonsense*; assumptions in their socio-cultural contexts as to what it is to be a man, and within that, to be a certain kind of man. Any list of characteristics will be at best partial and more than likely exaggerated, yet a common reference point for many participants was the image of man as physically strong, decisive, and brave, oriented towards public displays of manhood that allow for a limited spectrum of emotions to be displayed, and of manhood having an intimate relationship with forms of expected, justified and even celebrated violence. Despite decades of research and the centrality of feminist debates in many contexts, the gendered nature of male identities remains to a large extent undeclared, if recognised at all.

It can be seen in the reasons listed in the introduction that a critique of men, gender and masculinity became central to the seminar, as addressing the roots of violent behaviour crucially involves unmasking and challenging the assumptions, pressures and ideologies that underpin that behaviour. As Andrew Edgar argues:

[...] qualities that are stereotypically attributed to women and men in contemporary western culture (such as greater emotional expression in women, greater tendencies to violence and aggression in men) are seen as gender, which entails that they could be changed.²

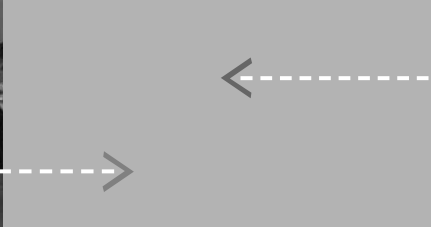
A central emphasis on gender allowed the seminar participants not only to engage with the learned and constructed quality of masculinity, but also to locate their work and energies in this very possibility of change. 'Being a man' may suggest a powerful process of socialisation, but it is one that can be challenged, subverted and transformed in countless ways. While masculinity may only be appearing on different agendas because of the high-profile link to violence, engaging with masculine discourses is essential to a range of human issues.

---→ 2.2 MASCULINITY AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION.

Countless images recounted at the seminar were widely recognisable across contexts; a queue of men concentrating only on their shoes in a health centre queue in Austria, a group of English teenagers laughing at a mate who is labelled queer because he is crying, a group of soldiers testing their brotherhood in a Georgian army barracks. These vignettes of experience from the seminar testified to two points; there is no unifying masculinity that is recognisable to all men, everywhere. Nevertheless, the pressure and expectation to behave in certain ways is a common experience of manhood. Identities are always forged in difference and association; being a man involves not being

² Andrew Edgar & Peter Sedgwick (ed) (1999) *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory* p158.





something other than man and being like certain other men. Masculinity in its contexts involves displaying attitudes and behaviours that signify and validate male identities in relation to each other, and almost always in opposition to notions of femininity. Ken Harland, in his keynote presentation, employed his own definition of masculinity as 'cultural expectations of male behaviour', and also quoted a more lengthy description:

Masculinities are those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organisational locations, which are commonly associated with men and thus culturally defined as not feminine.³

It is important to note that the plural *masculinities* not only appears in this quote, but became to a large extent a stable term during the seminar discussions. Masculinity not only varies across socio-cultural contexts and within groups and networks, it is also not a coherent set of behaviours. Different men, with different experiences, relationships and pressures may perform their masculinity differently and inconsistently. Nevertheless, pluralizing masculinity does not suggest any easy plurality of masculinities. In other words, despite masculinity being constructed around varying expectations and regulations in different contexts, these 'cultural expectations of male behaviour' may be equally limiting and oppressive to men and women. Similarly, much of the discussion that took place would have been impossible if there were not widely shared aspects of masculinity that transcend contexts. In our globalising world, the two most *global* events of the last year have been a soccer world cup and a war.

What do we need this concept of man for? Defining masculinity is so often just not being female. We could reverse the question; do we feel man enough to behave like women? it's only by challenging and diminishing these categories that we can promote freedom of feeling and behaviour.




2.3 LEARNING MASCULINITIES

To suggest that masculinity is a socio-cultural construct is not to suggest that it is artificial and shallow. Male roles and assumptions around masculinity are naturalised arguably from birth; in language, in relationships and roles, in sport and recreation, in education and still to a significant extent in career choice, and so forth. Boys and young men, it was argued, learn and internalise elements of masculinity from accepted sources of socialisation. These include roles and relationships within the family and peer groups, expectations surrounding roles and behaviour in institutional settings such as work and education, and to presumably varying extents, through interpreting and valuing representations of masculinity.

2.3.1 Stereotypes of traditional masculinity

Emphasising *masculinities* means qualifying accounts of how and where masculinity is learned. Ken Harland, in his keynote input "Male identity: A Crisis of Masculinity" presented an account of what he termed the stereotype of traditional masculinity, and was careful not to generalise beyond the context of his research with young people in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Yet it seemed clear from the debates which followed that the

³ Whitehead, S.M., & Barrett, F.J. (ed.) *The Masculinities Reader*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2001.



issues he raised touched a chord in very different realities. Ken Harland argued that while routes to adulthood in many late-industrial societies are becoming more complex and prolonged, assumptions about what it is to be a man are still bound up to a significant extent in an historical memory of such traditional male roles as soldier, worker, and to varying degrees, father. Men have long been arranged around a series of *Ps*⁴: as **p**rotector, and since the period of the industrial revolution in the UK men have had a public role as a worker, a **p**rovider. These publicly expected and validated roles, Harland argued, provide men with **p**rivilege in relation to the status of women, and their status in the eyes of other men.

A similar analysis is provided by Chris Barker as part of an overview of contemporary debates on masculinity⁵. Barker argues that at least since the Enlightenment, masculinity has become interconnected with notions of reason (with a subsequent marginalisation of the emotions) and that under modern forms of organisation, men's roles became regulated by industrial time and practice, and formally separated from the private sphere of the home, children, and women. These long and involved historical developments, he argues, can be related to 'contemporary common sense' whereby men should control themselves and their emotions, be competitive and self-sufficient, and whereby male senses of esteem and value are often bound up in public acclaim and achievement. As he writes:

The language of modernity stresses the gulf between the feminine coded private world and the masculine coded public world where men are acculturated to seek esteem through public performance and the recognition of achievement. This can take many forms, from violence, through sport, to educational qualifications and occupational status (p123)

The range of forms emphasised here is important; it was noted in the seminar that exploring the link between violence and masculinity can result in an over-concentration on working class masculinities or marginalised youth, as the educated and well-off engage in physical violence less frequently to re-assert control and status. Sexual conquest, the corporate take-over and victory on the rugby field can equally be understood as a masculinist desire to perform and achieve, and may involve other forms of violence.

The brief historical pen picture of masculinity outlined above is clearly limited in its application, particularly across the different modernities of the Council of Europe's member states. While the seminar could not, and indeed did not aim to provide an analysis of how masculinity has evolved in different contexts, Ken Harland's outline of 'traditional masculinity' provided the basis for a discussion among men and women at the seminar as to how they have experienced the acquisition of masculinity, and how they understand the values they and others in their milieu attach to it. In a seminar acknowledging the prevalent silences that surround the inner lives of men, it seemed to be a unique experience for many to participate in a frank discussion of male identities.

⁴ This 'P scheme' was developed by Ken Harland and used in his keynote input. The different words (protector, provider, privilege, public, private, pain) appear in relevant sections throughout this chapter.

⁵ Chris Barker (2002). "Identity, Equality and Difference" in *Making Sense of Cultural Studies* pp 121-129





2.3.2 Masculinity and media

While it is near impossible to sum up the dimensions of socialisation and enculturation discussed as a whole, it is important to include a final note here on the ascribed role of media representations. *Media* tends to function as a floating category in many discussions of social issues, and in seminar situations such as this one, there is rarely the chance to analyse particular media representations, never mind the range of factors that have to be discussed in relation to media reception and interpretation. At an empirical level, most participants recognised shared notions of dominant masculinity represented in over-lapping categories of sport, advertising and action movies. More importantly, these images circulate in societies that many social scientists argue are *image-saturated*; what we know now of the global world, how we see and evaluate otherness, and how we imagine ourselves in relation to others is heavily influenced by quantities of information and imagery on a scale never before experienced.

The importance of role models, heroes and images of masculinity was emphasised in this context. Boys and young men seek role models as an important source of self-identity, and in contemporary consumer societies celebrity heroes and other prevalent representations communicate unattainable standards of potency, wealth, power and control. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that, as Graham Murdock pithily puts it, 'images do not walk in straight lines'⁶. In other words, images are interpreted, and interpreted in subjective contexts. Boys and young men may be open to influence, but their minds are not like buckets waiting to be filled. Instead, they interpret in relation to their existing knowledge and values, the channels through which they discuss and share, and the skills they possess. Youth work has a role to play in providing 'heroes in their context', but also in recognising and discussing with young men how they understand and value the images they engage with.

i prefer to say that i have
a complex masculinity,
and just 'being a man'
doesn't describe the
things i value and identify
with.

2.3.3 Masculinity on the world stage.

It is interesting to note - given the temporal context of the seminar - that in an attempt to explain the reticence of most European countries to join an attack on Iraq, the North American policy analyst Robert Kagan adopted the title of the well-known book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* by John Gray to read "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus"⁷. Substituting war-makers for men and anti-war protestors for women is an interesting move, with a logic that could be interpreted as follows. While feminised Europeans favoured dialogue, masculine Americans apparently favour the language of action and war. While Europeans counselled for patience, Americans knew when it was time to be decisive. And while Europeans may see their opposition to war as principled, Kagan knows that it is really the result of post WW2 softness, military weakness, and *emasculaton*. In a seminar engaging with deep-rooted and naturalised assumptions about men and male behaviours, there could be few more symbolic contexts than this one.

⁶ Graham Murdock (1999: 14), "Rights and representations: public discourse and cultural citizenship" in Gripsrud, J., (ed.) *Television and Common Knowledge*. Routledge, London

⁷ Robert Kagan (2003) *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*.





2.4 SOCIAL CHANGE AND UNSETTLED MASCULINITIES

Men today, according to Peter Ciaccio of the World Student Christian Federation, are like 'kings without thrones'. This compelling metaphor sums up much of the analysis at the seminar of issues facing men - and consequently women - today, but it does need some explanation. Easy divisions between now and then, traditional and modern simplify the complex nature of social changes, and the discursive category of *men* is as over-loaded as that of *women*, *white people*, *Africans*. Yet by working with the prototype of traditional masculinity translated into their different habitats, participants were able to suggest and analyse changes - in worlds of work, families, health and public politics - that have challenged the privilege and implicit gender empowerment of men, while rarely providing the means to deal with identities in crisis. Confusion about 'what it is to be/become a man' often results in a reliance on the accepted categories of proven manhood, with the painful and often violent consequences that will be discussed at various stages of this report.

The public status of men, it was argued, has been challenged by a range of factors, again located by many commentators in the post-world war two world⁸. Feminist critiques of patriarchal structures, of the invisibility of gender and of assumed male privileges have undermined the discourses that sustain unquestioned masculinity. The political-economic processes often summarised as *deindustrialisation* have limited and in many instances obliterated the jobs traditionally associated with male workers, leading not only to losses of income and security but also to sources of belonging and prestige. Seemingly permanent and 'acceptable' levels of unemployment in many countries have sundered the link between being a father and husband on the one hand, and breadwinner and 'publicly useful person' on the other. And while sometimes-radical changes can be partially related to conditions of stress, depression and mental illness, many men were held to be dangerously and wilfully ignorant when it came to their health and engaging with professional health care.

i've noticed that a lot of guys really talk to their female friends, but between men what you can show is so limited. i think we all recognise this pressure to be a man in certain ways.

