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# BOYS

In 1996, when we chose the topic of “masculinity” for the second edition of FORUM, it was a pioneering time for sex education work with boys. The booklet documents four specialist conferences, in addition to newly published books, specialist publications and booklets. The target group of “boys” was suddenly experiencing a boom.

In late 2007, the results of studies dealing with the problems, deficits and disadvantages experienced by boys were then published and widely discussed. A high proportion of boys in special schools, problems finding a first job, a lack of self-awareness, little physical contact, poor health in comparison with girls, inferior communication skills and, last but not least, a low level of education and poorer contraceptive behaviour are only some of the deficits addressed. The magazine “Schüler” featured “boys” as its lead article for its 2007 edition and “Wirtschaftswoche” also selected the topic of boys for a provocative title page in October 2007.

So what has happened since this topic first came to our attention in the mid 1990s? At least one thing is certain: schools, youth welfare centres and the numerous institutions that are now involved in work with boys throughout Germany are faced with a great challenge. It is necessary to cast an eye over the experience gained in educational science over the past years and the latest research findings, and to take stock, looking beyond the public outcry about the “boys’ disaster” [Jungenkatastrophe].

We asked Uwe Sielert to provide a critical overview of this field. Professor Sielert previously introduced and analysed the programme of work with boys in FORUM 2/3-1996. Reinhard Winter, who was also a contributing author to that issue of FORUM, here reports on boys in sex education lessons at school, an area in which much fundamental work remains to be done, particularly with regard to raising the awareness of the teaching staff and improving their skills.

Michael Cremers introduces the project “New paths for boys” [Neue Wege für Jungs] and the results of the corresponding scientific evaluation.

The article contributed by Susanne Eggert from the Deutsche Institut für Medienpädagogik in Forschung und Praxis [German Institute for Media Education in Research and Practice] focuses on what media boys prefer and how they use these media.

In his contribution, Olaf Jantz examines concepts of masculinity and role models held by boys from immigrant backgrounds and patterns of attitudes regarding the family, partnership and sexuality, whilst Stefan Timmermanns investigates how the education of boys can respond to the aversion and aggression that is still exhibited by many young people with regard to homosexuality.

*The editorial team*

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# No longer a niche existence, but also not a matter of course – work with boys in Germany

**After around ten years of work with boys, Uwe Sielert, who reported on the beginnings of and prospects for work with boys in FORUM in 1996, now takes stock. A considerable number of projects and events now bear witness to the significance of this field of work, which must be viewed as a “quality feature in the landscape of youth welfare”. However, political obstacles and forthcoming tasks are also discussed.**

In 1996, in FORUM Sex Education 2/3, I described the beginnings of critical work with boys and men as “expulsion from the programme of traditional masculinity” and warned against simply developing new programmes that reformat the behaviour of adolescent boys. Drawing an analogy with the casting-out of the first humans from paradise, that is the “innocent” correspondence of person and environment (patriarchal self-evident facts), I advised that the forbidden apple should indeed be plucked from the tree of knowledge, without the simultaneous acceptance of a feminist agenda, or any other agenda for change. After all, knowledge begins where the agenda ends, and I encouraged players to “first become properly established in our current position, with critical awareness” (SIELERT 1996, p. 16).

By this, I meant:

- First understanding oneself as the male player in one’s own programme and learning from others in their alterity
- Perceiving boys in their full diversity and not operating a policy of establishing their identity by only seeing the deficits and making generalisations
- Developing educational concepts based on experiences and not merely from theoretical constructs
- Accepting various types of masculinity as a pool of impulses for boys
- Obtaining suggestions for individual educational support, by means of quantitative research findings and qualitative, dense descriptions of boys’ biographies (c.f. Ibid).

This perspective and the assessment of the situation on which it was based had been preceded by an initial national study carried out by the BZgA, in which REINHOLD MUNDING, after extensive research, described work with boys (in the field of sex education) as being a “topic prescribed from above”, adding that its implementation “causes educators difficulties... in practice” (BZgA 1995, p. 65). MUNDING cited the following reasons for this inadequate motivation:

- “The psychological stress suffered by men and boys is not very great
- There is no lobby in the Federal Republic for work with boys
- Work with boys is funded by individuals
- Sex education work with boys is rarely understood to be “autonomous”

- People are suspicious of work with boys, seeing it as an additional initiative for boys
- Men’s motivation for working with boys is very low.” (Ibid, p. 62 et seq.)

## Quality characteristics in the specialist discourse and beacons in practice

Ten years later, following a new survey of 230 sponsors and providers of work with boys in Germany, Munding comes to a rather encouraging conclusion: “Work with boys is no longer confused with youth work, it is accorded a very high value in the educational landscape and most of those surveyed assume that work with boys will remain a permanent topic on the agenda, i.e. that it will attain a stable position supporting co-education.” Work with boys is now principally focused on resources and is, in point of fact, a task carried out by men. It is now anchored in the sponsors’ practical work by means of concepts and guidelines and through “gender mainstreaming” (c.f. Ibid, p. 157 et seq.).

Of course, it is still possible to optimise everything with more permanent funding, reflection on the standards of content, better networking, implementation in regular education, particularly in primary education, and a stronger grounding in the interdisciplinary discourse (c.f. Ibid, p. 159 et seq.).

Encouraging reports of success are also coming from the networks of work with boys and from their representatives. ALEXANDER BENTHEIM, who, as editor of the national magazine “Switchboard”, aimed at boys and men, can give us a reliable insight into current activities and concepts in this field, attests that specialist discussion has left the unfruitful debates about the focus of new programmes behind it, along with one-sided corrective policy (“Boys create problems”) and welfare policy (“Boys have problems). “Now the focus is on approaches that emphasise the competences and resources of boys, and the joy that they take in discovery, instead of their deficits.” (BENTHEIM 2007, p. 264) BENTHEIM claims “that, for many years, there have been promising concepts and projects that incorporate boys’ worries, help to formulate their interests or needs and enable them to experience important options for action.”

(Ibid). In actual fact, the number of events and training sessions concerned with work with boys that have now been documented is impressive.<sup>1</sup> During 2006 and 2007 alone, the magazine “Switchboard” documented numerous different versions of the

- Concepts (education for boys with a focus on inclusion, political education for boys, encounters between boys from different environments, opening up of work with boys in an intercultural manner)
- Fields of activity (work with boys in schools and nurseries, in church organisations, childcare and media projects) and
- Target groups (educationally-disadvantaged boys, boys with experience of discrimination, boys from immigrant backgrounds, fathers and sons, etc.).

In addition to reflection on and conceptual evaluation of practical experiences, the last ten years have seen efforts in the area of quality assurance and various theoretical building blocks of critical gender research and gender mainstreaming brought into conjunction with conceptual considerations on work with boys (BENTHEIM et al., 2004). The field covers everything from inclusion-oriented pedagogies of diversity, intersectionality studies and a moderate deconstructionism for dealing with the gender-paradox, to “non-identitary” gender pedagogies. Against the background of these new theoretical approaches, I updated my own practical handbook on work with boys in 2002. The vast number of practical examples, concepts and “mid-term” theories that have been put forward since then in the area of boys’ education can be found in numerous collections and conference reports, right up to the recent past.<sup>2</sup>

Added to this are some campaigns which, with the support of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, as well as that of one regional ministry or the other, seek to support boys in coming to terms with their lives, particularly in the areas of vocational orientation and life planning (such as, for example, the federal project “Neue Wege für Jungs” [New paths for boys], on which there is a detailed report in this booklet). With the aid of a poster campaign on the topic of “Cool boys” and “Strong men”, young males are addressed by the mass media with regard to the themes of educational work, work on relationships and housework, and educators are invited to take part in the discussion.

Some ministries and specialist authorities working in the area of youth policy and health policy have recognised the necessity of addressing boys in a particular way, supplying the educational initiatives working with boys with material and initiating accompanying image campaigns to create a new understanding of what it means to be a boy or a man. Consequently, the Federal Centre for Health Education accords great value to gender-sensitive sex education, health promotion and family planning, and produces corresponding materials for boys and young men, which can be used in the mass media or for personal communication.

All of this sounds impressive, so long as the perspective extends only to the efforts that have been made and to the measures in work with boys that have actually been unfolded.

Things immediately look different when the framework is broadened and the perspective is extended to take in all sectors of the educational and social system, shedding light on its social environment as a whole.

The specialist authorities do not always find it easy to convince their superordinated ministries of the need for professional concepts reflecting on boys and men. Some political organisations still operate a one-sided policy of equal rights for women, instead of a gender policy that is also helpful for boys and men, or base their decisions – for example regarding how to combat violence by boys and men – on populist opinions with rather repressive ideas for solving the problem.

However, when programmes for work with boys and men are funded, it is predominantly to combat problems for which boys and men are notorious.

“In spite of the 1991 Child and Youth Welfare Act [Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz], with its important Article 9 (3), the PISA and IGLU studies, gender mainstreaming or regional Boys’ Days, policy, organisations and sponsors prove only moderately flexible, scarcely touching on concepts of masculinity that have been handed down, and there are only six (rather poorly equipped) regional working groups dealing with work with boys and only a small number of up-to-date youth welfare guidelines in the regions, which focus more on the actual needs of boys and, in addition, purely have the character of “recommendations”. (BENTHEIM 2007, p. 263)

The craft of professionals working with boys has remained of a manageable size in Germany, with its members meeting regularly at specialist conferences, and many educators involved in the education of boys, social educational workers and advisors in the educational, social and healthcare sectors have now thoroughly justified, thought out and differentiated their gender-sensitive work, and integrated this into their directly accessible practice. Despite this, the didactic efforts made in the area of youth education and projects remain mere beacons giving orientation and acting as examples. When viewed on a large-scale, these are actually only oases in a desert landscape of modernised masculinity, whose structures and institutions remain largely unaffected.

It is striking that, in spite of the quality assurance that has become current throughout the entire educational sector, in general, little evaluation of practical projects concerned with working with boys is documented, and no research on the efficacy of such projects has been carried out to date.<sup>3</sup>

1 Data up to 2006 evaluated from a methodical perspective by SIELERT, in HOLLSTEIN/MATZNER 2007, p. 47–68).

2 For example in the extensive bibliography of one of the latest publications from BRONNER and BEHNISCH (2007).

3 In a study carried out for the German Youth Institute [Deutsche Jugendinstitut], looking at the prevention of violence in non-school based youth work, WINTER and NEUBAUER (2007) come to the conclusion that, although there is any abundance of publications, books and booklets, and indeed training sessions concerned with preventing violence among boys, there is a lack of qualified and well-thought-out practical work and concepts developed on-site, and the evaluation thereof. The evaluation of concepts is left to the practitioners themselves (c.f. WINTER/NEUBAUER 2007, p. 29).