With regard to family, the boundaries between public and private seem increasingly confused - and as a result of feminist critique - questioned and politicised. Working groups on *Sexuality and young men* and *the role of young men in changing societies* noted that work, marriage and family are still interconnected for many young men as markers on a path to full manhood; *it's just what you do*. These expectations (or versions of them) must now negotiate - to name but a few factors - divergent experiences of family life, relationship histories and styles, changing expectations and practices of marriage and co-habitation, work and child-rearing. And crucially, the private sphere is no longer the home kingdom of a masculine man, as relationships now demand reflective engagement with gendered roles, as Alberto Melucci elaborates:

⁸ See Susan Faludi (1999) *Stiffed. The Betrayal of the Modern Man* for a discussion of post-war male disorientation in the US, and Barker op.cit. for a broader application of her arguments.





Differences that existed also in the past - but which were ordered hierarchically in the cultural (male-dominated) structure and thus kept effectively under control - now burst forth as women forcefully state their own view of the world [..] In interpersonal relations, and in particular in love relations, the enhanced visibility of difference introduces an emotional overload stemming from the new tasks of communication and integration with which the new couple must cope⁹.

Many of these changes inter-relate in terms of control and risk; while stereotypical masculinity values control and self-sufficiency, many men, placed differently in this matrix of social change, are not prepared to cope with change and risk as potentially constant elements of their public and private spheres. To return to the opening allegory; unquestioned masculinity and the relationships that sustain it may lead to the expectations of *kings*, while social factors inevitably de-throne and disillusion. What was termed the 'markers of becoming a man' are in flux, disputed and unavailable. It is important to emphasise that this analysis at the seminar was not proposed as anything other than an analytical framework congruent with the aims of the women's movement. It would be ironic if discussions of masculinity that contribute to breaking the silence that surrounds it were intended or read as attacks on the very feminist critiques that have made these discussions fundamental and desirable.



2.5 LEGACIES OF MASCULINITY

Thus far masculinity has been considered in fairly abstract terms, but the motivation for treating it as a central topic of the seminar was grounded in many participants' experience and awareness of the impact of limited and oppressive masculinities on children, women and men. The analysis of many participants cohered with a notion introduced by Christian Spoden, that what was variously called 'traditional', 'dominant' or 'hegemonic' masculinity is in crisis, and also in transition. It has been noted in another seminar report in this series that '[..] there have been notable changes in understandings of traditional gender roles in some groups of young people in Europe¹⁰. The participants at this seminar, and the networks in which they work and develop their ideas stand as a powerful and obvious example of this. Yet any such changes are experienced and evaluated very differently, and negotiating change demands awareness, competencies and support. While the work of many of the organisation represented presented instances of timely intervention, they also testified to the frustration and alienation of many boys and young men trying to live versions of what they may have been taught, but which no longer have an unproblematic acceptance in their wider social relationships. This section broadly reviews the negative socio-personal legacies discussed.

Boys work needs to develop early training and sensitisation. if you ask young boys 'what do you want to be' you get an indication of the roles, images and myths they have absorbed. We need to find pedagogy that can engage in these questions at the appropriate times.

⁹ Alberto Melucci 1996: 110., *The Playing Self. Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society*. Cambridge University Press

¹⁰ Bryony L. Hoskins & Marie-Laure Lemineur (2002) *Youth Against Violence. Seminar Report*. P26.





2.5.1 *The emotional sphere*

Enduring clichés of masculinity often focus on emotions, control, and acceptable spectrums of expression. They are in the language we use - as many people noted in the seminar 'to be emotional' is almost a synonym for weakness - and in countless representations of male behaviour, male celebrity, male role models, and so forth. In the definitional tension between masculinity and femininity, emotions are very much a property of the 'weaker, fairer sex'.

Of course it should go without saying that everybody is emotional, but how emotions are expressed, interpreted and judged is another question. The expression of emotions involves socio-cultural codes that we learn to read. Masculinity - ways of expecting and performing manhood - involves ways of reading and evaluating emotions as well. As human beings men experience emotional responses wired and integrated into their very beings, but communicate to the world outside the body often in highly prescribed ways. Emotions are not gendered, but perceptions and expressions of them are; what a human feels is channelled through what a gendered person can express. The public and private separation so crucial in approaching masculinity can often mean, in emotional terms, a private sphere of one, as access for anyone else involves risk. The effects of this are unsurprising; pain is the final p in the very limited alphabet of masculinity.

The enduring risk in many contexts is that 'being emotional' involves weakness and a lack of self-control. This is equally central to street bravado and the philosophy that something is 'just business'. What one working group in the seminar termed 'emotional illiteracy' was linked to many of the boys and young men encountered in different youth work contexts. The working group on Roles of young men in changing societies argued that while displays of aggression are accepted, crying is restricted to funerals, and in certain circumstances, missing a penalty in an important football match. While emotions are commonly regarded as feminine, they also noted prevalent links between displays of emotion and perceived homosexuality, thus stressing the categories of difference that sustain limited masculinity through oppositions of power and weakness.

As many participants noted, however, developing the freedom and literacy to recognise and express emotional needs is a central life skill, and a fundamental premise of violence prevention. This particular working group developed its ideas from the experience and expertise of the Young Men's Unit of Youth Action in Belfast, but those present agreed on a general tension. To quote the workshop report:

It is very difficult for young men to show their feelings, they keep it all inside. They want to break out of the pattern of the stereotype of masculinity but they find it hard to express themselves, they internalise problems.

The commonplace engagements and stresses of everyday life, exacerbated for many young men and boys by being marginalised in changing societies, leads to feelings and needs that many are ill-equipped to process. Before examining violence in this context, and the forms of youth work that, among other things say 'it's ok to have emotions', the remainder of this section examines masculinity and emotions in relation to health, sexuality, work and education.





2.5.2 Sexuality

In what proved to be a rhetorical question, Ken Harland asked; 'is it ok to say penis in a boys' school?' The murmured assent was probably not, unless it is in biology class, or as one participant remembered, if it happens to be somebody's nickname. The exaggerated nature of the question tapped into what many identified as the absurd state of sexual education for boys and young men, particularly in formal education. Sexual education for many remains what could be accurately termed informal; mechanical information is provided in the classroom; one working group labelled this *education based on science not emotions*. Sex in the context of relationships, feelings, pleasure, gender and sexuality was held in some experiences to be inadequately addressed, and in others to verge on the taboo. While formal education was generally regarded as failing to provide meaningful sexual education (although it has to be stressed that this varies enormously in the national situations represented) the wider links to masculinity need to be emphasised. Becoming a man is often linked to having sex, yet the emotional dislocation of masculinity allows no place for the fear, pressure and insecurity that individuals often feel;

The dominant image of a 'real' man implies being sexually active, presenting yourself to be both powerful and potent in relation to women and men. Early on boys and young men are seen to be initiators of sex and responsible for how the sexual encounter will be acted out. This can constitute a very strong pressure difficult to handle in a constructive way.

The quote above comes from the report of the working group on *Sexuality and young men*, and they went on to stress that the private\public dichotomy is often seen in the difference between behaviour within male groups - where the self is projected as the potent and powerful stereotype - and individually, where men behave in more complex ways. Separating sex from sexuality involves separating sex from discussions of intimacy and relationships, and compounds the emotional dislocation of masculinity:

Intimacy is largely a matter of emotional communication, and the evident difficulties men have in talking about relationships, which requires emotional security and language skills, is rooted in a culturally constructed and historically specific form of masculinity [...] What many men repress, or fail to acquire, is the autonomy necessary for the development of emotional closeness¹¹.

Working with masculinity and sexuality was regarded as being a core element of this practice of youth work, not only to engage with the one-dimensional images that many feel they have to live up to, but also because of the significant imbrications of heterosexuality with sexism, homophobia and violence. These questions will be taken up in chapter three.

2.5.3 Health

Tackling the centrality of sexuality to male identities, and the paradoxical silence that often surrounds it, means engaging with fundamental questions of sexual health. John Nicholls, working with the Health Opportunities Team in Edinburgh, summed up his work with these issues in the following way:

¹¹ Barker, op.cit. p128.



Working with young men around any sensitive and personal issue raises many challenges for workers and young men alike. Young men are taught through the many unspoken customs of European society that some aspects of our of the lives are private and not to be shared - sex belongs to this secretive world. In contrast, young men are expected by their peers to be born with sexual skills of prowess, power, knowledge and confidence to enable sexual competence at an early age. The greatest challenge for young men is to break from the restrictions of the private and the illusions of the peer-led public façade and to explore their realities with honesty.

Despite ample research detailing the varied health risks that men face during their life course, the general impression left after several stories was that many men would prefer to perform emergency surgery on themselves than consult doctors and medical professionals. Romeo Bissuti, working with MEN Men's Health Centre in Vienna, remarked that the health clinics he conducts at different venues are full of men who would rather wait in line to ask a 'question' than make an appointment with a doctor. Once again, the internal workings of the human body are interpreted through the lens of masculinity; illness may be weakness, and signifies that a man is not always the pilot of his own destiny. This is particularly the case with regard to mental health. Across European Union countries the suicide rate for young men between the ages of 15-24 is currently twice that of the comparable female age-group¹². While this and other statistics show startling rates of suicide, high-risk and addictive behaviour and increased levels of obesity among young men are also of concern across Europe, but to quote one participant, 'if it's in your head, you suffer in silence'. Given the relationship between public masculinities and reason noted earlier, it could be surmised that diseases that involve a perceived loss of reason and control are seen as thoroughly shameful. In the logic of masculinity, problems - and reactions to them - are always externalised. A further consequence of this, noted both by Romeo Bissuti and by Lillia Raileanu, working in a very different setting with Information Centre GenderDoc-M in Moldova, is that many men they encounter do not understand how support, counselling and psychological services may help them, or what these services offer.

2.5.4 Work and Education

Given the intimate link proposed between masculine identities and the public sphere, there was an important focus on issues of work and education during these discussions. While the experiences of those present differed enormously according to national economic circumstance and subjective life chance and opportunities, there was a general agreement with the proposition of Ken Harland, and stated here also by Lynne Chisholm and Siyka Kovacheva that:

Young people in today's Europe experience longer and more complex transitions to adult life. Highly flexible pathways replace formerly more standardised tracks towards employment and family building¹³.

Flexible pathways, replete with opportunity and risk for those who walk them in different ways and at different paces, demand skills of orientation and navigation. With

¹² Eurostat, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat>.

¹³ (2002) Exploring the European social mosaic. The social situation of young people in Europe p32.





dependable markers on these standardised tracks removed, young men seem to be much less prepared to negotiate these changes than young women. In this regard, gender needs to be read interactionally with issues of class, ethnicity, location and sexual orientation, and the educational ill-preparedness and narrow work options of many young men in different European societies cannot be separated from their realities of marginalisation and the hegemonisation of 'flexibility' in market economies. Nevertheless, the anecdotal evidence of participants and some research points to a conclusion that young women are more responsive (still within multiple restrictions) to expanded educational opportunities¹⁴ and so-called flexible career paths.

While young women may still be severely limited by expectations, practices and structural impediments to balancing work and family, the main observation pertaining to young men was that masculinity was significant in retarding preparedness for constant change. For while masculinity is linked to work, status and public role, an irony of the new worlds of work is that

[...] Labour market and employment structures are now changing rapidly, and it may well be that young women will find themselves gradually better-placed to take advantage of new and changing demands for skills and competences, which place greater emphasis on the kinds of qualities and capacities that are more closely associated with cultural femininity than with masculinity¹⁵.