## Work with boys in the culture of dominance that is modernised masculinity: “fire fighters” and “softies”

When assessing the quantitative and qualitative significance and position of work with boys, both today and in the near future, it is necessary to place the activities described at the level of educational science and youth policy in a broader context of the meaning of the male social character in today's society. In addition, it is necessary to make a distinction between specific individuals and their private practices, as well as between the work with boys which has an educational purpose, on the one hand, and the patterns of hegemonic masculinity embedded in larger social structures, on the other hand. Furthermore, it has also been empirically proven in the gender literature (e.g. BÖHNISCH 2004 and BÖHNISCH/BRÜCKNER 2001, BERESWIL et al. 2007), that, in our society, despite all the changes in the private sphere or in the educational system, many other realms of experience continue to be characterised by the male principle of externalisation and assertiveness, particularly the sectors of work, the media, consumption and industry.

The modernised habitus of masculinity is – similarly to the traditional variant of the patriarchal social character – characterised by “external focus” and continues to correspond to certain personality attributes. Today, the attributes strong, flexible, innovative, active, technically skilled, in control of feelings and aware of competition are regarded as male. It is the insignia of a culture of assertiveness which, in spite of all the gender-sensitive activities of the educational organisations, consistently has the effect of a magnet, principally on boys, but increasingly also on girls: “School should prepare you for life and life is hard!” The majority of parents – even those who are socially critical – are keen to send their sons to a “demanding” High School where the quality criterion is very unlikely to be a gender-sensitive curriculum. Even if the boys are not able to assert themselves by gaining good marks at the High School, their self-confident manner will ensure that they continue to possess the power to define social behaviour. Furthermore, after their school career, girls are also only able to hold their own effectively in professional life if they have learned the culture of assertiveness at a young age.

In principle, a “culture of pausing to reflect” offers fewer opportunities for material gratification and public appreciation. It still has feminine connotations, is familiar to girls, but has an alienating effect on boys. This culture is concerned with coming to rest, listening to oneself, being in a relationship, all things that are less attractive in our society; it is a matter of grappling with limitations, and is concerned with the virtues of helping and conserving. Boys also need these linguistic, emotional, communicative and contemplative competences for healthy physical and mental development, and as well as in order to organise a humane society.

From the outset, the concepts and projects developed in the field of work with boys and men try to offer children these types of integrated conditions for growing up and to acquaint adolescents cautiously with the side of their gender identity that is generally neglected. At the same time, these efforts are hindered by the aforementioned habitus of modernised masculinity, or else small successes are easily nullified again if the boys are exposed to the demands of the culture of assertiveness. The important factor here is

performance requirements prescribed by society, which have the effect of destroying group solidarity in the face of increasingly scarce opportunities for realisation and unequal patterns of distribution. The egotistical behaviour of some so-called funding agencies in Germany, which is picked up on by the media again and again, is just one symbolic expression of this. In this climate, the vices of the struggle for power and the projection of one's own helplessness onto the weakest flourish – initially they are seen within peer groups, encouraged by career-focused parents, and, at the latest, they are honoured as a matter of course upon entry to the world of work.

Today, the habitus of assertiveness in its traditional-patriarchal and violent form is of course only successful in particular areas. It can run riot in the virtual world of computer games, in sport and in some radical cultural and political milieus. At the same time, it is true that boys and men who publically “fall out of the role of modernised masculinity”, such as those who do not meet the performance standards and end up in precarious circumstances, are provided with special programmes (given the appropriate uprising among their victims). Among the public, work with boys is therefore “largely perceived as domesticating ‘fire fighters’ or as creating romanticised ‘softies’ – yet not as what its protagonists have continued to make it over many years, often from the sidelines, where they have been pushed through no fault of their own: a quality characteristic in the youth welfare landscape, which is able to provide answers where traditional prevention and intervention practices have failed repeatedly.” (BENTHEIM 2007, p. 263)

Over the past few years, things have gone differently in the area of work with girls and women. The intentions of emancipating and strengthening work with girls found a counterpart in the sector of school and vocational qualifications and continue to find this, despite diverse male resistance. Increasingly, well-educated individuals who are equipped with socially-useful soft skills are encouraged and required. They should be independent, mobile, flexible and able to deal with pressure, they must be able to manage their own work and take care of themselves, as well as being ready to assert themselves. This “social character”, which is above all economically functional, can be fulfilled by men as well as by women. Consequently, the assertiveness training sessions, self-defence courses and qualification offensives forming part of educational work with girls are paid for by society. Painful experiences with boys and men in the area of relationships remain.

In addition, there is increasing demand for service providers who are socially committed, empathetic and able to work in the area of relationships, who, for little pay, are willing and able to pick up those people who cannot comply, or can no longer comply, with the dominant pattern of the modern culture of assertiveness. The majority of these service providers are still women – increasingly those from immigrant backgrounds –, who then relieve German women from work in the home, in relationships and in bringing up children, the latter having accepted and internalised the pattern of assertiveness.

However, when it comes to coping with the dominant social challenges, boys and men do not hold out much hope for the value of “pausing and reflecting” as an opportunity for identity balance, and see few benefits in concerning themselves with work bringing up children, housework or work in relationships, or indeed with jobs in the caring

occupations. Work with boys that seeks to familiarise them with such values is quickly disqualified as “work for softies”. There are too few adult men who exemplify these values to their sons and can find recognition for this in industry and society, or indeed can have a career.

On the other hand, there are also indications that assertiveness alone is no longer sufficient or produces side effects, meaning that an increasing number of boys in the schools and training centres of the modern performance society are falling behind.

### **The media’s discovery of the “boys’ disaster” in the educational sector – an opportunity for work with boys?**

The fact that the media’s presentation of the “boys’ disaster” has reached schools and that many mothers and fathers are concerned about the educational progress of their male offspring may be a sign of hope as far as gender-sensitive work with boys is concerned. At least a discourse has been set in motion regarding how to afford adequate consideration to boys within the educational system. Perhaps this will actually enable gender policy to slowly penetrate to the centre of the educational landscape, by means of the instrument of gender mainstreaming; and not merely as women’s policy in disguise, but rather as the dialectic linking of women’s and men’s issues in a cross-gender debate. It remains to be seen whether this is successful. Above all, in the interests of work with boys and men that is (also) socially critical, it is necessary to consider how work with boys can be established in school contexts and as part of teacher training.

That is to say that many educational policy initiatives to date can be construed as differentiating the shadowy aspects of the socialisation of boys and men against the background of social origin, and seeking solutions that are specific to social class. Not all boys in the educational system fail, only the (growing) group for whose members the traditional patriarchal habitus is paired with precarious circumstances. In their environment, “middle-class boys” come to know a more balanced image of men than do boys from immigrant backgrounds and those whose parents obtained little education. To date, this latter group has been provided with anti-violence training sessions, whilst the winners in the educational game are inculcated with a modernised habitus of masculinity, i.e. assertiveness and flexibility, by means of courses in public speaking and management training sessions. Unfortunately, when it comes to the future development of our education system, we can expect a dual system, even in the federal states that are keen to embrace reforms, such as Schleswig-Holstein. This system would have grammar schools for the educationally advantaged, on the one hand, and regional or community schools for the rest, on the other hand.

Nevertheless, the willingness to develop gender-specific problem solving strategies is growing, and with it the opportunity to integrate work with boys into schools, in their role as “houses of learning”. In particular, the trend towards all-day schools enables many forms of collaboration between the previously conventional scholastic learning environment and the diverse initiatives in the social sphere. Not only can the youth welfare service and other official sectors of the

social and health care system be drawn together into a local educational network, but in this way, the existing networks of work with boys can also be incorporated into concepts of “all-day learning”.

Critical research into the topic of boys and men should continue to diagnose and publicise the ways in which this is achieved and the intentions of the initiatives, noting whether they are humanising for all or whether they perpetuate social discrimination. With reference to the gender equality enshrined in law and a strategy of gender mainstreaming – which also promotes boys and men in a holistic manner –, as well as a subjectively tangible humanisation of the lives of boys and men, it is worthwhile to advocate the expansion of work with boys.

*Uwe Sielert*



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# Boys on traditional and new paths.

## Results of the supporting scientific study of the pilot project *Neue Wege für Jungs* [*New paths for boys*]

**The aim of the project *New paths for boys* is to flag up new career prospects for boys, particularly in the social, caring, educational and service provision professions. This article provides information on the results of the accompanying research.**

German equal opportunities policy is increasingly supporting efforts to win over more men and boys to areas of work that have previously tended to be the domain of women (such as childcare, education and medical care), in order to counter gender segregation in this manner. Some examples of this are the pilot project *New paths for boys*, launched by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) in 2005, and the new regulation regarding parental leave, introduced in 2007, which offers young parents an incentive to organise their family and careers on an equal basis and for fathers to be more involved in caring activities<sup>1</sup> in the family. The first successful outcomes of this incentive can already be seen.<sup>2</sup>

The first part of the following article sheds some light on the background to the project *New paths for boys*. To do this, we will first provide a short description of the history of the pilot project's creation. The second part then contains results from the supporting scientific study, with particular focus on "traditional and new paths" for boys. Finally, the third part presents advice on content and method for educational specialists working both in and outside schools. During the two-year pilot stage of *New paths for boys*, positive experiences were made using these suggestions. Detailed descriptions of the outcomes can be found in the final report of the supporting scientific study.<sup>3</sup>

### **Boys on Girls' Day [Mädchen-Zukunftstag]**

Since 2001, Girls' Day has been held throughout Germany every year, on the fourth Thursday in April.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, the campaign day seeks to broaden the gender-stereotyped professional focus of girls, which traditionally tends to be geared towards the area of social service provision. On the other hand, the campaign day is intended to make a long-term contribution towards realising a gender-fair division of work, by making all those involved in the process of choosing a career aware of young women's potential with regard to the industrial and technological future.

The supplementary launch of the pilot project *New paths for boys* in 2005 does not merely follow the recognition that boys' choices of profession are also characterised by gender-stereotyped preferences, but also directs attention to the fact that boys and men hold joint responsibility for transforming

the existing "gender order" and for realising a gender-fair division of work. With the three main themes of the project – broadening the spectrum of job choices, rendering the male role more flexible and promoting social competences – boys are offered vital support in choosing their path and in broadening their professional and personal goals, which open up new options for them beyond restrictive gender stereotypes.

*New paths for boys* should be understood as a service office for facilitators, as a platform for specialist discussion and exchange of ideas and as a form of networking for various players. On the website [www.neue-wege-fuer-jungs.de](http://www.neue-wege-fuer-jungs.de), the project provides information, background data and specific materials for implementing projects, and documents the outcomes of workshops, in order to propagate successful concepts and permit critical reflection. The diverse range of services provided by the service office is principally targeted at teachers and social workers who are involved with the education of boys in the first five years of secondary school.

- 1 The term includes all caring activities with feminine connotations, work in the household, work bringing up children, care of the elderly or disabled, etc.
- 2 The author connects the term "family" to a variety of living arrangements and/or lifestyles. Children and adolescents grow up in different conditions: "With their single mother or their single father, with their parents and siblings, with their grandparents, with their mother and her female or male partner, with their father and his male or female partner, in a supervised residential community for young people, etc. (HARTMANN 2002, p. 11).
- 3 The results of the supporting scientific study are due to be published shortly at [www.Kompetenzz.de](http://www.Kompetenzz.de).
- 4 Since 2001, Girls' Day has been organised by the organisation "Frauen geben Technik neue Impulse" e.V. Bielefeld (since 2005 known as Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V. Bielefeld) and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the European Social Fund and the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

### *New paths for boys well received*

The pilot project *New paths for boys* is increasingly being implemented in public, in schools, in regional authorities, by private and public sponsors, in organisations and companies, and the number of network partners supporting the approach with numerous initiatives such as project days, workshops, seminars and collaborations with schools is constantly rising. A diverse range of educational offers were made available to the participating boys at numerous event locations. The initiatives, in the form of work experience, projects and workshops, were very well received by the vast majority of the approximately 4000 boys who took part in the surveys.<sup>5</sup> 85% of the boys who attended a project or workshop in 2007, and 92% of those who completed a short-term work placement, judged this participation to be “very good” or “good”. Moreover, the adults involved were also very satisfied with the way the measures were implemented, with most of them wishing to take part in initiatives forming part of *New paths for boys* again next year.<sup>6</sup>

### **Boys on traditional and new paths**

The name and the topical focus of the pilot project *New paths for boys* implicitly reference old, traditional paths of masculinity, ways of being a boy and becoming a man in our society. These paths are characterised by a traditional choice of career, alignment with the model of the male main provider, and frequently also by homophobia, negative delimitation from femininity and from lifestyles and areas of work with feminine connotations. Although these paths are increasingly coming under criticism and are in need of legitimisation, they continue to be passed on to boys, by the media, the public and private division of labour and by peer groups, among others. Many boys are overwhelmed by this contradictory starting point, particularly because new, alternative concepts of masculinity are frequently devalued, particularly within their own peer groups. Part-time work and the role of a house-husband are not an option that most boys and men can take seriously. Male adolescents who reproach their classmates for sexual innuendoes aimed at girls, boys who wear skirts and make-up, homophile boys who are caring and affectionate towards their own gender, and boys who openly acknowledge their homosexuality continue to be punished with contempt, exclusion and even violence for their breach of the norms and hierarchies of masculinity, although this danger varies depending on the social milieu. Furthermore, boys who make an effort to get very good marks in school or who prefer to read books

than to play football or basketball also meet with annoyance, at the least. Consequently, many of them tend to evaluate success at school and school performance as being rather negative, and correspondingly to view it as unmasculine and feminine. As a result, most boys are under pressure not to be taken for gay, feminine or childish, particularly within their peer group (c.f. PHOENIX/FROSCH 2005; CREMERS et al. 2008).

On the other hand, however, it is also true that thinking in rigid categories such as “the boys” or “their needs” is counter-productive, as neither category exists as such. The public perception of boys as being loud, aggressive, disruptive, violent and underperforming (at school) hides from view the transformations taking place and those boys who are reserved, cautious, caring and high-performing (at school). In addition, the aforementioned one-sided perception of many boys and young men’s “typical male behaviour”, conceals the “quiet and caring” parts of the “loud and aggressive” boys. “These quiet parts may be an unnoticed need for tenderness or the desire for recognition, but may also be nervousness or uncertainty, which often come into play as the hidden causes of the boys’ transgressive behaviour.” (DROGAND-STRUD/OTTEMEIER-GLÜCKS 2003)

The focus on traditional norms of masculinity also has an impact on boys’ attitudes towards so-called “women’s jobs”. For many boys and young men, professions that demand soft skills and/or caring attributes as qualifications have a negative image, with these males frequently devaluing caring work as “feminine” and considering that their male identity is threatened or not confirmed by undertaking training in this field. Consequently, only a small number of male trainees can be found in professions that have feminine connotations. The few studies carried out to date looking at men in women’s professions also show that men must often first gain experiences in “male professions” before deciding to take a job in care or education (c.f. KRABEL/STUVE 2005, PEETERS 2007).

However, it is once again true that around one third of the boys surveyed as part of the pilot project would, in the future, like or very much like to work in a field that is currently regarded as a feminine domain, or express a rather neutral career aspiration. Approximately 70% of boys consider it a good idea for men to get to know professions that are still untypical, as part of a “taster placement”. In addition, boys who complete a taster placement are significantly better able to imagine training and working in fields with a majority of women at some point in the future. In view of the current ratio of female to male specialists in these fields of work, this is a very promising figure.

### **Old and new paths in the division of labour within partnerships**

In addition, the supporting scientific study has also found encouraging results with regard to the division of household labour between partners. On 1 February 2008, in the “Current affairs” section, under the title “40/80-Katastrophe” [40/80 disaster], the Federal Ministry of the Family described on its homepage a plight between men and women when it came to dividing up the duties and tasks that arise. The Ministry based its article on the results of the latest Shell Youth Study:

“According to this study, 80% of young women want to combine career and family, but at most 40 percent of young men can imagine a partnership where the duties and tasks

5 2100 boys participated in the first survey in 2006, and 1876 in the second survey in 2007.

6 In education, both in and outside schools, and in scientific research, we are still only beginning to address the issue of how to help boys plan their families, careers and futures. Following consultation with the sponsors, the first survey therefore concentrated on questions regarding attitudes to life planning and gender equality. These questions were left out of the 2007 survey, which instead concentrated principally on the specific initiatives (projects/workshops/taster placements) and the boys’ satisfaction with these initiatives. Another reason for excluding the questions relating to attitudes was that, after only one year, we did not expect significantly different results in this respect.

are divided equally. From these figures, we can conclude that only 50% of young women can count on liberal partners, whilst the other half encounter men who expect their wife to ease the burden on them” (BMFSFJ, 2008).

Due to the different survey design, the results of the latest Shell Youth Study are of course not comparable with the findings of the supporting scientific survey for this project, yet the boys who were questioned straight after their project or short placement seem to have significantly more cooperative attitudes. On that day, the “masculine” compatibility of family and career promoted by *New paths for boys* had got through to boys, at least as far as norms are concerned. Approximately 20% of boys can very well imagine sharing household tasks in a cooperative manner in the future, whilst a further 52% can well imagine this. 29% of boys consider it very important to have a job in the future that allows them to take care of the household and/or the children, whilst this point is at least important for a further 42% of boys. 11.5% of boys even say that they could very well imagine taking a few years off work to take care of the household and the children, and a further 35.5% can well imagine this.

However, the data from the supporting scientific study also reveal another side of the boys. At least 30% of boys cannot imagine dividing the household tasks and work of bringing up children in a cooperative manner if their partners wish, or find this hard to imagine, and almost 50% would reject a fair division of labour if they did divide tasks in a cooperative manner. 16% of boys also responded “very well” to the statement “I can imagine needing most of my time for my job and helping out in the home and/or the family from time to time”, whilst a further 44% could “well” imagine this. In addition, we found that the older the boys, the less likely they are to state that they want to share the housework and work of bringing up children in a cooperative manner, and the more important a career is to them.

#### **Suggestions regarding content and method for initiatives forming part of *New paths for boys***

The pilot project *New paths for boys* aims to expand competences and resources of boys and male adolescents in both the private/social and professional spheres. Here, schools can make a particular contribution towards supporting boys in shaping their future independently and can highlight alternative lifestyles, through a combination of careers advice and gender-reflective life planning. Schools are the ideal location for initiatives forming part of *New paths for boys*, as they represent a place where all young people can be reached and where career decisions are often influenced or made. For examples, compulsory social placements with preparation and feedback could easily be introduced in schools. Furthermore, babysitting courses could be implemented or volunteer passes issued for social activities and services, which would count towards school grades. The current reorganisation of the educational curriculum represents a great opportunity to establish meaningful career-planning and life-planning initiatives (c.f. HAMMER/BARTJES 2005).

#### *Short-term placements*

By promoting short-term placements in educational, caring and other occupational fields that involve dealing with people, *New paths for boys* gives boys the opportunity to really experience and get to know professional work in childcare or work with the elderly or disabled, for example. This is an

important step towards making boys familiar with these types of jobs, as the survey of the educators and providers involved with “taster placements” reveals. Both groups surveyed identified the information deficit as a major reason preventing boys from deciding to enter “non-typical male” jobs. For this reason, the offer of short-term placements plays to many boys’ interest in this area, as such interest is certainly present.

Within the framework of *New paths for boys*, the boys can search independently for a short-term placement in the area of healthcare or education, or in other fields of work with feminine connotations. Frequently, external players (network partners, teachers, other educational specialists, equal rights and women’s representatives, etc.) form an interface between the school and the short-term placement, by finding appropriate facilities for the boys. However, parents, relations and acquaintances also help the boys in their search for a suitable place. The short-term placements should be supported by initiatives offering an opportunity for reflection, where the experiences gained from the placement can be considered, supplemented and questioned. If possible, this should be done in conjunction with the girls.

#### *Projects/workshops*

As part of the pilot project, independent of the short-term placements, it is also possible and worthwhile to encourage reflection on concepts of masculinity and gender relations, by means of school-based and non-school-based workshops and projects, or to promote boys’ skills in taking care of themselves and the household and their social competences, as happened in the first two years of the pilot stage, in various ways. Information on career planning and life planning constituted the main component of the projects that were carried out, together with the opportunity to practise household tasks. This included discussions concerning men, women, boys and girls and a debate about the near future and distant future. Job application training sessions and household rallies were held and household passes were handed out. In addition, the programme included visits to a nursery school, a hairdresser’s, a baker’s and other “typically feminine” workplaces.<sup>7</sup> In other locations, boys were visited by men who work in “non-typical male” jobs or are completing civilian service in an area with feminine connotations. Experience shows that boys place great value on the opinions and attitudes of other boys and young men. For this reason, use should also be made of experiences gathered by young people carrying out work experience in geriatric care, child education or other fields of activity with feminine connotations. It is possible to build on these types of experiences: What competences have been acquired here? What were the important experiences? What was fun? What was difficult? (c.f. also HAMMER/BARTJES 2005 on this topic.)