Language, communication and interpersonal skills, for so long regarded as bound up in the feminine sphere of the private, are now central to work environments in service rather than product based economies. This is not to say that speaking from the heart will suddenly lead to full employment for men, but that the legacy of culturally constructed masculinities is now a factor in the exclusion of many young men from meaningful work lives. Yet these very masculinities entail a pressure to achieve public status, to be the provider, and as Ken Harland noted, being provided for is not an option for many young men. The changing world of work provides another paradox; work is central to masculine identity, but masculine assumptions (in the context of other important educational and social factors) leave young men ill-prepared for the current situation.

2.6 CHALLENGING AND PLURALISING MASCULINITY

Discussing masculinity across experiences and contexts involves painting many broad strokes, and this report is openly aware of that. Speaking from their different contexts however, participants generally agreed that the constructed nature of masculinity needs to be subjected to far more public scrutiny, and that through individual behaviour, educational intervention and diversified representations masculinity can be pluralised. In other words, this is a second sense of *masculinities*; if the first recognises the reality of different and partially commensurate masculinities, this second sense is an aspirational one. For some, this involves consciously projecting different and positive aspects of masculinity that could challenge the restrictive stereotypes and widen the

¹⁴ Ibid. p43

¹⁵ Ibid. p36





spectrum of recognised male behaviour. There was considerable debate on this strategy, and it was argued that this may involve the pressure to project a 'right' identity, precisely the kind of pressure that youth workers do not want to communicate to the young men they work with. Yet others saw this as openly embracing their 'complex masculinity' in all its positiveness, complexity and contradictoriness. In this vision, men move from saying "I'm a man" (with all of the assumptions that carries) to "I'm a man who" (thinks, acts, and interprets roles in ways that are not circumscribed by limited masculinity).

Beyond questioning and pluralising masculinity exists the controversial notion of transcending it altogether. In his keynote address, Christian Spoden questioned the elemental relevance of the concept of man (and relatedly woman). Concentrating on pluralising masculinities still assumes a fundamental difference between male and female, and as such, will always follow contemporary masculinities in defining itself in relation to females, if not exclusively femininity. It is doubtful if this process can ever be free from replicating aspects of gender inequality. Beyond biological creation, he argued, there is no practice or role that cannot be diversified, and diminishing and transcending gender categories increases human freedom for men and women.

It is important to note at this point that as with any theoretical argument that touches on and challenges deeply held assumptions, participants at the seminar adopted varying stances on the degree to which they agreed with and adopted an analysis of gender. A majority of the group accepted the premise that beyond the determination of sex by biology, gender was a matter of socialisation and enculturation. In other words we are born as men and women, but the values we attach to, codes we use to express and behaviours we associate with sex are gendered. For some however, to reduce all differences in roles, behaviours and outlooks to human processes is to lose sight of what they see as essential differences between men and women. This is an emotive and controversial subject, where analysis cannot be separated from the religious and political discourses that produce them, and this seminar was no different.

As with any such fundamental controversy, evidence can be cited for any viewpoint. During the writing of this report for example, I saw two television documentaries and three newspaper articles that - in relation to contextualised research - drew very different conclusions on the relationship between biochemistry and socialisation. Beyond the actual research involved, it was stressed during seminar discussions that this question cannot escape the history of patriarchies, where an important regulator in male and female power has been the reduction of gender to sexual determinism. Youth work does not need to solve a basic question of essentialism and anti-essentialism to commit to and facilitate others in questioning the taken-for-granted in their behaviour and social vision. It can also recognise that men are more often threatened than empowered by gender discourses, and youth work has a role to play in evangelising the freedom and benefits that come with diluted gender categories.

An example of this discussed in depth - and presented here as indicative of wider debates - is child rearing. It was argued that while many men have interpreted equal opportunities as improving the conditions of women in the workplace, these changes have rarely been promoted as beneficial for men. Yet, in the experience of participants working with this issue, many men have realised that their quality of life is greatly





improved by becoming a carer, rather than just provider. As Spoden argued, the home is only seen as a *feminine* area because men are absent, once they are meaningfully present it becomes a *parental* area. Shifts of this kind may mean some discomfort for men, they may be seen as feminised by peers, but change involves discomfort, and increasing opportunity and participation beyond gender is surely worth it.

This was emphasised by some participants because of what they described as the shadow of essentialist and right-wing men's work. Masculinity in transition has produced the kind of analysis documented here, and has also produced a reaction away from the commitment involved in living with the ambiguity of transition. Extreme movements, such as neonazism, provide among other things a straightforward blueprint for male behaviour, replete with mission, enemy and legitimised violence. Another more prevalent form is of the kind satirised in Paul Thomas Anderson's film *Magnolia*, where Tom Cruise plays a character facilitating workshops for men traumatised by feminism and the complexity of modern sexual relationships. Cruise's character trains them to regain mastery and control, and to 'refuse to apologise for what you need and want'. Examples such as this one underline the central commitment of this analysis at the seminar; engaging with gender unites men and women in confronting expectations and assumptions that have, to different extents, negative consequences for all in our societies.



Section 3. Violence, Young Men and Boys

3.1 THE SIMPLICITY AND COMPLEXITY OF VIOLENCE

I'm afraid of my own anger, it's a curtain on my eyes and it takes over. I try to deal with it by pumping it out in the gym or speaking with friends.

In a workshop on Forum Theatre, participants re-created moments of conflict and potential violence they had experienced. In the pedagogy of this practice, volunteers model their stories in order to name and unmask the dynamics of violence, and experiment with strategies for change. In one particular scene, a gang beats a young man for not offering a cigarette demanded of him. In the infallible logic of provocation, it doesn't matter whether he smokes or not, the request is one of many possible pretexts for attack. As he lies on the ground, a victim of multiple blows, the ringleader of the attack explains bluntly:

I only wanted one cigarette you little faggot.

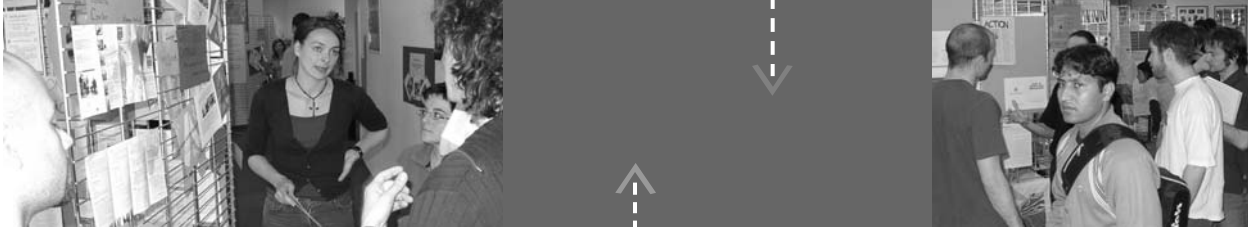
This simple sentence captures much about random violence in the lives of young men. The victim is constructed as different and inferior - he is a faggot because he lost - and thus belongs somewhere in the open category of victimhood that includes perceived weakness, femininity, gayness and difference. As a participant in the workshop put it, 'his only crime was to be different, what can you do about that?' But his attacker is also aggrieved; not only can he justify the attack, but in some sense he can make it sound as if the victimiser is also the victim. This seminar was confronted with many such moments. Violence can be dynamic and sudden, and its impact immediate, serious, and in ways unknowable. But the rationale of violence is not mindless; it is built on assumptions and images of the other, and it can be explained and often eloquently justified. Working with boys and young men in relation to violence makes many demands, not least of which is to understand the logics of violence, and to be aware of one's own relationship with violence of many kinds.

3.2 ASPECTS OF VIOLENCE

This seminar ranged across many understandings, types and contexts of violence, from armed and post-armed conflict societies to violence and crime in urban areas, violence in such social institutions as the family, the army and the school, sporting violence, and wider senses of violence that encompassed the structural violence of economic injustice and even the notion of masculinity as a violence to self.

Placing violence in the context of masculinity and social contexts neither justifies it, nor *explains* violence absolutely. It is important to begin this section with this observation. As many participants testified, young men are seen as a 'problem' category, and attempts to analyse and explain the background to their actions are often stereotyped by populist 'law and order' political messages. Yet questions of social change, self-image, marginalisation and loss of control are clearly central factors in the motivation and validation of violence by many young men. Using definitions, recounted experiences and debates from the seminar, this section examines aspects of violent behaviour and young men.





3.2.1 Recognising violence.

Violence is not just perpetrated actions that have obvious physical effects, although physical violence - and its often-disastrous consequences - was discussed in great depth at the seminar. Violence is also something that has to be named and judged as violence within ethical frameworks. In a seminar spanning such a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, the perceived and evaluated nature of violence was a central discussion. Violence needs to be recognised as violence, and every context has acceptable forms of violence, and actions not *normally* seen as violence at all. Indeed, there are often reasons and agendas for proposing hierarchies of violence, or even for rendering certain kinds of violence natural, justified, or invisible.

Discussing violence and youth normally infers physical violence, and as the *Youth Against Violence* report statistically details, homicide, rape, physical assault and violent crime perpetrated by young offenders are increasingly of concern in varied European societies¹⁶. Beyond the physical, there is no strict consensus on what violence involves, when it is justified, and the nature and relevance of intent. These aspects will be discussed here, as an understanding of how violence is interpreted is central to working with youth involved in violence, and awareness-raising in the appropriate societal contexts. As many participants noted, the background context of war also highlighted that violence is legitimised and justified in various ways, on macro and micro levels:

We're here talking about this, and then thousands of miles away right now hundreds and thousands of young men are being asked to kill each other.

3.2.2 Working definitions of violence



In his keynote address, "Violence: definitions, forms and the involvement of young men", Christian Spoden, director of the Centre for Violence Prevention in Bremen, offered a range of definitions that allowed discussions to concentrate on the relationships forged by violence. In relation to physical violence, he argued, violence involves acts carried out with knowledge of the likely consequences for the other person, including pain and injury. More broadly, he employed a formulation of Johann Galtung's, which proposes that violence is *anything avoidable that hinders human self-realisation*¹⁷.

This inclusive definition was seen as important for a number of reasons, including the dimensions of violence it suggests. Physical violence hinders human self-realisation in very stark ways, but emphasising this notion also allowed a consideration of verbal violence for example, institutional violence of different kinds, and indeed, the violence of masculinity as a set of limiting and often oppressive assumptions. Secondly, the idea of hindering another is not solely dependent on something being illegal. Spoden emphasised that dependence on legal definitions freed the perpetrator from thinking through the consequences of their actions; if something is not forbidden, then it appears to be more subjective. As an example he cited violence within marriage and within the home, and shifts in perception of this violence over time. In many contexts this was regarded as merely a *domestic* incident for quite a long time, while a similar assault on

¹⁶ Pp 17-18.

¹⁷ The *Youth Against Violence* Seminar Report provides a further series of working definitions of violence. Pp 16-17.





an unknown woman in *public* would be treated as a criminal offence. Focusing on the avoidable consequences of action on another person lays bare the way in which different kinds of violence are placed in hierarchy. As one participant noted, violence between the young men he worked with never gained as much attention as their violence against property.

Stressing the avoidability of violence argues that violence is learned, and can be unlearned if the beliefs and assumptions that underpin it are engaged with, and alternative strategies and behaviours are opened up. An important aspect of this for youth workers engaging with the violent behaviour of others is the recognition that nobody is free of violence. Everybody has attitudes, reactions and behaviours that are violent by this definition. Given the complex nature of perceptions and validations of violence, speakers and participants emphasised that self-awareness with regard to violence, and moving away from simple good/bad polarities, is central to work with boys and young men. Analysing one's own experiences with violence as a victim and perpetrator, and the values upon which one evaluates violence is fundamental to establishing meaningful relationships with young people involved in violence. This question will be further explored in chapter four.

3.2.3 Intention and perception of violence

Emphasising that violence needs to be understood in terms of the social beliefs and frameworks that explain it poses a challenge for youth workers engaging with the fundamentals of violent behaviour among young men. If violence involves a relationship between avoidable actions and consequences for another, then it also involves questions of intent, and perceptions of the act of violence. As many participants noted, their clients often argued that they didn't intend to cause certain effects. Yet the effects, and the perception of them, cannot be separated from their actions. Christian Spoden emphasised that work with boys involved a constant stress on being responsible for the consequences you create, beyond questions of guilt and the defence of legality. Responsibility is something that can be understood, negotiated and deferred in various ways. To illustrate this, he asked participants to consider the following statement, and then to answer whether they found it acceptable, unacceptable, or as constituting sexual harassment:

A group of boys is watching a girl in the showers after sport, and she does not know.

While most found such behaviour unpleasant, some stopped short of describing it as harassment as the girl in question was unaware of the voyeurs. For others however, a lack of awareness could never be taken for any form of assent, and the boys were guilty of harassment as their gaze intruded and objectified the girl in question. Focusing on responsibility, Spoden argued, involves recognising that in this scenario the boys haven't achieved any consent, and the entire responsibility rests on them and cannot be deferred to others. The discussion of this statement was a powerful moment during the seminar, as people realised that a group committed to non-violence and gender politics nevertheless approached this question from diverse, and often conflicting standpoints. It emphasised that working with violence and behaviour involves self-knowledge, and the necessity to be aware of the ideas and ethical frameworks of others.



3.3 VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY.

Key components of restrictive masculinity identified in chapter two included the importance of public image, and relatedly, a sense of invulnerability, control and rank in particular male hierarchies. Projecting a tough public image and engaging in violence as a means of self-expression is intrinsically part of the stereotypical masculinities discussed at the seminar. This is intensified when physical prowess is one of the few avenues open to prove and perform masculinity. Yet as Christian Spoden pointed out to the general affirmation of the seminar, considerations of masculinity are marginal to discussions of criminality and delinquency.

3.3.1 Violence and power

Violence is an extreme commentary on power; it involves the ability of one to impact on the life, human rights and well-being of another. Its impacts can indefinitely disempower the victim physically and emotionally. Yet in the context of masculinity, violence is often seen as empowering. Participants constantly stressed the relationship between young men disempowered socially, and reclaiming power, self-esteem and prestige through a recourse to violence. The peace educator Pat Patfoort explains this in terms of what she calls the lack of equivalence in relationships of power, with violence stemming from attempts to shift from a relative position of disempowerment. Violence involves not just physical but psychological survival, and where opportunities are lacking, self-respect can be temporarily regained through power over someone else¹⁸.

It was argued that in a range of ways masculinity sanctions violence. Attempting to live up to masculine stereotypes may involve projecting an uncompromising image, and one that has to be defended and legitimised in certain male peer hierarchies. As one participant noted in his work with young street gangs, boys can be punished for failing to engage in violence; violence is central to their construction of masculinity. In situations where other traditional markers of masculinity are unachievable, physical prowess and *toughness* become key ways of proving oneself as a man. This notion of proving was deemed to be crucial in understanding the tendency towards 'recreational' violence within and between groups of young men, particularly but not exclusively among the socio-economically excluded.

Similarly, the relationships that certain masculinities forge between men and women places women as victims of male power in a range of ways. Discussions of Christian Spoden's input detailed the ways in which women can be framed in relation to violence. In some contexts beating women is dishonourable, as it proves nothing. It may even indicate weakness on the part of the victimiser as man-on-man violence makes sense within specific and general frameworks of male hierarchy. While in these instances physical violence does not take place, women are still disempowered and perceived instrumentally in terms of male power. However it is also crucial to bear in mind that domestic violence directed against women remains a central problem in many contexts, and can be linked, among other factors, to masculine reclamation of power in the so-called *private sphere*¹⁹. A corollary of this, mentioned by various participants, is the

¹⁸ Pat Patfoort, *Uprooting Violence, Building Nonviolence. From a nonviolent upbringing to a nonviolent society*. Maine, Cobblesmith, 1995.

¹⁹ See *Violence Against Young Women in Europe* p20.





silence that often surrounds domestic violence directed at men, as this form of victimhood involves increased dimensions of disempowerment.

3.3.2 Violence and emotional illiteracy

In a poem 'This Was My Father', the poet John Hegley has written of his father that *I didn't understand his need to wallop me so much, except that it kept us in touch*²⁰. His picture of emotional dislocation resonates with much analysis that emerged during discussions. 2.7.1 examined legacies of masculinity in relation to the limited range of acceptable emotions accorded to men in some contexts. As many participants noted, violence may become a means of expressing anger, fear or aggression within the codes of masculinity; a violent act is an emotional display devoid of apparent weakness, and it is an active outgoing response. In this sense, violence is also communication, and youth work must understand the messages in order to construct responses.

Christian Spoden noted from his experience of working with young men that built-up frustrations are often released through violence, and accumulate through a lack of spaces and channels to express emotional needs. His input differentiated between aggression, anger and violence, and argued that many young men need to get in touch with what he termed their 'vital aggression' as a central means of violent prevention. Anger is an emotion, and work with boys and young men involves establishing the right to be angry, particularly among those with a lot to be angry about. Nevertheless, anger is easily channelled into violence, and as an emotion that dominates all others, is also harmful to the health of the perpetrator.

A further useful element of Spoden's input was a discussion of submissiveness, aggressiveness and assertiveness. As Kent Lindahl of EXIT observed during a working group, men rarely realise that emotional expression is hard work for everybody, and does not come naturally. As such, they rarely engage in ways of communicating that reflect their needs within an awareness of those of others. Submissive and aggressive behaviour are linked by asymmetry. Submissive behaviour involves denying needs, allowing others to choose and not expressing the self, whereas aggressiveness involves achieving needs at the expense of others, making choices for others and hindering them in the expression of one's own emotions. It was contended that youth workers need to encourage and facilitate assertive behaviour where young men can honestly express their feelings and aim for what they actually want, while allowing others to achieve their goals. This is based on fundamentally respecting themselves and others. In this sense, assertiveness involves achieving the key balances recognised in influential theories of conflict transformation²¹. These questions will be related to youth work practice in chapter four.

3.3.3 Further socio-personal factors in violence

While masculinity has been damagingly under-discussed in relation to boys, young men and violence, it is not proposed here as a new meta-theory. The assumptions and constraints of masculinity are intertwined in the entire social existence of the individual, and as such diverse socio-personal factors must be considered in relation to violent

²⁰ John Hegley (1994) *These Were Your Father's*. London, Mandarin, p.76.

²¹ For an introductory overview, see Titley, G (ed.) *Training Essentials T-Kit*, 2002





behaviour. *Learning* violence is a highly researched and controversial area, and varying positions propose different relationships between the competence and responsibility of the individual and the socio-cultural situation in which the individual operates. This report follows the logic of previous publications in the series by stressing that social factors relate to violence, rather than cause it. This is the case for two reasons; establishing direct causal relationships usually simplifies the complexity of different circumstances, and also downplays the importance of human agency. Youth work concentrating on the avoidability of violence implies that change can take place, and emphasises the non-transferable responsibility of the perpetrator. Yet, as a seminar working group on this question insisted, it can only achieve this by never losing sight of the socio-political context in which myriad youth violence takes place.

The list of socialising agents discussed by participants is depressingly familiar, even if listing them here generalises to a point of acute abstraction. For many the family remains a site not only of gendered roles but also of gendered violence. Christian Spoden recounted how many young offenders he worked with had histories of violent abuse. In - for example - father and son relationships, identifying victimhood with weakness may lead to identifying with the victimiser, and recreating the same processes in different roles in the future if help is not sought or available. Indeed it was generally noted that wider society has difficulty perceiving boys and young men as victims, thus reinforcing an ingrained assumption that *needs* involve weakness, and that solutions are to be found in moving from positions of powerlessness to power-over others.


These wider assumptions around violence and men were inevitably linked in various ways to media representation. Decades of media research has discounted crude behaviourist links between representations of violence and violent acts, and accepted the notion that media reception is a process of active meaning production related to the context and competences of the individual²². Yet asserting the active nature of audiences does not lessen the charge that many media representations normalise violence as action, and often simplify the psychology and impacts of violence. A telling criticism made at the seminar was that a perceived majority of fictional representations that deal with themes of conflict present violence as an acceptable and often obvious form of conflict resolution. While media producers often argue that they merely reflect reality, it was argued that this position attempts to stand outside of society for the sake of convenience. Indeed, some media theorists argue that media can take what they term a *countervailing* position, and offer images and narratives that present critiques of and alternatives to violence.

Certain participants highlighted the climate of violence in schools they worked in or liaised with. Christoph Hofbauer, a teacher and practising trainer in violence prevention in schools, argued that schools are increasingly microcosms of wider atmospheres of violence in society. Citing lack of parental supervision and involvement, formative experiences of violence, and increasingly influential gang and peer group regulation, he argued that school regulations and teacher-pupil relationships now count for little in terms of violence deterrence. Speaking from a review of research conducted in Austria²³, he maintained that while schools are still relatively safe, violence

²² See Morley, D., *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*. Routledge, London, 1992.

²³ Christoph Hofbauer, "Violence in Schools". Circulated paper.





in schools is more prevalent and serious in terms of the weapons used and injuries sustained. While these factors are beyond the control of teachers, his work aimed at motivating teachers to find ways of creating an "environment within schools that promotes respect, dignity and non-violence".

The experience of Kent Lindahl of EXIT and Marius Eriksen of Project 'Tett Paa' testified to the realities of violence in very different kinds of youth gangs. Working in Sweden and Norway respectively, their work illustrates the ways in which extreme marginalisation exists even within societies commonly regarded as prosperous and stable. EXIT, a Swedish organisation founded by Lindahl in 1998, works with neonazi youth from the premise that there are rational reasons why young people gravitate towards such movements:

They are used to being picked upon, and find themselves at the bottom of their social hierarchy. Neonazism satisfies a need for vengeance, camaraderie, 'respect', identity and control in the midst of a chaotic and degrading existence²⁴.

The sense of belonging and protection associated with gangs is deepened by the ideological induction of neonazism; a focus of difference, threat and therefore violence is readily provided. Racist violence therefore functions to prove the belonging and rank of the gang member, while strengthening boundaries and carrying implicit justification. The EXIT report cited above also notes the irony present in experiences of marginality and frustration driving 'ethnic youth groups to form criminal gangs'. Marius Eriksen's gang intervention project dealing with this in Norway is discussed in 4.5.

In many marginalised youth contexts, violence and crime are inter-linked with the abuse of alcohol and drugs. In term of Galtung's definition of violence that this report has been making reference to, abuse of and dependence on addictive substances is clearly violence to the self. It also leads to increased violence in a number of ways. A common experience of many participants is the link between serious drug dependency and violence, as crime becomes a basic means of feeding a drug habit. Alcohol was implicated in many experiences of violence; by impairing a person's judgement and reading of situations, and often lowering their inhibitions, it increases violence on the street and in the home. This is a possibility that transcends actual youth group contexts; while EXIT emphasises the role of excessive alcohol consumption in organised neonazi bonding, recent studies in Ireland have also linked a surge in random street violence among young people to increased alcohol consumption²⁵.