7 See [www.neue-wege-fuer-jungs.de](http://www.neue-wege-fuer-jungs.de) for further examples and suggestions.

## Conclusion

In education, both within and outside school, and in scientific research, we are still only beginning to address the issue of how we can provide boys with appropriate support in the transition from school to work. Furthermore, the spectrum of activities offered by the *New paths for boys* service office is restricted by the fact that this is a pilot project. A policy that wishes to establish gender-related career and life planning as a self-evident component within and outside scholastic education, and that seeks to bring about a change in consciousness in this regard, must rely on further long-term and institutionally secured measures, in order to win over more men and boys to fields of activity that have previously tended to be the domain of women. In order to provide boys and girls with the appropriate educational support in the transition from school to work and to guarantee gender-fair access to the labour market, traditional careers guidance, which aims to ensure that young people participate in society and work through supportive and integrative help, must be supplemented by gender-reflective life planning and planning for the future. In order to achieve this goal, a nationwide training and further education programme for male and female teachers and educators is required to raise their awareness of gender issues. In addition, ongoing commitment from men and women is desirable. In the supporting scientific study, many specialists therefore voiced the wish for more cooperation between the fields of work with girls and work with boys. To this end, the network of *New paths for boys* service offices, which has a relatively balanced composition of 46% female and 54% male contacts, will hopefully continue to offer a good framework in the future.

*Michael Cremers*



Michael Cremers is the author of the expert report "Neue Wege für Jungs?! – Ein geschlechtsbezogener Blick auf die Situation von Jungen im Übergang Schule–Beruf" [New paths for boys?! – An examination of the situation of boys in the transition between school and work], which was published by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in 2007, and a scientific contributor at Dissens e.V. research institute in Berlin. Dissens e.V. is a non-profit organisation that is active in research, consulting, education and work with boys.

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# Boys – school – learning about sex.

## Boys in school-based sex education

**The author awards school-based sex education the grade of “unsatisfactory” and reminds teachers of their responsibility when it comes to getting boys on board. Boys bring with them knowledge of and great interest in sexual issues, although these aspects are far too frequently disregarded due to the occasionally provocative way in which they are expressed.**

Over the past three decades, school-based sex education has become something that is taken for granted as a part of learning about sex (c.f. SCHMIDT/SIELERT 2008; SIELERT 2008) and has generally spread. In the course of this process, the issue of differentiations arose: boys became an interesting target group. However, there is no such thing as “The boys”, and a simple differentiation by gender is scarcely adequate if sex education is to be appropriate and professional. It therefore appears necessary to look more carefully at which boys are meant in each case: distinctions must be drawn, particularly by age, but also by access to education, educational disadvantage or privileges, by immigration or religious affiliation.

Similarly, there is no such thing as “The school”, an accurate picture can only be obtained through differentiation by types of school and by educational focus, by age, quality of training, gender of the teachers, etc. Such a differentiation is not possible here, and consequently I will restrict myself here to looking at trends and educational interests among boys. As there is only a very small amount of differentiated quantitative data available in this area, the intention is to approach the topic from a predominantly qualitative perspective. The background to the topic consists of my own experiences in sex education work with boys and the BZgA study of boys (WINTER/NEUBAUER 1998). From a quantitative perspective, this is supplemented by figures from the BZgA's repeated surveys on youth sexuality (see below).

In general, school-based sex education has two dimensions for boys: There is an official side that includes a social brief, an establishment of topics and “the subject” in timetables, that builds on knowledge, reason, norms and intellectual competence. The sex education lesson is the defined location where this is to take place. The other, informal side of school-based sex education generally plays a much greater role in boys' everyday lives and is more important to them. As a living space, the school offers many opportunities in this area: the playground as a market place for sexual news, lunchrooms as places where pupils can get closer, halls and toilets for encounters and caresses, pupils of the same age as sources of information and, last but not least, school parties as realms of experience – this is where “real life” comes into school. On one side, therefore, we find lessons, institutional briefs and a more or less dry matter – whilst the other sides

pulses with life. These two sides are brought together in schools, sometimes in an unavoidable collision that leads to conflicts, sometimes where interests overlap, with the official and informal sides (possibly) coming into contact.

These two sides can also be associated with the players in schools. The official, institutional side is represented by adults, with teachers of both sexes acting as their agents. In their fundamental position they are bound by institutional contracts and are responsible for knowledge, morality and health in delegating these contracts. On the other hand, boys play a significant role on the informal side – and they view sex education lessons from this “real life” point of view. In any case, these different perspectives mean that it is advisable to be sure to include both ways of looking at the issue when it comes to the “sex education of boys in schools”.

### School-based sex education: unsatisfactory

The usual reflex we find when a boys' topic is at stake also functions in connection with sex education in schools: the focus is on boys, predominantly on the few who cause real problems. There are consistent attempts to distract attention from the fact that schools are part of the problem. In particular, it is often necessary to rather “hammer home the point” in order to make teachers aware that they have a vital joint responsibility if sex education with boys is difficult. Here the focus is on the school as an organisation, as “boys in school-based sex education” is always also an institutional issue, for example with regard to staff, lesson quality, structure and the educational brief.

### Agents in sex education

In representative surveys, teachers are consistently named by boys as important figures when it comes to learning about sex (c.f. BZgA 1996 and 2006). This means they are mentioned slightly less frequently than mothers and more frequently than fathers. However, only very few boys (4%) cite teachers as confidants for sexual matters. It is clear that, when it comes to sexual topics, these adults are not important to boys as trusted persons, but rather they attain their importance through being the preferred persons for

imparting knowledge. Here, teachers (22%) are more or less on the same footing as parents (mothers 25%, fathers 20%), partners (25%), and other boys (23%) (c.f. BZgA 2006). Indeed, in some subject areas, school is by far the most important source of information. It was in school that half of the boys (!) learned of the fact that girls can obtain the pill free of charge up to the age of twenty (Ibid p. 60); peers (22%) and mothers (19%) are considerably less important here. This underlines the general importance of school when it comes to boys' education in sexual matters.

The question is whether the school can meet boys' expectations in this area? Experiences with teachers, for example in further training courses or in school projects looking at sex education, give cause for doubt. The Study of Boys [Jungenstudie] (WINTER/NEUBAUER 1998, p. 120 et seq.) also highlights deficits. Many teachers find it difficult to deal with the manner in which boys communicate about sexual matters and the way they show their interest. Teachers are often uncertain when dealing with sexually coloured comments from boys and interpret these merely as a need for boundaries to be set. After all, in the eyes of adults, it is vital that sexuality is not communicated as being "dirty" or made to seem ridiculous. However, boys who want to put forward sexual topics in which they are interested frequently come into conflict with this image of refined sexuality. Teachers tend to perceive boys in line with gender stereotypes, according to which boys, based on their socialisation, are regarded as competent (in the sense of having prior knowledge of sexual matters), purposeful and with a tendency to overstep the mark. Correspondingly, teachers often assume that, when it comes to boys, the primary task is to set boundaries.

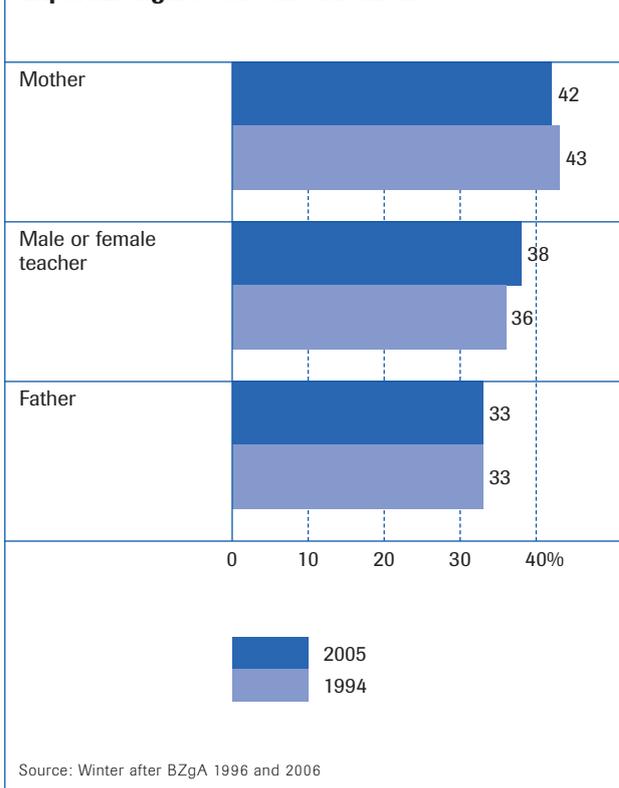
#### The victims of poor provision or just not interested?

Teachers scarcely realise that boys are under pressure to be competent and are therefore definitely needy: they want comprehensible information and they would like to compare their half-knowledge or sexual myths with high-quality information on sexual matters. If schools do not cater to these desires for learning and information, dismissive reactions are understandable. On the other hand, teachers complain that boys are insufficiently interested in theoretical (biological) knowledge of sexual matters, and interpret this as a general lack of interest in sex education topics. Hardly any consideration is given to the fact that insufficient time is accorded to issues specific to boys. Furthermore, those responsible for sex education in schools also give little thought to the fact that, for a long time, boys are one to two years behind girls in their development. This accounts for about half of their school lives. A structural solidification is at work here, which is reflected in the compulsion for coeducation and an ideology of equal treatment: In general, everyone should know the same amount about everything, even if there are obvious gender-specific access points, focuses and working forms. The fact that boys must allow themselves to be measured against the standard of girls who are (mentally) more mature and that less consideration is given to their interests in the content of sex education can be viewed as disadvantaging boys.

There is still a general lack of clarity in schools with regard to how these access points specific to boys could look. This is another reason why schools like to delegate sex education to external providers. In the event that teachers take an interest in what happens with boys in external sex

Fig. 1

#### Important figures for sex education



education lessons, they are often amazed at what is possible with boys. In these events, boys are approachable, lively and interested, they allow themselves to be motivated when they are less boxed in and are encouraged to expand their repertoire. With the insistence of schools on knowledge that holds no interest for many boys, on refined sex education and limits for boys, opportunities that sex education offers to work with the boys on an agreed expansion of their competences are missed.

#### Boys and sex in the new millennium

Within a few generations, the influences on and reference values for boys' sexuality have undergone a tangible change. In qualitative terms, this can be seen in work with boys, for example in the conflicts that occupy boys with regard to sexuality. "Drive-related" themes (such as masturbation, stimulating resources) are of less interest today than demands on performance, legal and moral issues, sexual borders and fears. To date, school administrations and schools have not adapted their concepts of sex education to these changes. The concepts often date from the 1970s – if they exist at all. Consequently, the quality of sex education leaves something to be desired.

The change in the paradigms of boys' sexuality can be traced to three factors: gender relations, the prevention of the threats of HIV and AID and the possibilities offered by the internet. These influences change the basis of boys' sex education and we will therefore provide a brief outline of them below.