3.4 VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Victims of the kinds of violence perpetrated by young men and boys could in theory be anyone. This section concentrates on dominant themes discussed at the seminar. A common factor between these 'categories' is the role accorded to the victims in restrictive notions of masculinity.

²⁴ Katja Wahlström, "Exit: A Way Through. Facing Neonazism and racism among youth", 2002.

²⁵ World Health Organisation, *European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs*. WHO, Stockholm, 2001.



3.4.1 Gender-related violence

Violence and sexual abuse against women surfaced frequently and urgently during the seminar, and indeed a general aim of the entire event was to explore some of the critical questions raised in the previous seminar *Violence Against Young Women in Europe*. That seminar identified the ongoing realities of domestic violence, sexual abuse including rape and incest, trafficking in young women and the effects of armed conflicts, racism and discrimination against minority women, female genital and other forms of bodily mutilation, and the dimensions of economic injustice.

The gender-power analysis central to the seminar clearly related domestic abuse and sexual violence to extreme demonstrations of power and control within a patriarchal ideology. Power over a woman in these confrontations may involve a range of other circumstantial factors, but still centrally involve a display of dominance over women as possessions and objects. To greater and lesser degrees, entrenched attitudes assume that these forms of violence may be 'explained' or 'mitigated' by dominant assumptions around the normality of violence in everyday life. Many participants argued that domestic violence is still under-reported and even to a degree accepted, whereas others noted grimly that attitudes to rape still involve assumptions about the complicity of the victim, often through dress or attitude. 'She was asking for it' or 'she must have led him on' may sound to some like awful clichés, but in some contexts they seem to retain an unchallenged and perverse currency.

The assumptions and invisible licence of gendered realities was held to be central to many of the forms of violence against women listed above. During the writing of this report for example, the release of the film *Lilya 4-ever* has prompted a period of media coverage of trafficking in young women and the significant presence of enslaved prostitutes from *new Europe* in the *old*. A report in an English newspaper argued that a driving factor in the importation of young women to the UK was not just the 'traditional' sex market, but the popularity of lap-dancing clubs frequented by young professionals, predominantly male but also female. The article contended that this new clientele saw lap-dancing as just another form of ironic, postmodern entertainment on offer in the cosmopolitan city. This may not be so-called traditional masculinity, but it is gender-power masked and integrated into new and equally repressive practices.

A task for gender analysis in youth work is clearly to track and question the shifting ways in which the objectification of women can be legitimised. Equally, social institutions need to consider adequately the values their practices reflect. A progressive example of this was provided by Peter Söderstrom, who highlighted the criminalisation of sex buyers in Sweden. He pointed out that the legal shift towards criminalising sex buyers in Sweden is important not only for its substantive impact, but because it signals an awareness in law of the social attitudes that often permeate 'sex as a service'. While prostitution is a subject that elicits contrary and deeply held points of view, this legal change poses a direct challenge to the values that regard the female body as just another commodity in our borderless, free market world.



3.4.2 Violence and homophobia

In the definitional logic of masculinity, it was noted in 2.7.1 that homosexuality is often taken as a marker of not being a real man, and as being mixed up in Othered²⁶ categories of being feminine, weak, and different. This difference, and the justification that cultural prejudice against homosexuality provides in many contexts, was linked in many discussions to the prevalence of violence against young homosexual men. Young homosexual men in this sense also includes young men who are not gay, but whose appearance, demeanour or behaviour allows them to be categorised as different/homosexual and thus rationalised as targets of violence. A quote from *Young Men Talking - Voices from Belfast* provides a description that had strong cross-cultural recognition in the seminar group. 'Fruit' in this instance is one of the many available and prejudicial terms for the catch-all category of different/homosexual:

Young men can't show their feelings because of the way others would treat you. Showing how you feel is seen as weakness. If you cry people just laugh at you. If my mate cried I'd mock him and call him a fruit.

Peter Söderstrom, working with Lansstyrelsen Vastersbottens Lan in Sweden, argued that violence against women and gay men are both part of 'making masculinity', and indeed this kind of violence can be further extended to other vulnerable groups in society. Nevertheless, as Dennis van der Veur noted, an added dimension of violence against young gay men is the relationship of homophobia to masculinity, and perceptions of the intimate male sexuality that being gay suggests. To some extent this also explains a wider reluctance to discuss the continuing taboo of homosexuality in many social contexts.

Dennis, who is working with COC Netherlands²⁷ and facilitated the workshop "Growing up in a straight world: verbal and physical violence against young homosexual men" argued that the threat of and experience of violence was a pervasive aspect of young gay men's lives. Quoting survey results and individual testimonies from his current work zone of eastern and south-eastern Europe, as well as from what he termed 'so-called progressive' countries in western Europe, Dennis argued that while varying percentages of respondents experienced violence on the basis of their sexual identity, high rates of non-reporting of violence were common. In a report on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Poland for example, The Campaign Against Homophobia found that among those surveyed, one in seven had experienced physical violence, and 74.5% of those attacked did not inform the police. As the report stated:

The high percentage of people who do not report the cases of violence to the police is alarming. The situation indicates that homosexual people are afraid of the reaction of the police or doubt their efficiency. Very alarming are situations in which the police, summoned to investigate a crime, condemn the victim's sexual orientation, and thus commit an offence themselves²⁸.

²⁶ Othering refers to the active process of defining oneself in contra-distinction to identities seen as different, and often pejoratively so.

²⁷ Federation of Dutch Associations for the Integration of Homosexuality.

²⁸ Report 2001 On discrimination and intolerance due to sexual orientation in Poland, p11.





It was argued at this workshop that violence against sexual minorities needs to be seen in a relation to normative invisibility; people are assumed to be part of the heterosexual majority until they declare otherwise. Organisational notions of diversity that did not include sexuality were cited, implying that a constant struggle for advocacy groups dealing with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth issues is a questioning of the hidden values and assumptions that permeate different structures.

As with all forms of violence discussed at this seminar, physical and verbal violence directed at young homosexual men in a context of wider prejudice and normative assumptions can be related to a range of distressing consequences. Rising rates of suicide has been related to young men in section 2.7.3, and Dennis Van Der Veur quoted a study conducted in the UK and Ireland contending that young gay men are significantly more likely to attempt suicide than their straight counterparts. The insecurity and fear that stems from violence, and feelings of isolation and helplessness, was linked in the workshop to high levels of drug addiction and alcoholism, depression, homelessness, and an inability to complete various levels of education and training.

3.4.3 Violence motivated by racism and intolerance

Difference as a justification for violence, and difference within the logic of masculinity suggest that it should come as no surprise that a significant factor in urban youth violence is ethnic/religious/cultural/visual difference. The Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe and many partner youth non-governmental organisations have been actively campaigning in this area for quite some time, and in the current climate in many European countries, campaigns will have to continue for some time yet. Racist violence is not an exact entity. To consider two contexts for example, the work of EXIT in Sweden presented at the seminar examines extreme right groups organised around a particular, closed ideology, whereas in my native Dublin, a rise in violence, intimidation and harassment directed at asylum-seekers, refugees and immigrants has been for the most part unplanned. Similarly, many discourses of justification for discrimination exist.

While strident claims about the racial inferiority of the Other are currently mainly limited to the margins of the far-right, a more prevalent argument is the 'we're full' approach, accompanied by arguments that pay respect to the idea of cultural relativism only to argue for the incompatibility of cultures in failed European 'multicultural experiments'. In relation to this, many participants argued that racist violence or intolerance in their societies often took legitimacy from the statements and public priorities of certain political parties and the irresponsible agendas of sections of their media. It should be noted that perceived difference and racist frameworks also operate as an excuse for violence in a range of ways in urban settings. As Ronni Abergel of the Danish Crime Prevention Council has maintained, Danish society currently witnesses manifestations of racisms between a range of 'groups':

Unless we reflect on our own violence, how do we expect to work with it in others? The last thing we should present ourselves as is superman, who is in control. We can teach through our own awareness and own experiences, by just pointing out that this is how i dealt with things. We can't give our clients a cheesy "it'll be ok", that's exactly the attitude we need to challenge.





Number one, racism of the native population against migrant minorities. Number two migrant groups that are racist towards other migrant groups [...] Number three, and that is the migrant groups that are racist towards the Danish. What I would call reverse racism. Reverse racism is often created when groups are oppressed in society and they start building up anger and frustration towards the oppressors²⁹.

3-4-5 Young men as victims of violence

This report has approached the young men discussed at the seminar as often being perpetrators of and victims of violence, and of violence of different kinds. In certain cases, the experience of victimhood is central to the later practice of victimisation. It has argued that violence needs to be linked to the restrictions of masculinity and in many instances experiences of marginality in order to construct educational responses that transcend useless lectures on good and bad. In discussions of physical violence and intimidation, many situations were mentioned that are not discussed at length here, but are no less serious for that. Bullying and mobbing in schools was frequently mentioned, and the dimensions of power, hierarchy, group maintenance and the fixed difference of the victim discussed in other sections are of central relevance to these forms of harassment and attack. This is not limited to schools, but present also in other environments - such as sports clubs and youth clubs - that should in theory be safe, and encourage the participation of the individual. A variety of recent reports also show that young men are frequently at risk of random violence in European cities because of their status as young men; for some intent on violence as a pastime, being a young man in the wrong place at the wrong time is justification enough.

3-4-6 Conscripts as victims of state-sanctioned violence

The experience of national military service was not overtly discussed during the formal plenary exchanges, but as a unifying experience for many men, was alluded to at other times nonetheless. The distribution of the European Council of Conscripts Organisations' publication *Casualties in Peacetime: a study on violence and intimidation in the armed forces in Europe* also contributed to this. In questioning the constructions and cultural expectations of masculinity, it must surely be regarded as significant that in a post Cold War world, many nations still expect (within varying systems) their young men to be soldiers because of their sex and place of birth. In terms of the recognition of violence, it is also telling that forms of discipline and harassment that would result in criminal prosecution during one's civilian experience are often regarded as part of the *culture* of the army, helping to 'make a man of you'.

Following the sociologist Erwin Goffman, the ECCO report describes the army as a 'total institution' where decision-making is external to oneself and every aspect of the individual's existence is controlled and disciplined. Justifications for institutional violence, and the types of ritual group violence that develop, are bound up in the hierarchy of the army and myths of good violence and being a real soldier. For the conscript, the army is a place outside of the society in which they have existed, and a world in which the values and relationships of 'their former world' are judged 'too soft and weak':

²⁹ Hearing on the specific situation of young migrants. Council of Europe, Budapest, 2002, p32.





The conditions and limitations of a group of conscripts is subjected to result in a situation in which certain soft ways of conflict handling and control make place for tougher ways. Consideration and negotiations based upon mutual respect are replaced by display power and intimidation³⁰.



3.5 VIOLENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

The perpetrator can always justify violent action, and it was widely accepted at the seminar that the key to working with violent offenders is unpicking the structures of justification they have developed. In previous sections of this chapter, many implicit justifications have been present; she was flirting with me, his kind just aren't natural, He spilled my beer, I didn't mean it, they're taking our jobs, the police need to protect the peace, every state needs a strong army. This section discusses some of the dimensions of justification and avoidance, as understanding these dynamics is central to youth work with boys and young men on violence.