### Gender relations

Changes in gender relations led to masculine qualities losing their potency. With regard to boys, this can be seen through uncertainties. On the one hand, these are to be welcomed, as they indicate an open position which boys can “grow into”; on the other hand insecure boys need orientation – not least with regard to being male. Moreover, boys are largely left to their own devices in this regard. In general, the debate centres on boys as PISA losers, as those who have problems or commit acts of violence, whilst boys’ attempts to deal with matters escape attention. The change in gender relations has also led to necessary changes in the area of sexuality, with boys feeling that they receive insufficient support in this regard. Girls benefit from this change in many ways. Today, they can and may be sexually competent, yet they do not have to be. On the other hand, boys have to be highly competent in sexual matters, as this corresponds to the traditional roles, their own gender roles and frequently also to the attributions and expectations of girls. However, flaws in sex education prevent boys from building on their competences in this area. The importance of sexuality in images of masculinity is completely opposed to the significance of sex education in schools (added together, 15 hours dealing explicitly with the topic of sexuality in a boy’s school career).

In addition, the new gender relations include a high degree of morality and strictness. Boys are subtly taught that, in contact with girls and women, it is particularly important to do absolutely everything correctly. With many boys, we find pressure not to make any mistakes. A great deal of hidden morality can be detected here, and long lists of requirements can be reeled off, which can be drawn together under the concept of “sexual control morality”: boys should watch out, be considerate and cautious; they must be responsive to their partner’s wishes or tempo, they must also accept partial responsibility for her; they must talk about everything and agree, but despite this they must understand simply and without the need for words, and so on. To date, the new situation based on changed gender relations has not been reflected in school-based sex education, where the assumption that girls are generally at a disadvantage is not questioned.

### Prevention

Long before pupils could encounter actual risks (something that is unlikely to happen), the topic of AIDS is all pervasive in sex education. Information on HIV, AIDS and preventative efforts may go hand-in-hand with the idea of sexuality hidden by the threat of illness, suffering and death. Boys seem to be more effected by this, as the responsibility for sexuality and for protection (use of condoms) is brought home to them in particular. Of course, HIV prevention does not intend to produce this correlation. However, on balance, what counts is the significance accorded to the area of prevention, in comparison with information on successful, enjoyable experience of sexuality. Despite the necessity of AIDS prevention, it is more important that boys can embrace their sexuality as something positive. However, boys subliminally get the impression that sexuality is primarily about prevention. In contrast, it is necessary to communicate to boys that sexuality is principally something that is permitted, beautiful and enjoyable, and that the focus is on sensuality, energy or zest for life. This is not common in the official school-based sex education programme.

Consequently, in practice many boys are amazed when people talk openly and in detail to them about enjoyable sex, when sexual lust is accorded its own value and not merely used as a diversion to end up back at the risks and the prevention once again. Many boys today display uncertainty with regard to their own sexual energy. The threatening components of sexuality, in the background, are reinforced by the excessive weight that is placed on prevention. Furthermore, there is often little male support in boys’ lives when it comes to sexuality, and the issue of male sexuality is very frequently discussed in conjunction with violence. This results in boys being left to deal with an unpleasant and complex mix of influences.

### Internet

In complete contrast to preventative work, the internet provides, on the pornographic sites used by boys, a wealth of information and (predominantly visual) stimulation. The situation has changed radically in the space of just a few years, with an infinite amount of illustrative pornographic material now easy to find and access.

Nowadays, boys do not have to invest a lot of time or money, or risk embarrassment, in order to view erotic material. Everything can be seen on the internet – and boys exploit this. In this process, normal things are rendered banal and boring; some boys form their taste and then explicitly distance themselves: the more men in pornographic films fake high-performance sex with their faces distorted by the effort, the less real, living boys have to emulate these images. For others, the edges of the topic become interesting, as there are borders with disgust that simultaneously fascinate and shock boys. Boys express all possible reactions between fascination and radical avoidance.

On the internet, they come into contact with the sexual problems of adults, with normalities, types of games and borderline areas which, forced out of the legitimate areas, resurface again on the web. In general, boys adopt an open, postmodern attitude in this respect: “Basically everything is ok”, although they often specify, for their individual case: “... but I don’t like it”. The problem is that hardly any adults speak to boys about these things in an understanding way, focusing on the boys. Quite the contrary: A problematic adult world projects its sexual problems onto boys and onto their internet usage, whilst real boys must deal with their sexuality in their individual ways.

In all three aspects – changed gender relations, prevention and internet sex – a gulf is opening up between “official” and “informal”. Official information teaches boys about the threatening sides of sexuality, with sex regarded as a danger (making mistakes, catching diseases). Informally, sex on the internet is presented in terms of boundless lust, great capability and prurience to the point of disgust. Given this situation, and without support from flawed education initiatives, it is obvious that massive problems must arise occasionally, yet this is not primarily the fault of boys.

### Sex education in schools

Against this background and from the point of view of boys, the term “sexual learning” is in fact more suitable than “sex education”. In their contradictory situation, boys are less interested in intentional education than in acquiring know-

ledge. They wish a significant proportion of this to be acquired through their own initiative and based on their own experience, and also take an interest in “sexual life skills”. Most boys do not even consider that school has its own value as a specific element – and this pertains equally to the world of school and to schools as places for imparting and acquiring knowledge. Consequently, almost all boys regard sex education in school as a “normal” matter. The fact that sex education is a matter of course takes the pressure off pupils: Unlike with other sources of information, pupils do not have to take an active part here – sex education is on the timetable and therefore simply happens. It is therefore particularly detrimental if sex education is not accorded enough importance, is removed due to time constraints or is compromised. The aspect of implicitness is significant for boys as they place great importance on being competent. Each question also means admitting gaps in their competence (although some boys also regard the fact of being able to ask questions and being able to find the correct sources themselves as a competence).

Although boys see themselves as competent, they hope to consolidate their current knowledge: To a certain extent, they expect “official” confirmation of their knowledge, as an important function of school education. Here, unlike in other subjects, they can already bring something to the class, they are able to join in the discussion, having prior sexual experience. It is often important for them to be able to present their prior knowledge and to have their competence acknowledged. However, it can also happen (generally in primary school), that boys have their first experience of learning about sex in school. In general, we should expect diversity in every class, with regard to the distribution of knowledge, the experiences and the ability to communicate on sexual topics.

For many boys, physical, intimate and sexual matters may not only be interesting, but are also often shameful and embarrassing. Some attempt to hide the fact that they are embarrassed by the situation by hiding behind demonstratively distanced, competent or indeed “pithy” behaviour. When talking to boys about sex education delivered by teachers, the term “funny” often crops up; when discussing educational centres, this term is almost only used in relation to school. Many boys stress that it was only the other boys who giggled. This “third person effect” can be interpreted as showing that the embarrassing tension does not correspond to the status that boys themselves wish to have – “I’m past that” or “I’m further on” – and is linked to the lack of development or the young age of the others. However, some boys also decode the amusement directly as a phenomenon caused by shame and embarrassment. In schools, this is created at the typical interface where official and informal, private and political matters meet; a charged tension develops here, which can be successfully relieved if, for example, we write up terms from the sexual repertoire on the board that usually only records “decent” things (c.f. WINTER 2002).

### Criticism from boys

Many boys have a critical attitude towards sex education in school. Their criticism should be taken seriously and they should certainly be recognised as having expert status. With regard to the teaching staff, the boys give both positive and

negative feedback. In the event that teachers succeed in getting the information across well, they are awarded the title “normal”; if this is not the case, they are classed as “prudish” or “uptight”. Boys find fault with the quality and content of school-based sex education: poor methods, a lack of skills and the one-sided focus of the content. Above all, the frequent reproach that school-based sex education is too much restricted to biological knowledge suggests that boys wish for more information on the other meaningful aspects of sexuality, on topics such as tenderness, love, starting and organising relationships, specific information on human sexuality and to gain more skills in these areas. This point of criticism corresponds to the statistics on topics in sex education lessons (c.f. BZgA 2006, p. 33). From boys’ point of view, although school does provide them with important knowledge, it is often too little and the wrong information. This qualitative impression is also confirmed in quantitative terms: Boys view their greatest information deficit as pertaining to the aspect of “sexual practices”. In the BZgA surveys, this item is always in first place: In 1994, 47% of boys complained of deficits here, whilst in 2006 it was 44% (c.f. BZgA 1996 and 2006). Much further down the table come, in 2006, “sexually-transmitted diseases” (32%) and “contraception” (27%).

Again and again, boys credibly assure us that sex education in their school has gaps in important places where there should be no gaps, and where there are none in other schools. For example, when a 16-year old boy complains that he has never yet been informed about contraception in school, this reveals significant flaws. In this regard, the question arises of quality standards for school-based sex education, to be implemented by means of quality control and quality assurance.

Yet even if boys do sometimes voice harsh criticism of school-based sex education, they never call for sex education lessons to be scrapped!

*Reinhard Winter*



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# Real men are (not) afraid of homosexuals!

## How work with boys can respond to the widespread aggression against being gay

**Homosexuality is an important part of work with boys, all the more so as studies provide evidence of continued widespread aversion and aggression towards being gay among many young people. This article by Stefan Timmermanns looks at what education professionals can do to combat this trend.**

### Homosexuality as the key to understanding male identities

For some time now, the topic of homosexuality has been one of the issues that are consistently dealt with in work with boys and men. Today, we understand the contexts and functions of homophobia for the constructions of male identities more clearly than ever before. CONNELL (c.f. 2000, p. 83) describes the exclusion of homosexual desires in order to define masculinity as a “key figure” of modern hegemonial masculinity. For her (RAEWYN, formerly CONNELL), homophobia, which describes fear of contact with homosexuals and also fear of being viewed as homosexual, is one of the most important mechanisms used to build hierarchies in the relationship between the genders and establish gender identities (ibid, p. 102). Gay men disrupt the concept of masculinity at its most sensitive points: the gender role behaviour expected from society and sexual desire.

“Homosocial reference”, i.e. the way that boys arrange friendly relations between one another, has also found a firm place in the theoretical debate about work with boys in Germany (c.f. WINTER/NEUBAUER 2001, SIELERT 2002). Even in practical handouts, hardly any publications nowadays fail to include methods dealing explicitly with same-sex love. With STURZENHECKER, we can note that “addressing the issue of homosexuality (...) is therefore an important element of work with boys (2000, p. 58).