3.5.1 Lack of control

A common excuse, and one that is often regarded as commonsensical because of the dynamism of physical violence, is a lack of control. It is also established in social mythology; many contexts have equivalent expressions for the crime of passion or the red mist of anger. Criminal law also differentiates between pre-meditated violence and more spontaneous forms. Yet as Christian Spoden emphasised, putting a spotlight on the act of violence in minute detail forces the perpetrator to recognise that they made decisions at every stage, meaning that they can no longer pretend that something 'came over me'. This is fundamental to accepting responsibility for the consequences of actions. The Forum Theatre workshop investigated precisely this aspect of decision-making and violent confrontation. As David Richmond, one of the facilitators put it, as a man he feels regularly confronted by a 'mental index card'. In certain situations, one of the primary - and most masculine - impulses is to lash out, but training and self-awareness can ensure that this option is discounted, and the mind flips over to a new card. A working group on 'Dealing with fear and controlling anger' produced recommendations on mainstreaming work with anger and fear, and these are presented in the last section.

3.5.2 The cost-benefit analysis of violence

Violence is often described as senseless, but it needs to be recognised that there are two senses to this. On the one hand, the destruction and cycles of perpetual fear and retribution that violence brings is unsustainable, but for many young men in the kinds of contexts discussed here, violence makes perfect sense. There may be material gain, there may be hierarchical advantage to be won, violence may just even be a fun distraction. Participants from very different work contexts consistently pointed out that moralising about violence to their clients makes no sense; if they shared the force of the moral imperatives presented, presumably they wouldn't have been involved in the violence in the first place. Kent Lindahl, describing his experience in the neonazi

³⁰ ECCO, *Casualties in Peacetime. A study on violence and intimidation in the armed forces in Europe*. Stockholm, 1997, p17.





movement, observed that violence in his experience brought gain, including moves up a 'career ladder' within the movement. A key shared observation on working with young men involved in violence is the need to facilitate the realisation that violence is avoidable, and brings other gains for themselves and others. In particular, the relationship forged between the youth worker and young man can illustrate this.

3.5.3 The difference of the other

Nobody can be unaware of humanity's bitter histories of stereotyping and dehumanising, yet constantly evolving processes of exclusion work on much the same logic. Migrants to western European countries, for example, are now seen as culturally incompatible or economic parasites, versions of previous historical perspectives that saw them as racially inferior and in need of civilisation. Dehumanising the victim of violence is an obvious tactic; it not only partially justifies the act, but also removes the need to empathise with their pain and experience. There is no agreed concept of empathy, but the necessity of recognising the humanity and subjectivity of the infinite others that can be randomly encountered in modern societies has been widely discussed in intercultural learning, social psychology and conflict theory.

We have to ask ourselves if physical force can ever really change anything after all, violence against a fascist is open to the charge of fascism.

Lack of empathy can be seen in the gender-based, homophobic and racist violence discussed previously. And as with many aspects of violence discussed in this report, it is important to relate individual tactics to wider social legitimacy. It was a widely observed tactic of certain transnational media corporations during the war on Iraq that they refrained from broadcasting footage of Iraqi victims of aerial bombardment, for 'morale purposes'. This seminar emphasised the constant need to question the images that perpetrators of violence hold of their victims and the role this plays in the structure of justification. Equally it should be remembered that self-stereotyping can play a role in responsibility avoidance; as Christian Spoden observed, sex offenders he worked with were always keen to differentiate themselves from 'those other monsters you see in the media'.

3.5.4 Invisible violence

If a tree falls in the forest and nobody sees it happen, does it really happen? This question is often wheeled out in discussions of perception and the nature of reality, yet it has a relevance to certain debates that surfaced at the seminar. If there is no available research, public discussion or criminal investigation of certain forms of violence, does that mean they don't happen? As was argued in 3.2.1, recognising the existence and shape of violence is not a straightforward or innocent process. On occasion, it was noticeable that certain participants assumed that, for example, sexual abuse was not a problem in their national contexts, as they never heard anything about it. Yet the focus on sexual abuse in state institutions, the clergy and social services in some Western European countries is relatively recent, despite victims being abused over a far longer period. Gaining this focus has involved confronting powerful taboos, conspiracies of silence and hegemonic assumptions of normality. The slow emergence of rape within marriage as a crime is another example of the constructed nature of violence as a social category.





3.5.5 Violence and the (ab) uses of culture

A controversial factor in the recognition of violence is the argument that certain practices make sense within cultural groups and traditions, and this proposes a dilemma between universalism and particularism. As with previous seminars, this argument arose over the issue of female circumcision, an issue that by now is often treated as a generalised symbol rather than rooted practice. In European discussions, this is given an added dimension by histories of cultural power, as it provokes unease among majority voices to criticise the cultural practices of immigrant groups whose cultural identities have been historically affected by European practices and knowledge. During the seminar, the debate polarised between those advocating the absolute primacy of human rights over culture, and those arguing not only from a position of cultural relativism, but arguing that human rights are to an extent a western liberal construct.

On the question of female genital mutilation, it was pointed out in discussion that cultural relativism often comes squarely into conflict with a gender-power analysis; as one participant put it, male circumcision potentially enhances sexual pleasure, while what is erroneously described as the female equivalent is designed to do precisely the opposite. It also struck this rapporteur that part of the problem in these familiar discussions is a dependence on limited and frozen notions of culture. Everything moves and everything changes; yet cultures tend to be held up as frozen and unchanging only in particular circumstances and conflicts. Similarly, it should be stating the obvious to assert that different people have different values, needs and politics within what are often simplistically called cultural groups. As Jane K. Cowan et al argue in relation to female excision:

It is doubtful that cultural practices of circumcision enjoy total consensual support even within the community in which they occur. This is almost certainly the case for African migrants to European urban centres, [...] but probably also obtains in their homeland, where African feminist organisations have noisily protested them. Rather than seeing a singular culture with a set of fixed meanings that are incomparable with those of human rights, it is more illuminating to think of culture as a field of creative interchange and contestation, often around certain shared symbols, propositions or practices, and continuous transformation³¹.

Assuming that something is cultural, or tradition, proposes that it is valuable 'because it just is', and overlooks not just the different identities and powers within supposed groups, but fails to notice the way in which culture has become central to contemporary global politics and boundary maintenance. Culture is performed and represented on the world stage, and can often be an abstract entity with a limited range of elite representatives. The same authors quoted above also describe what they call the 'political opportunism' of often-westernised elites in a few Asian states, where arguing for the incompatibility of 'Asian values' with 'western human rights' is a 'political tactic used to bolster state sovereignty and resist international denunciations of internal repression of political dissent'³².

³¹ Cowan, J., K., et al (ed.) *Culture and Rights. Anthropological Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press, p5.

³² Ibid, p7.



3.5.6 Good violence and better violence

As many people know only too well, physical violence involves what David and Jules Dorey Richmond described in the workshop on Forum Theatre as a firing squad moment. In other words, a moment arrives when violence is inevitable, and fight or flight is necessary for survival and physical well-being. Yet while self-defence is something everybody can relate to, this workshop explored grey areas that I can only sum up as the attraction of better violence. For example, is it ok to strike a neonazi who is verbally abusing you, and whom you know to have committed violent acts in the past? By improvising the options available in a conflict, drama work of this nature also opens up debates on the legitimacy of violence. Forum Theatre is a methodology central to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and as the name would suggest, it investigates the nature and dynamics of oppression. A conclusion in this workshop was that physical force, even if it can be justified in different ways, never actually changes oppression, it just shifts it around. This conclusion is echoed in a quote from Mahatma Gandhi presented at the seminar:

in the gangs i know, the guys fight over any small thing, everything is about pride. There's a real pressure as well, to keep face in front of everyone.

I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary, the evil it does is permanent.



Section 4. Good practice in youth work with boys and young men



4.1 KEY QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH WORKERS

At the conclusion of his powerful presentation, Ken Harland posed five questions that recurred for consideration throughout the seminar. These questions targeted the vision, motivation, competence and self-awareness of youth workers:

1. How can we build meaningful relationships through which young men can reflect upon their lives?
2. How can we actively support young men who do not actively seek support?
3. How can we help free young men from pressures they feel to 'match up' to the masculine stereotypes?
4. How can we encourage young men to play an active role in their community and address important issues affecting them?
5. How do we as workers acquire the necessary skills to work more effectively with young men?

This chapter considers the work, projects and ideas presented at the seminar in relation to these key questions.



4.2 SELF-AWARENESS AND SKILLS OF THE YOUTH WORKER

Building and sustaining meaningful relationships with young men, particularly those who do not actively seek support, places a range of demands on the motivation, self-knowledge and skills of the youth worker. Based on discussions in workshops and project presentations, the following is set of suggestions emerging from discussion that primarily address questions 1,3 & 5 posed by Ken Harland. The suggestions also inter-relate with the recommendations presented in chapter five.

4.2.1 Awareness, attitudes and relationships

As with any role that involves working with others, youth work in this context involves reflecting on oneself before engaging with others. This is crucial in the light of arguments made previously; that no one is free of violence, that everybody is a gendered and sexual being, and everyone has attitudes and values on these questions. Youth workers need to answer the question 'how did I become the man I am, and what do I feel about that?' It is only by doing this that youth workers can begin to monitor the image and attitudes they project in a group. Work with boys and young men demands cultivating and maintaining relationships, and these relationships demand nothing less than patience, long-term commitments and giving of oneself. As a potential role model, youth workers cannot hope to project a 'cool' or 'right' image within a relationship, or to articulate 'right attitudes' and answers. Trust and learning emerge from authentic relationships, where young men can learn from complex, honest and often vulnerable role models. Roles in a relationship are dynamic and constantly being negotiated, and one-dimensional approaches can never survive this process.

In particular, complex and honest role models can challenge the restrictions of masculinity through their behaviour. Youth workers that are open and emotionally articulate provide evidence that it is ok to be an emotional being. Similarly, for young men dealing with disillusionment while socialised into a masculinity of hierarchy and





competition, it is important that youth workers can present their own experiences as normal life events. 'It's no problem' and 'it'll be ok' replicate masculine attitudes and avoidance. Youth workers must resist the dynamics of proving prevalent in male groups. Youth workers require an awareness of the limits of their involvement and potential. This was discussed in relation to the potential dependency of an individual on a youth worker, even if working on self-esteem should counter this. Having motivated yet realistic expectations is central to sustainable work, and youth workers must bear in mind that their contact time is limited in relation to other social actors and influences.

4.2.2 Knowledge, practice and skills

Youth workers need to reflect on the agendas and issues they broach with young men. Good practice involves consulting on and starting from the needs and main concerns of the young men themselves, and not imposing topics, theories, solutions or easy answers. This approach reflects attentiveness to the fact that youth workers are also constantly learning from boys and young men. Many of the issues involved in boys work demand a praxis of self-analysis and training and guided reflection. This is particularly the case with issues of power, gender and sexuality. Youth workers could establish feedback and monitoring possibilities where possible, and preferably with male and female colleagues.

Increasingly in European societies boys work takes place in what are often termed multicultural contexts. Key skills for working in these contexts were identified, but were also seen as desirable in general. They include knowledge of communication, group dynamics and skills in conflict transformation (negotiation, mediation, facilitation). Intercultural learning also emphasises self-reflection for the youth worker on the normative assumptions and values with which s/he operates. Appropriate education in human rights and the legal provisions that pertain to young men's issues is desirable and central to providing alternatives to violence. In relation to this, certain target groups - such as minority groups, drug users - will require specialised knowledge on legal questions, policy and service provision. Working with boys and young men means knowing what they are interested in and why, and approaching it in a non-judgemental and non-patronising way. Greater knowledge of interests implies more opportunities to open channels of communication and activity.



4.3 PEER EDUCATION

Peer education is a central philosophy of work with boys and young men, and is important in questions 2 & 4; reaching those who do not seek support, and opening up forms of participation and involvement for them. The working group on "Dealing with fear and controlling anger" noted that

Young men lack constructive personal and professional relationships. The role of friendship is essential when based on trust, love and understanding.