### ‘I’m cool – you’re gay!’

In spite of the tolerance proclaimed by the media and society, the attitude of a large number of boys towards homosexuals is still characterised by prejudices. Being gay may increase the entertainment value of our daily soaps, yet in the context of boys’ own gender identity it represents a threat. As evidenced by a study carried out by iconkids & youth (2002, 71% of boys aged between 12 and 17 consider that lesbians and gay men are “not” or “certainly not good”. My own survey, “Keine Angst, die beißen nicht!” [Don’t worry, they won’t bite!] (2003), which looked at young people aged between 11 and 18, revealed a large number of stereotypical attitudes: “You can recognise gay men by the fact that they wear eye make-up. They want to talk like women and walk like women”. Feelings such as disgust and repulsion, as well

as fears, can be determined from some of the young people’s own statements: “When I see a gay man, I’m always frightened because he can rape me.” The high degree of rejection and the use of insults among peers mean that significantly more than half of young gay men have a negative experience of discovering their sexual orientation (WATZLAWIK 2004). It is therefore not surprising that the risk of suicide among homosexual young people is up to six times higher than among those of a heterosexual orientation.<sup>1</sup>

Derogatory and insulting expressions such as “gay pig” fulfil various functions. One of the most important of these functions is to define masculine behaviour. The term “gay” serves as an instrument for social control. Anyone who deviates from the code of masculinity is called “gay” and loses the right to be a man. The fear of exclusion compels boys to behave in a conformist manner. In this way, considerable pressure is created among boys to want to be “normal”, that is just like all the others. Furthermore, over the past few years, the adjective “gay” has developed into a synonym for everything that boys perceive as unpleasant, annoying or simply “stupid”. The negative assessment that is transported with the insult and the adjective does not just make coming-out difficult for boys who fall in love with boys, but also makes it difficult for their heterosexual peers to access some of their emotions and to experience friendly bonds and physical closeness among one another. Consequently, relationships with other boys are deprived of many experiences and are the poorer for it. The spectrum of boys’ behaviour is restricted and aspects of their personalities are not developed. It is difficult for boys to perceive and express feelings and needs, and to do things that benefit themselves or others. Physical contact is only accepted in connection with an aggressive component such as when playing sport or in brawls. Physical contact can sometimes also trigger emotions such as tenderness, admiration or sympathy, yet these emotions then frighten many boys. From puberty onwards, if not earlier, they experience hardly any physical closeness from their fathers, let alone from other men. This would permit them to learn a more mature, adult way of dealing with

<sup>1</sup> See overviews of various studies on this topic in: Senatsverwaltung 1999, 82 et seq. and RAMSAY 2008

physical closeness and to integrate it into their repertoire of masculine behaviour as a pleasant experience. Emotions linked to closeness are quickly labelled as sentimental or “gay”, and therefore as unmanly. Not only do these emotions have to be avoided, they must also be devalued. Here, projecting these emotions onto the gay community offers enormous relief. In order to feel more secure in their male identity, many boys repress tender emotions, for example, and delegate them to gay men, so that they can better despise them. This makes it easier for boys to maintain their masculinity, which they regard as superior, a task that is permanently necessary and hard work.

Because they often “fall by the wayside” in day-to-day education and can easily become “collateral damage” caused by the construction mechanisms of masculine hegemonial identity, gay young people rely on clear support from adults and on protection from degradation and discrimination. On the other hand, heterosexual boys need support and role models in dealing with their developmental tasks. Who better to take on this function of role model and protector than, for example, boys’ workers and teachers?

### **Reflecting one’s own position on homosexuality**

Against the background of this analysis and my own practical experiences in work with boys, both homosexual and heterosexual, I would like to offer some suggestions on how work with boys can respond to the aversion and aggression against being gay. In doing so, I turn firstly to male boys’ workers, male teachers, fathers and male educationalists, as they have the more important role model function for boys when dealing with the topic of homosexuality. That does not mean that women cannot also contribute to a differentiated and less hegemonial image of masculinity. However, their contribution has a different significance.

Men who educate boys need to be prepared to look closely if same-sex closeness or physical contact is devalued. They should not continually avoid confrontation and must expect that they will (wrongly) be identified as gay or bisexual, due to their opinion. Men who work with boys know from experience that work on relationships is one of the most important aspects of their work. An examination of one’s own emotions, particularly of fears and uncertainties in dealing with one’s own gender, forms part of the foundation of educational science applied to boys. Only on the basis of such self-reflection can a role model function be adopted, for example when dealing with gay men or with regard to (un)typical role behaviour. What can educationalists who fulfil these basic requirements do to support all boys in discovering their identities?

### **Talking helps!**

Even if it sounds banal, you can talk about your own experiences with homosexuality and connected aspects such as homoeroticism, physicality, tenderness, admiration, friendship and sympathy between boys and men and thereby break the male “vow of silence”. Talking does not always help and certainly does not do so immediately, but without verbal communication it is certain that you will not achieve very much. Fathers, uncles and cousins act as role models for

young people in dealing with fears, weaknesses and, above all, physical contact with people of the same sex. Even today, it is only in exceptional cases that boys experience a situation where their male support persons talk about how they dealt with their fear of being thought gay during puberty or what feelings it triggered when they knowingly faced a gay man for the first time. Boys rarely have an opportunity to talk seriously and in detail with other boys or men about homosexuality and/or what they think it is. How can we then expect them to develop a balanced and differentiated opinion on the subject, completely of their own accord? More could be made of opportunities for conversation (and there are many, given the insults exchanged in all-male groups), in order to talk with boys about their experiences with things that they find ambivalent and perceive as threatening their identity. Initially, simply listening to boys would be a good start, perhaps followed by a question or two to help the boys perceive matters in a more differentiated manner: “Are they really all like that? Do all gay men really do that?” Following this, in the second stage, it would then be possible to talk about your own experiences. Here, it is particularly important that the boys are not corrected and that no one denies them the right to have these emotions. The boys should not be forbidden from holding their opinions and their feelings should not be denied. We can only hold up our own opinion, in order to show that there are also other possible responses in situations that appear threatening to them, and hope that one day they will be able to find their own way.

### **More role models in dealing with uncertainties and contradictions**

A central reason that the subject of homosexuality generates so many aversions is the fear of not being a proper man and of being excluded by one’s peers. Research into the subject of men does not dispute the fact that the male identity is extremely fragile, and thereby uncertain. Boys want certainty when it comes to the question of their identity. However, this does not exist, because there are a large number of contradictions involved in being a man, as in every area of life. Consequently, boys need role models in order to learn how ambivalences and contradictions can be integrated into their self-image. For these role models, I have in mind men who, on the one hand, embody “traditional masculine virtues”. On the other hand, however, they are able to take on auxiliary or caring roles and to protect their gay colleagues from hostility, without losing their self-assurance as “proper” men. Another strategy may be to create situations, for example through role play, where ambivalences are deliberately played with or where boys are taken out of their comfort zone in a controlled manner. The confusion resulting from these measures can then be used productively for further educational work. In my opinion, the greatest challenge is that we must learn a certain “equanimity” in a world that is becoming increasingly diverse and individual, must learn to live with uncertainties and contradictions and accept these, so that we are not constantly running up against them and being obstructed by them. Here, equanimity must not be regarded as equalling indifference or turning a blind eye.

### Fair play through clear rules

In order to protect boys who are gay, it is important to make it clear, within a group or facility, that discrimination directed against homosexuals (and naturally also against other people) will not be accepted. Firstly, it is not acceptable for a community to exclude an individual. In the event that this rule is broken, the least that the management can do is to protect a homosexual boy who is being bullied after coming out, for example. If the boy is accused of being gay by others, but does not identify himself as such, it is vital to protect him from exclusion or aggression. The best way of preventing discrimination is to put in place, by mutual agreement, a set of rules that clarifies how everyone should behave towards one another. In almost every group, there are sufficient characteristics and differences that can serve as examples in addition to sexual orientation, so that it does not have to be a “special rule for homosexuals”: the same applies to disabled people, immigrants and many others. In this way, it is possible to work out, together with the boys, that the foundation for democratic cooperation is mutual respect. If someone is not prepared to show sufficient acceptance of others, he cannot expect that others will have respect for him.

### Broadening boys’ repertoire of behaviour

As the issue of sexual orientation is very closely connected with gender role behaviour, and gay men are frequently accused of acting like women, it may be worthwhile to question this cliché, by looking at “typical male” and “typical female” behaviour. Groups made up exclusively of boys have the advantage that “typical” tasks cannot be delegated to the other gender. Here, boys can also learn to take on tasks that they would otherwise rarely be entrusted with or expected to carry out, such as cooking, cleaning or taking care of themselves and others. In addition, mental well-being may be included in the equation. In groups where the genders are separated, with suitable leadership, boys also find it easier to talk about their feelings. In this type of setting they are more likely to broaden their repertoire of behaviour, for example by comforting someone. If someone can emancipate himself a little from the tight-fitting armour of gender roles, without immediately being deprived of his masculinity by doing so, he will also find it easier to accept this behaviour in other boys or men. If the diversity of “masculine” activities in different cultures or throughout history is highlighted, this may provide additional support for the process. When discussing sexual orientation and identity, it is important to point out that this is primarily a way in which people identify themselves, and not a way in which others identify them. Someone is only gay if he decides to identify himself as such and also presents himself as such to the outside world. No one has the right to call someone gay against his will.

### Perceiving oneself more strongly through the body

Bodywork can be another way of reflecting on oneself, being more aware of feelings and getting to know oneself better. Physical experience and physical mastery also help to acquire self-confidence. If someone feels comfortable in his/her own skin and knows his/her boundaries, he/she is also able to interact with others in a much more balanced manner. Moreover, the use of bodywork presents the opportunity to learn a new method of interaction: besides brawls and

competitions, boys are indeed able to learn how to do things that benefit themselves and others. In a safe atmosphere, even a massage exercise using hedgehog balls is gratefully accepted by pupils in the second year of secondary general school. Here, the male leader does not help the boys if he ignores homophobic comments. On the contrary, the leader should pick up on the insinuations, which are often uttered in low tones or concealed in short phrases. It is precisely when it comes to the body and physical contact with people of the same sex that male role models are of the greatest importance for boys. In this respect, educationalists and, above all, trainers working in the field of popular sport could discuss their own fears and experiences with the boys, talking about how they dealt with these when they were adolescents, or how they resolved this tension for themselves. In the event that they never found it a problem to touch another man, this could be their clear message to the young men. In both cases, the men would show that they deal with the situation confidently and act as role models for many boys.

### Encountering the “bogeymen”

In spite of their presence in the media, many boys have no personal contact with homosexuals. In my own survey, 88% of boys did not know any gay men in their social sphere (c.f. TIMMERMANN 2003, p. 112). Uncertainty and suppositions form the ideal breeding ground for prejudices and clichés.