For this, and other reasons, peer relationships may carry a very different significance from relations with a 'professional' youth worker. This was confirmed by Danielle Speller, working as a psychologist in a school in Luxembourg. Despite all assurances she can give





to the contrary, she observed that she is rarely fully trusted within the school setting, as pupils feel they cannot trust the official relationships they are not privy to, or that information leakage will take place. Peer education groups are also of importance because of the role of peer groups in compounding masculinity and violence discussed in chapter three. Peer education projects work from an awareness that existing social structures provide few if any opportunities for meaningful participation for many young people, and that becoming involved in discussions, groups and projects with people of the same milieu is a crucial opportunity. This is heightened by the insistence at the seminar that many young people are an unharnessed potential, and can play active roles in promoting nonviolence. Most of the peer projects represented at the seminar worked a similar definition to the one employed at the Youth against Violence seminar, where peer education was viewed as people of a similar age educating each other on a topic, and where similarities between the background of peer educators and participants was held to be influential³³.

In establishing peer relationships, initial contact may involve outreach work by youth workers. Several practitioners described how their peer education practice was based on extensive outreach with young people in their normal hangouts, and discussing whatever issues they decided to bring up. One youth worker described how many interested young people would 'test' her attitudes and reactions before deciding whether to pursue the opportunity further. This experience reinforces the points on attitude and competency identified in the previous section. Once involved, young people can receive training and get involved in groups working on a whole range of relevant life issues. Other outreach services aimed to make services - which engage with health, familial and economic issues - flexible and responsive to the needs and often fears of the young people they are in contact with. Outreach work in projects of this kind is fundamental; services may be physically available to young people, but not mentally so. Confidence building, encouragement and clarity of offer are instrumental in engaging them in the groups and services provided.

We have to talk about the things that can't be talked about. We need patience, time and changing strategies to work in the different realities youth work is confronted with. You have to be personal, give of yourself, and avoid simple solutions or imposing theories.

Establishing a relationship with boys and young men involves working with what they are interested in, and overwhelmingly that can mean sport. The role of sport in peer education attracted conflicting views. This is particularly the case as in some contexts youth work has been traditionally sport-centred. Sport is team-based and of relevance, yet it is also competitive, hierarchical and based on physical prowess. Therefore using sport means once again that the self-awareness and group skills of the youth worker are brought into focus. Some participants argued that competitive sport reinforces masculinity, whereas others argued that ignoring sport because of its masculine nature has the effect of reinforcing it; sport is then seen as something that belongs to the world beyond youth work. As one participant observed, you surely can take young men to play paintball, as long as it is not the only activity, and as long as it is framed by different kinds of discussion and meaning. Competitive sports can also be used in contrary and interesting ways; one group mentioned football with three teams, an exercise that involves group dynamics and questions of teamwork and negotiation.

³³ A longer discussion of peer education is contained in that report, pp 34-45.





4.3.1 The gender of peers?

Another difficult question for peer education, and indeed for work with boys and young men in general, is the role and effect of women's involvement. This is clearly not an issue of men correcting the influence of women; as one working group noted, women have not only been stuck with the traditional nurturing role at home, but in a variety of public roles - nurses and teachers being the most obvious. It was subsequently argued that in many young men's socialisation, intimate and emotionally open relationships are predominantly with women. While the importance of these relationships cannot be underestimated, it nevertheless contributes to the naturalised association of the emotional sphere with the feminine. From this perspective, a reliance on women in this sphere of work may confirm aspects of traditional masculinity. As the workshop on gender mainstreaming argued, boys and young men need to encounter more men in educational contexts.

That said, simply encountering a man is not in itself significant, unless men working in education are themselves trained and engaged in gender issues. Evidence from different working groups pointed to the conclusion that not only are quotas of men decreasing in youth work and primary/secondary education, but that many male youth workers are not particularly interested in gender issues. Therefore confronting young men with more men is far from easy, if increasingly crucial. Particularly in the realm of sexual education and violence, the symbolic and actual effect of having a man discuss the impacts of masculinity was held to be of fundamental importance. An added dimension of this is that boys and girls work should be presented as complementary aspects of gender work. Separate forms of work are necessary to approach sensitive issues and also to allow for different approaches working towards similar goals. From their experiences, participants argued that these parallel tracks could be brought together in different ways and combinations, although there was no consensus on this.



4.4 WORKING WITH MASCULINITY

A number of projects and initiatives represented at the seminar explicitly address masculinity in their work with young men. This section examines some examples in relation to question three, which challenges youth work to free young men from the pressure of stereotypes.

4.4.1 Boys groups

At different points in the report it has been clear that a favoured, and in some places highly developed form and methodology is to work with groups of young men and boys on the issues that affect them. Many elements of the basic logic of these groups and necessary youth worker competence have been discussed previously. Facilitators present stressed basic conditions for this work; a safe and consistent space, consensual guidelines for common work together and confidentiality. Work in groups may be augmented by personal consultations of individuals with their youth workers.

The Young Men's Forum in Northern Ireland contributed a lot of expertise and experience in this area to the seminar. By addressing the stereotypes and restrictions of masculinity, they are also inherently addressing the rationale of stereotypes that different sections of





Northern Irish society may hold of each other. In the four work stages of the forum, trained peer educators bring together groups of young men on the basis of initial contacts and discussions. In a consultative manner, the groups within the forum consider issues related to masculinity; men and violence, health and sexuality, needs and anxieties in negotiating the transition to adulthood. Following this, the young men begin to consider ways in which they can incorporate themselves as active citizens, and become voices on these issues in their communities.

The 'Meikäpoika' project of the Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Association currently employs peer education to address a range of issues associated with growing up, adolescence, manhood, and violence and aggression. The overall project involves youth workers, teachers, social workers and volunteers, and central to it is the establishment of boys discussion groups and projects in local associations and schools. An interesting dimension of the boys work carried out in this context is that the groups are complemented by father and son activities. Throughout the seminar participants had contended that this relationship, while clearly of enormous formative influence, is one of the most difficult to approach. Within guided discussions, this father-son focus addresses the father's experience of growing up and relationship with his father, grandfather or stepfather, and examines the shared and different experience of growing up today.

We can try to be role models, but we have to be pretty realistic about how much contact we can have. We have a few hours a week when other role models surround young men for much longer. Youth work is competing with many different things in society.

4.4.2 Gender-mainstreaming

Gender-mainstreaming is not specific to any one activity, rather it should be seen as a philosophy and strategy that youth workers should apply to their activities and general organisational work. According to the workshop on this topic, mainstreaming is a means to achieving the goal of gender equality, and needs to be central to policy development, research, advocacy, legislation, resource allocation and the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects. Gender mainstreaming works from the premise that a gender perspective is crucial in all activities to work towards gender equality, but that equality is not always achieved by applying identical or even similar strategies. A common example of this is the different methodologies and styles of group work that boys work and girls work will employ, even if working towards the same objectives. Within this, a further diversity of needs and interests must be recognised. To quote from the workshop report:

The basis for achieving equal opportunities goes through making use of different approaches and making sure that a wide range of different people's preferences are met. It is important to underline that the difference within genders is likely to be as great as that between genders. Emphasising plural approaches is crucial since even a single sex group always represents a great variety of personalities.

The idea of mainstreaming is imperative; by regularly insisting on centring gender as a factor in organisational, educational and inter-personal decisions, gender mainstreaming raises awareness of gender without engaging in judgemental and unproductive conflicts.

We call it boys' work, but we need to think as well about girls' expectations of boys being men, in the classroom for example. Young girls also have their male role models.





4.4.3 Demystifying sexuality

Several projects present addressed various aspects of men's health, and were united by a struggle to raise awareness and legitimise an interest in and concern for one's own body. The Health Opportunities Team, working in Edinburgh in Scotland, works through its confidential and one-to-one support service and its information and education services to 'promote a positive attitude towards the diversity of young people's sexuality'. Complementing the individual consultations are single sex group meetings facilitated by team workers. In order to reach as many young people as possible the project works in a range of settings, including all levels of formal education, youth groups, community centres and voluntary organisations. This approach is summed up in the words of Romeo Bissuti, working with MEN Men's Health Centre in Vienna:

We need to provide an attractive package and be proactive in our outreach. By opening as many channels for young people as possible, we increase the opportunities for them to come back into contact with us.

Section 3.4.2 discussed the frightening dimensions of homophobia, and already mentioned some organisations working on the European level. The information centre Genderdoc - Moldova currently works to advocate gay and lesbian rights in a heavily prejudicial atmosphere, and lobbies through the Council of Europe on a regular basis. As well as its advocacy work, Genderdoc works to increase awareness on safe sex and health issues in the gay and lesbian community, and it also provides a psychological counselling service by phone, post, email, and through its nationally circulated magazine *Mirror*. An interesting aspect of its advocacy and awareness raising strategies is to provide workshops on homosexual issues with the Moldovan LGBT community and journalists, journalism and psychology students, NGOs and teachers. The organisation cooperates consistently with other NGOs involved in gay and lesbian rights issues, and human rights organisations from all over Europe.

While many stereotypes of sexual identities and attitudes to sexuality exist, those pertaining to young Christians rarely come up for discussion. The work of the World Student Christian Federation and its Gender and Education working group aims to stimulate a debate among its members on the relationship between their faith and embodiment, and in 2002 produced an edition of its journal *Mozaik* entitled "Embodied Faith". The working group also devised a set of guidelines on sexual harassment for WSCF Europe to be implemented in their activities and meetings.



4.5 WORKING WITH VIOLENCE

Intervening in violence is often described in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention strategies, although the borders between these are not always obvious in the work of some organisations. Many of the organisation and projects described previously could be described as being involved in primary prevention work on violence. By engaging with masculinity and the socialisation of boys and young men, they are attempting to address problems and give young men the space, skills and self-esteem to address their needs and problems constructively. Organisations engaged in outreach work in urban contexts and working to combat homophobic prejudice are also engaged





in secondary prevention, as their work develops particular strategies of prevention in relation to vulnerable target groups. Tertiary prevention involves intervening in existing cycles of violence.

A well developed example of tertiary protection is the project "Tett Paa", a gang intervention programme in the suburb of Furuset in Oslo. The project developed as a response to the increased involvement of minority youth in gangs and criminal activity, and in a climate of high profile media coverage of crime. It was also based on an analysis of the failure of current approaches to prevent young offenders from inexorably becoming more involved in gang life. The project targeted youth with a profile that is reflected across prosperous European countries; of minority background, accorded low social status and concentrated in certain suburbs, living in relative poverty, with limited education and consequently limited work prospects. Most of those selected to participate in the project had already been in contact with child welfare institutions and the criminal justice system for some time.

Beginning in 2001, the project targeted 21 boys in the 15-21 age group. Participation in the program is voluntary, and project workers attempt to establish individual relationships and the ability to work in groups. The strategy of work develops over time, starting with intense supervision and family involvement, and in particular focusing on the relationship between brothers and routes into gang activity. The project co-operates with all of the agencies and institutions that are involved in the young man's case. Over time, each individual's programme begins to work with a range of therapy and guidance measures, focusing on short-term goals for the individual and their family in work, education and social integration. According to Marius Eriksen, the programme particularly works in cases where the young men want to move away from crime, drug abuse and violence, and where the voluntary nature of participation compounded by the open and supportive service allows them to realise the value of their own aims and life changes. Nevertheless, he notes that a project of this nature does not always win the support it needs, either within the official systems, or from the peer groups and social networks of the young men in their target group.