For this reason, it may be worthwhile to enable direct encounters with homosexuals in an educational setting. So-called gay-lesbian educational projects exist in numerous cities, and their members offer to talk to young people about how they themselves realised that they were gay and how others reacted to them coming out. This gives the boys a chance to ask questions, even personal ones, to young men who are generally not much older than them. As a result of the direct and authentic experience of interaction with educationally-trained gay men, some prejudices can be dispelled and a more differentiated perception can be achieved. To supplement this interaction, or in the event that a personal encounter is not possible, films can be used to achieve similar results. The feature film “Sommersturm” [Summer Storm], for which the Federal Agency for Civic Education has published an accompanying booklet, particularly suggests itself here. Of course, it is not easy for all pubescent young people to sit through a kissing scene between two boys, but if you only ever approach the topic “with kid gloves”, you are unlikely to get down to the main aspects, such as boys’ fear of homosexuals or uncertainties with regard to their own identity, let alone be able to work on these aspects.

### Seriously and yet with humour

If the suggestions proposed above seem too serious to anyone, they should realise that it is vital to look seriously and sincerely at the issue of homosexuality. It certainly takes a great deal of courage to face up to this task as a boys’ worker. However, the issue must also be approached with a good portion of humour and, above all, a willingness to laugh at yourself. That is to say, pubescent young people hate one thing above all: moralisers. Instead of this, as educationalists, we should make an ironic comment from time to time and

also be big enough to laugh at ourselves every so often. This does not undermine your authority. On the contrary, this can be a very effective method of letting boys know that you have just noted discriminatory behaviour and do not condone this in any way. Without constantly repeating politically correct set phrases, it is possible to signal that you are keeping a look out for undesirable behaviour and are prepared to take further action, if necessary. By distancing yourself from events by laughing at yourself, you simultaneously demonstrate self-assuredness and poise. These are characteristics that boys (among others) find very impressive.

### Everyone benefits when you support homosexuals

According to the research, well-thought out, “balanced” work with boys (Winter/Neubauer 2001, Sielert 2002), which recognises boys in their diversity and with all their skills, opens up new realms of experience to them and also supports homosexual boys, will ultimately benefit everyone. Without a moralising sub-text, a comment on “gay” cars or mobiles could be regarded as an opportunity to discuss with the boys the impact of their choice of language on a gay classmate, who is in the process of wrestling with coming-out. A humorous comment about whether a car can actually have a sexual orientation or a personal statement to the effect that you yourself treat your gay friends just like other men has a greater impact than priggish admonishments. In the course of the conversation, you can make clear to the boys how the discriminatory effect of their thoughtless comments can appear to boys who feel attracted to the same gender. Frequently, those who coin pithy slogans have scarcely any experience of homosexuals, but a great fear of being propositioned by them. Dispelling this fear would benefit all boys, no matter whether heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual.

*Stefan Timmermanns*



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# Intercultural Work with Boys – Practice, Aims and Professional Stance

**Intercultural work with boys is intended to provide boys with opportunities to discover their individual skills and resources, to be able to recognise their interests and to learn to define their limitations. As far as educationalists are concerned, empathy and curiosity, authenticity and openness are more important here than the accumulation of knowledge of topics that are supposedly unfamiliar.**

The reality of being a boy today can no longer be described as pure monoculture, but rather interculturality has become a normal part of everyday life in schools, nurseries, leisure centres and “on the street”, much more than when we were at school. We can observe an increased presence of different “culture bearers” similar to the diversification and pluralisation of images of boys and men. If we extend the term “culture” to incorporate youth and youth sub-cultures, we can confidently claim that as far as work with boys is concerned, every group of boys that we meet can, and in my opinion should, be considered to be multicultural.

Usually strategies are discussed as to how to go about dealing with the consequences of more than 30 years of immigration involving people who have come to Germany for a very wide range of reasons and their children using imperative terms such as integration, understanding, adaptation or even “host culture”. However, all too often, the people concerned do not even have a say. Moreover, “intercultural discourse” in educational and therapeutic practice is dominated by the native German middle classes.

In contrast, work with boys, as we understand it, provides boys of all origins with the opportunity to recognise their interests and to defend these if necessary.

Intercultural work with boys therefore describes a world of opportunity in which encounters between males can be examined using initiatives supporting personality and making active use of resources. It is an experimental field and those working within it (may) consider themselves to be socially competent. Every boy possesses skills and every boy has his limitations. Work with boys always aims to develop the personal and social potential of individuals and also of the respective group. A group setting consisting of boys of different origins provides excellent opportunities in particular to unmask, modify, further develop or even reject the restrictive ways of life imposed by male ideologies. First of all, the various scopes of these are recognised by exploring them together and are then evaluated within the world of experience that unites all boys. This means that the focus of the initial exercise is not on what separates the boys!

It is only against this common background that it becomes possible for boys to accept their own different opinions, attitudes, ways of life etc. and those of others. Embracing difference offers boys a real chance to be an

individual beyond hegemonic masculine attributes.

Intercultural work with boys helps to prevent violence due to the fact that the boys involved in it become aware of the circumstances of their lives and actively influence these within the framework of democratic and self-actualising possibilities.

## **Prevention of violence?**

As a result, intercultural work with boys is not about working with boys who have been reduced to violence and “beating” this very thing out of them, rather it goes beyond the idea of violence as a form of self-assertion and tackles the non-specific risk factors associated with violent behaviour (such as self assurance, self confidence, mental and social resources, knowledge of how to access society’s resources, education, etc). Therefore, those experiences of boys which represent their own exclusion and the act of excluding themselves as well as their experience of violence and using violence always take centre stage. For this reason, those working with boys need to be open to the most wide-ranging facets of any migration experiences that the boys may have had. We should learn to understand how racism and sexism are experienced in the respective everyday environments of boys and exactly what impact this has on the boys.

## **Intercultural competence?**

Current developments in social pedagogy and social work are really seeking to question the benefits of all concepts and approaches used: What measure brings what benefit for which target groups? To this extent, quality development processes are also called for, supported and achieved in the area of work with boys. In addition, the intercultural aspect is plainly becoming an issue of central importance as far as this pedagogical transformation process is concerned, which is both necessary and logical at present. The call for intercultural competences which has (re-)intensified recently, particularly with regard to social issues, is also directed with corresponding emphasis at “male and female educationalists

of majority German origin"! The question here is simply what this "new requirement" could consist of explicitly. For example, what knowledge and skills must a "culturally aware" boy's worker possess? What trade should he learn? Moreover, the question of who actually benefits from intercultural understanding in work with boys is far from being answered: is it first and foremost boys from immigrant backgrounds, "native German" boys or boy's workers? In order to answer this question, funded networking and sponsored exchanges of theory and practice between the various participants are required.

A balancing act between, on the one hand, not denying to boys the fact that differences based on experience of racism or immigration exist, and on the other hand, not stereotyping boys of origins other than that of the "majority culture", lies at the heart of successful work with boys. Knowledge can help a great deal, but (supposedly fixed) knowledge can also act as a hindrance! It is therefore only secondly, thirdly or even fourthly that intercultural competence in work with boys means gathering knowledge of what is presumed to be foreign, of religious customs, of family focus or cultural images of masculinity. Intercultural competence primarily means learning to handle unfamiliar and possibly unsafe situations. It refers to the ability to learn how to deal with potential fears face to face, without allowing unnecessary feelings of being threatened to surface, since the threat comes from the typical tendency of men to avert fear, uncertainty and loss of control (and this applies not only to young men!). Intercultural competence therefore means first and foremost the ability to allow yourself to remain curious, to show and develop interest. In my opinion, the following points are of central importance as superordinate intercultural aims in work with boys which should determine our attitude towards boys:

- We demonstrate that we are neither blind to difference nor obsessed with difference.
- We attempt not to repeat the power of labelling.
- We show that we are authentically and empathetically "curious" whilst being aware of boundaries.
- We provide knowledge and permit new experiences.
- We ourselves learn to step outside our comfort zones.
- We expose ourselves to the unfamiliar.
- We examine the variety of lifestyles involving males working with fellow males and come together to question why such a thing is useful at all.
- We develop our own resources and try to activate those of the boys.
- We work together to try to find out when and why it seems important to the individual to emphasise perceived differences.

### Double "deficit treatment"

Within this context, it must be emphasised over and over again that boys of other origins usually experience double "deficit treatment". The work with boys currently being funded is therefore generally reduced to the aspect of preventing violence: Therefore, in addition to the attested social, communicative and mental deficits experienced by boys belonging to the majority culture, boys of other origins are said to face cultural conflicts. In the reality of working with boys, this view reveals itself to be somewhat exaggerated to say the least and is often exposed as more of an expres-

sion of the majority German ideology, since the vast majority of boys and girls have already mastered the art of switching between the various realms of experience. They can often integrate and connect the various parts of cultural socialisation. Boys with indirect and direct experience of immigration generally have an advantage as they (must) show themselves to be more socially mobile; and this is not just true of the language advantage that they possess! The striking intercultural competence of boys of other origins can be seen in their ability to tolerate social and personal ambivalences. A large number of boys from immigrant backgrounds are much more able to behave in a sensitive manner in situations where they feel unsure of how to behave.

However, this is not to belie the fact that people from immigrant backgrounds in particular experience various processes of exclusion and have experienced them in the past. Racist and (hetero-) sexual defamations should not be glossed over here. However, when examined more closely, apparent cultural conflicts reveal themselves to be conflicts between the generations: conflicts between "stubborn parents" and "pubescent adolescents" and conflicts between various boys who are searching for some direction in their lives based on very different male ideologies. This type of conflict is typical in Germany. In my opinion, this is an area in which boys in Germany are very similar!

For this reason, I believe the particularity of intercultural work with boys to lie in the professional, educational stance rooted in emancipatory tradition; the main points of which can be summarised as follows:

In order to provide an opportunity for (inter)cultural growth, it is necessary for us to train ourselves as educationalists to work with semi-paradoxes, in that we regard all boys as being equal and regard each individual as being different at the same time. Differences are then seen not as something that divides the boys, but rather as something that enriches everyday life (in the group) and as something that partly serves as an authentic basis for common realms of experience.

### And what about the methods used?

As far as methods are concerned, we can use our well-known repertoire of (gender-specific) group work for (inter)cultural work with boys. Within this context, perception exercises are particularly useful. Once we have got to know and established our own educational and social attitudes using perception training exercises, we are able to provide boys with an open space in which they learn to consciously perceive their environment, their counterparts and ultimately themselves. This enables us to explore cultural access patterns together by methodically working through issues such as inclusion versus exclusion, the personal versus that which belongs to others, the old versus the new, the masculine versus the non-masculine etc. There are a large number of methods that can be used to approach this...

I personally prefer the Gestalt therapy method which enables you to convey experiences in the here and now. The so-called "exercises on masculine territoriality" are particularly helpful.