The Association Against Violent Communication in Slovenia stresses that violence is taking place continuously in private contexts, so the involvement of the individual in nonviolence training can facilitate breaking away from patterns of communication that contribute to domestic and parental violence:

Although we cannot change our past experiences, we can learn not to express our powerlessness through violence or not to tolerate someone else's expression of powerlessness through violence against us.

They offer ways of recognising if your relationship is abusive and potentially violent, and also ways for individuals to analyse their own behaviour. The organisation works with a variety of methodologies, from individual counselling and self-help groups to phone counselling. They provide information services, particularly for women and children in relation to the law, and engage in advocacy on their behalf to state institutions. More generally, they engage in workshops in non-violent communication for an array of groups.





Chapter 5. Recommendations and Follow-up



5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORKING GROUPS

The recommendations are presented thematically, and organised internally according to the nature of the recommendation.

5.1.2 *On working with boys and young men in an intercultural context*

This workshop emphasised the need to increase efforts and resources in violence prevention, and key to that in certain contexts is increased intercultural awareness and competence. General recommendations on the nature of this work addressed the range of actors that should ideally be involved:

- Parents and guardians of the boys concerned should be involved in planning activities, and where feasible representatives of the wider community should be consulted as well.
- Project leaders of different cultural backgrounds should be encouraged to work in diverse teams, and more men need to be motivated and targeted to get involved.

RESEARCH

- Needs analysis of specific problems of boys and young men in intercultural contexts, specifically in relation to minority experiences and cases of social, economic and linguistic disadvantage.

EDUCATION

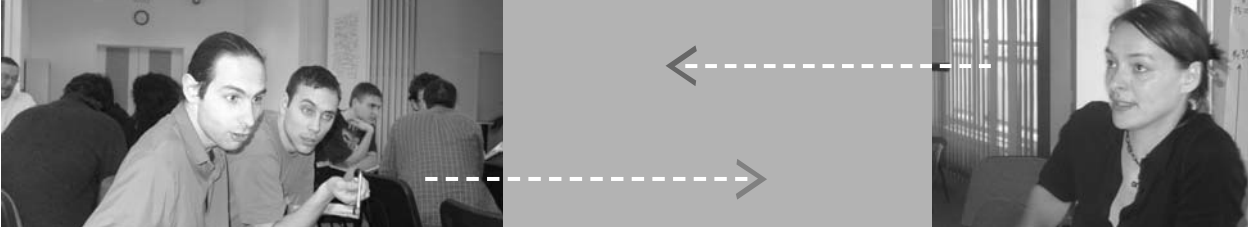
- Youth workers working with boys and young men should receive training in intercultural learning, and this need should be communicated to relevant educational offers on local, national, European and international levels.
- The low profile of boys work in general means that many projects need increased training in organisational and project management skills.
- The network emerging from the seminar could be developed to create a platform for ongoing exchanges of ideas, projects and good practice up to and including a European level.

5.1.3 *Roles of young men in changing societies*

YOUTH WORKERS

- Should engage in ongoing reflection on themselves as youth workers, including working to achieve realistic and achievable goals and evaluating what does and does not work in their practice.
- They should strive to provide safe environments for young men to express their feelings, and monitor the inclusiveness of their environments and work.
- They should develop support networks to share ideas and practices, which can also aid in identifying other resources and training to support the development of the worker.





EDUCATION

- ✦ Formal and non-formal education should specifically address masculinity and related issues, and in particular youth work should address the current prevalent imbalance between physical and emotional health.
- ✦ Educational programmes - most notably formal schooling - should increase their focus on life skills and personal development.

5.1.4 Dealing with fear and controlling anger

Given the destructive consequences of these emotions discussed in the previous chapters, it is puzzling that addressing these emotions in contemporary societies is not seen as a central issue. This group framed their recommendations with the following request:

Place male anger and aggression within a human rights context. Young men are often not aware of their basic human rights. Policy makers and government are also often unaware of the implications of this. If we insist that people have a basic human right to live without violence and if this is to be emphasised internationally then such an integration can facilitate a nonviolent agenda.

POLICY

- ✦ Work of this nature needs long-term commitment and funding to develop sustainable programmes. It is only in this way that these programmes reflect the long-term development that young men are being asked to engage in. Policy makers and service deliverers should understand that these processes take time and require patience.
- ✦ International partners - within an awareness that violence cannot be universally defined - should share and work with common understandings that strengthen cooperation and potentially illuminate different situations in different countries.

EDUCATION

- ✦ Working with diversity should include a respect and willingness to engage with a diversity of masculinities, genders, sexualities and cultural identities.
- ✦ Peer education must be supported as positive peer influences offer real and credible alternatives to mythic and unachievable stereotypes. Peer influence needs to be recognised as potentially of greater significance than professional direction.
- ✦ The choices that current services offer needs to be revised and youth workers must recognise that the requirements of one young man may be radically different from the requirements of another. In particular, the use of various creative methods and opportunities for self-expression in combating anger must be broad and inclusive.

5.2.5 Sexuality and young men

Sexuality emerged at the seminar as one of the key areas of work with boys and young men, as it involves fundamental and often complex issues of self-identity and intimacy, as well as pressing issues of health and violence. This group emphasised that the nature of their materials and discussions constantly involved inter-connected areas and actors, and thus expressed a preference for the following list format.





1. Youth work should include different points of view, diverse images of sexual identity and inclusive language to avoid presumptions and reinforcing stereotypes of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation.
2. Youth work with boys and young men should encourage boys to express their feelings and emotions concerning sexuality. Central to this is addressing body issues, both to promote comfort with physical proximity and to address fear and insecurity over body images.
3. Youth workers should be given adequate education based on gender power perspectives, and peer monitors could work with youth workers on their self-awareness with regard to gender, power and sexualities.
4. Youth workers and all activists in this area should demand legal changes in all areas where discrimination on the basis of gender, sexualities or sexual orientation remains, and in doing so promote public awareness of the discrimination and substantive issues.
5. Youth workers can be active in promoting national initiatives including relevant information centres and channels of information, and required research on youth and sexualities.
6. Workers on these issues should demand that schools implements programmes on sexual education in their curricula according to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

5.2.6 Gender mainstreaming

The report of this workshop noted that gender mainstreaming is often used as a fashionable or necessary term, lacking meaningful consideration or application. Their recommendations stem from a determination to argue for the relevance of gender mainstreaming thinking in youth work.

YOUTH WORKERS

- ... Youth workers should actively investigate the activities they offer in terms of how they are presented, who is encouraged to participate, how the aims and methodology relate to divergent needs, and whether staff teams working with young people are gender balanced.
- ... It should be consistently emphasised that gender issues are not only girls' issues.
- ... Youth workers should receive and should request appropriate training in skills and methodology for integrating gender awareness into their work.

EDUCATION

- ... Young people should be actively consulted to ensure that different gender viewpoints have an influence on the aims and outcomes of initiatives.
- ... Decision making processes should be analysed to avoid reproducing gender stereotypes. Invitation, presentation, types of involvement and group/team work are of relevance here.
- ... Educational material should be developed with an awareness of language, and appropriate material should be sourced for working with these issues.
- ... Physical locations utilised by organisations and projects should be considered in terms of their inclusiveness.



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Programme

TUESDAY, MARCH 18

- 09:30 Welcome and opening
- 10:00 Presentation of the context, programme, aims and objectives of the seminar
- 11:30 Introductory notes "Why work with boys and young men?"
- 14:30 Keynote speech "*Male identity and related behaviour*"
Speaker: **Mr Ken Harland**, Community Youth Work team at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK
- 16:30 Discussion on subjects raised by the speaker
- 17:30 Preparation of the Information Market
- 18:00 Close

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

- 09:30 Opening and programme of the day
- 09:45 Keynote speech "*Violence - definition, forms and involvement of young men*"
Speaker: **Mr Christian Spoden**, Head of the Fachstelle für Gewaltprävention (Centre for Violence Prevention) in Bremen, Germany
- 11:30 Questions and discussion in groups
- 14:30 Educational Talk "Approaches to youth work with boys and young men"
Mr Paul Kloosterman, SPHYNX Training and Consultancy, The Netherlands
- 16:30 Organisations' Information Market
- 18:00 Close

THURSDAY, MARCH 20

- 09:30 Opening and programme of the day
- 09:45 Workshops: Examples of good practice
 - Working with neo-Nazi groups
Facilitator: **Mr Kent Lindhal**, EXIT, Sweden
 - Personal development of young men
Facilitator: **Mr Martin McMullan**, Youth Action Northern Ireland, UK
 - Drama as a means of exploring violence
Facilitators: **Ms Jules Dorey Richmond** Freelance Theatre Practitioner/Director (UK) and **Mr David Richmond**, Head of Programme and Senior lecturer in Performance at York St. John, University College of Leeds (UK)
 - "Growing up in a straight world": verbal and physical violence against young homosexual men
Facilitator: **Mr Dennis van der Veur**, Association for Integration of Homosexuals - COC, The Netherlands
 - Training youth workers working with boys and young men
Facilitator: **Mr Paul Kloosterman**, SPHYNX Training and Consultancy, The Netherlands





FRIDAY, MARCH 21

- 09:30 Opening and programme of the day
- 09:45 Introduction to the thematic working groups
- ❖ *Sexuality and young men*
Facilitator: **Mr Paul Kloosterman**, SPHYNX Training and Consultancy, The Netherlands
 - ❖ *Dealing with fear and controlling anger*
Facilitator: **Mr Kent Lindhal**, EXIT, Sweden
 - ❖ *Gender mainstreaming*
Facilitator: **Ms Steffi Bednarek**, Project Coordinator and Freelance Trainer, Violence Prevention in Schools X Project, Luxembourg
 - ❖ *Equal opportunities for young men*
Facilitator: **Ms Judit Herman**, NANE Women's Rights Association, Hungary
 - ❖ *Roles of young men in changing societies*
Facilitator: **Mr Martin McMullan**, Youth Action Northern Ireland, UK
 - ❖ *Working with boys and young men in an intercultural context*
Facilitator: **Mr Goran Buldioski**, European Youth Centre Budapest, Council of Europe
- 14:30 Thematic working groups continue
- 16:30 Presentations in plenary
- 18:00 Close

SATURDAY, MARCH 22

- 09:30 Opening and programme of the day
- 09:45 Positive responses to the needs of boys and young men
- 14:30 Conclusions of the General Rapporteur
- 15:00 Evaluation of the Seminar
- 16:30 Closing session



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COMPASS - a Manual on Human Rights Education with Youth People, 2002
Youth Against Violence - seminar report, 2002
Presentation of the Long Term Training Course: Participation and Citizenship, 2002
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Young men and boys are increasingly exposed to violent situations in their daily lives, as a result of peer-group competitiveness and society's views of success, which are based solely on physical and economic considerations. Combating violence against girls and young women is already one of the most pressing human rights issues across Europe. However, while young boys and men frequently figure as actual or potential perpetrators of violence, their roles as victims or advocates of non-violence is often neglected. Measures to combat violence have to be gender specific and involve both sexes in order to be effective.

In this report Gavan Titley explores the youth work with boys and young men, analyses the issues to young men and violence as raised at the Seminar on Youth Work with Boys and Young Men As a Means to Prevent Violence in Everyday Life, and presents the main discussion points and recommendations produced.

The Council of Europe has forty-five member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. Ever since it was founded in 1949, in the aftermath of the second world war, the Council of Europe has symbolised reconciliation and the promotion of democratic ideals and standards. The Council's goals in the youth field include devising common European youth policies, and improving both educational and employment opportunities. The European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg are major instruments in achievement of these goals.

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