*Here is just one example to illustrate:*

Three boys go outside. The rest of the group is briefed on a special task and the three attempt one after another to tackle

a task that has been set specifically for them. For example, the “insiders” are assigned the task of “looking as mean as possible” and occupying all of the “strategically important” seats in the room. The person who then enters the room is told to look for a seat in the room where he feels at ease. An impossible task! This allows the feelings of the outsider to be re-enacted and evaluated as a group. Alternatively, a situation which typically happens to boys on the underground can be used: Eight boys form a “guard of honour” and one wants to get past. How does he solve the problem? Another alternative is for the “insiders” to run wildly around the room and to continually greet one other with a handshake. Everyone greets everyone else except for an outsider. What does the outsider do to deal with this exclusion? Does he resign himself to feeling excluded? Does he use violence to force the insiders to greet him? Does he use his charm to persuade the insiders to greet him? Does he look for a partner for solidarity? ... This then enables the individual boys to incorporate their real-life experiences into the evaluation. Some tell of racially motivated assault (“... it’s all just because I’m black”), others speak of heterosexist exclusion (“... they think I’m gay”).

When confronted with “extremely personal responsibility” it also becomes possible for the boys to discuss their own racist thoughts and behaviour. In the case of boys from immigrant backgrounds, this also reveals so-called self-ethnicizing processes (“That is what we Turks do!”). This helps the boys to discover to what extent they themselves identify with the cultural attributes assigned to them by family and the outside world. The central aim of this is for the boys to learn to change the undesirable aspects of their behaviour and confidently represent the desirable aspects. This helps boys to develop criteria for making their own personal decisions and to take responsibility for their own actions.

However, the methods only work if the boys are able to believe that we care about their view of things. We need to have a good relationship in order to be able to confront the boys and the boys need to have the courage to also be able to tell the educationalist uncomfortable truths. This particularly includes us working together to put forward the opportunities and limitations presented by each individual’s future prospects: What can we offer boys who initially have (will have) no opportunities on the primary or secondary labour market?

## Conclusion

Besides the ability to get involved, educationalists are also required to bring in their own personal experiences in order to make work with boys successful. It is helpful for building relationships if we are open about our fears and our experience of feeling alienated by “people who are different to us” in order to encourage boys to talk about their experiences (with themselves). It is useful here to break and question seemingly (inter-)cultural taboos. It helps us educationalists and the boys if we make persistent attempts to understand rather than believe that we could classify a respective specific attitude against the background of our intercultural knowledge. If we systematically challenge what appear to be clear facts, it is possible to witness unexpected growth, both personally and in boys of all origins.

What is more, it is necessary to remain in constant contact with the boys’ (supposed) resources. Human beings are capable of having extremely contradictory expectations of themselves. They switch between various realms of experience and adopt partially contradictory values along the way: For example, boys demonstrate different behaviour in a sports team (ability to work as part of a team) than at school (provocation against class rules). They modify their behaviour to fit in with family customs which they then abandon again in their peer group. They show themselves to be more empathetic when in female company and more offensive in groups of boys. In addition, Muslim boys who are considered to be problematic show a far greater amount of respect in the religious context than they do at school for example. Boys who are otherwise very in-your-face can shine due to their reliability, discretion and staying power in the case of work experience that they have chosen themselves. We can observe time and time again that a very large number of boys have the ability to switch easily between the various roles that are required of them. And this is true for all boys, irrespective of their origin! The professional attitude of the boy’s worker should therefore be characterised by a quest for the truth with the boys taking part which is distinguished by curiosity as well as observance of boundaries.

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Selection of texts that I have written that will permit a deeper understanding of the subject matter:

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# Action-oriented and eager for knowledge – use of media specific to boys

**What types of media boys prefer to use and how interested they are in these types of media forms the subject of this contribution, which is based on up-to-date data collected from repetitive questionnaires regarding the use of media by children and young people. Besides gender, the author also incorporates social factors into her analysis.**

## Boys use media

### Case study 1

11-year old David, who attends a High School, is very interested in nature and natural scientific events and processes. His father encourages this interest in various ways, including by buying him corresponding media products. In order to satisfy his thirst for knowledge, David draws on the whole range of media available. "If a particular subject arouses his scientific curiosity, he researches it until his thirst for knowledge is satisfied. He searches on Wikipedia, for example, and uses search engines including the children's search engine Blinde Kuh. If he is still unable to find the information that he is searching for, he consults encyclopaedias. (...) David (watches) educational programmes approximately four times a week and follows the latest news. If relevant events are reported on the news, such as natural disasters for example, he logs on to the internet to learn more about them, 'as this actually often immediately reveals special topics'." (WAGNER/THEUNERT 2006, p. 86 et seq.)

### Case study 2

Frank (13 years old) attends a Secondary General School. "He is growing up in an environment where fights between gangs of youths are a frequent occurrence and has already been involved himself in disputes in which the opponents were given a black eye or had their teeth knocked out. Frank is a fan of hardcore action. Dramatic, bloody representations, fighting and brutality are all guarantees that a series is exciting as far as he is concerned. 'The main thing is that they hit each other. That is actually the best part of films', he finds. He finds these elements in the mystery series The X-Files and Outer Limits, for example. (...) The main reason why he does not like "Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten" is that 'the men (look) so gay'. Appearance is important to them, such as 'trendy' clothes and styling, and these are features that do not fit into Frank's tough masculine world and cannot be reconciled with his ideas on masculinity." (EGGERT 2000, p. 104 et seq.)

David and Frank are two boys who could not be more different from one another. One of them is growing up in an

environment where a great deal of value is placed on getting a good education. The other one knows the 'law of the street' above all and must assert himself on the street. The boys' media preferences are just as different as the boys themselves. Are their media preferences typical of boys? In a certain sense, yes, in so far as

- there are boys who are interested in scientific phenomena and who also learn about them in the media,
- it can be observed that boys have a penchant for action.

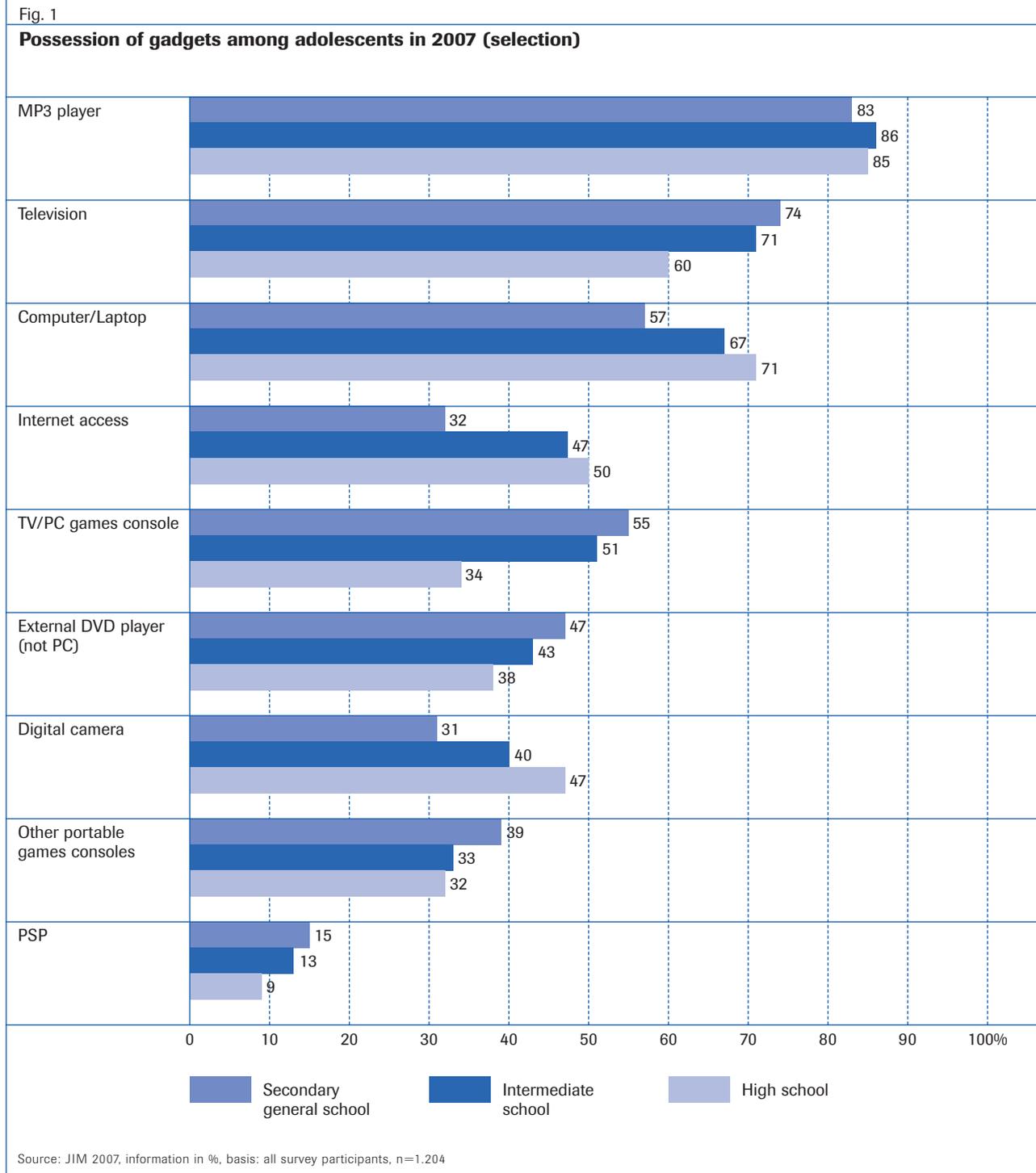
However, as these two examples illustrate, there is no such thing as a use of media that is typical of boys. Nevertheless, some trends and tendencies can be observed that are found predominantly in boys. Subsequently, I will portray first of all what types of media boys use before then going on to discuss what boys are looking for in the media and what functions the media serve or are intended to serve for them. To conclude, I will give indications as to how boys can be reached using media.

## What types of media do boys use?

### Possession of gadgets

If you look at the figures from the JIM and KIM studies<sup>1</sup>, a significant difference can be observed in the media possessed by girls and boys. In children aged between 6 and 13, it can be observed that overall boys possess a greater amount of media than girls. The media where girls take the lead is restricted to the cassette recorder (girls: 56%; boys: 50%) and a children's computer (girls: 16%; boys: 14%). As far as CD players and mobile phones are concerned, girls and boys are on a level pegging (CD players: 57%; mobile

<sup>1</sup> Since 1998, the Research Association for Media Education, Southwest Region has been conducting the annual JIM Study – Youth, Information, (Multi-)Media, which examines the media habits of 12 to 19 year olds in Germany. Likewise, since 1999, the annual KIM Study – Children and Media, which has included the supplement Computers and the Internet since 2000, has been recording the media usage habits of children aged between 6 and 13.



phones: 36%). Boys are better equipped than girls when it comes to all other media (cf. KIM Study 2006, p. 9).<sup>2</sup>

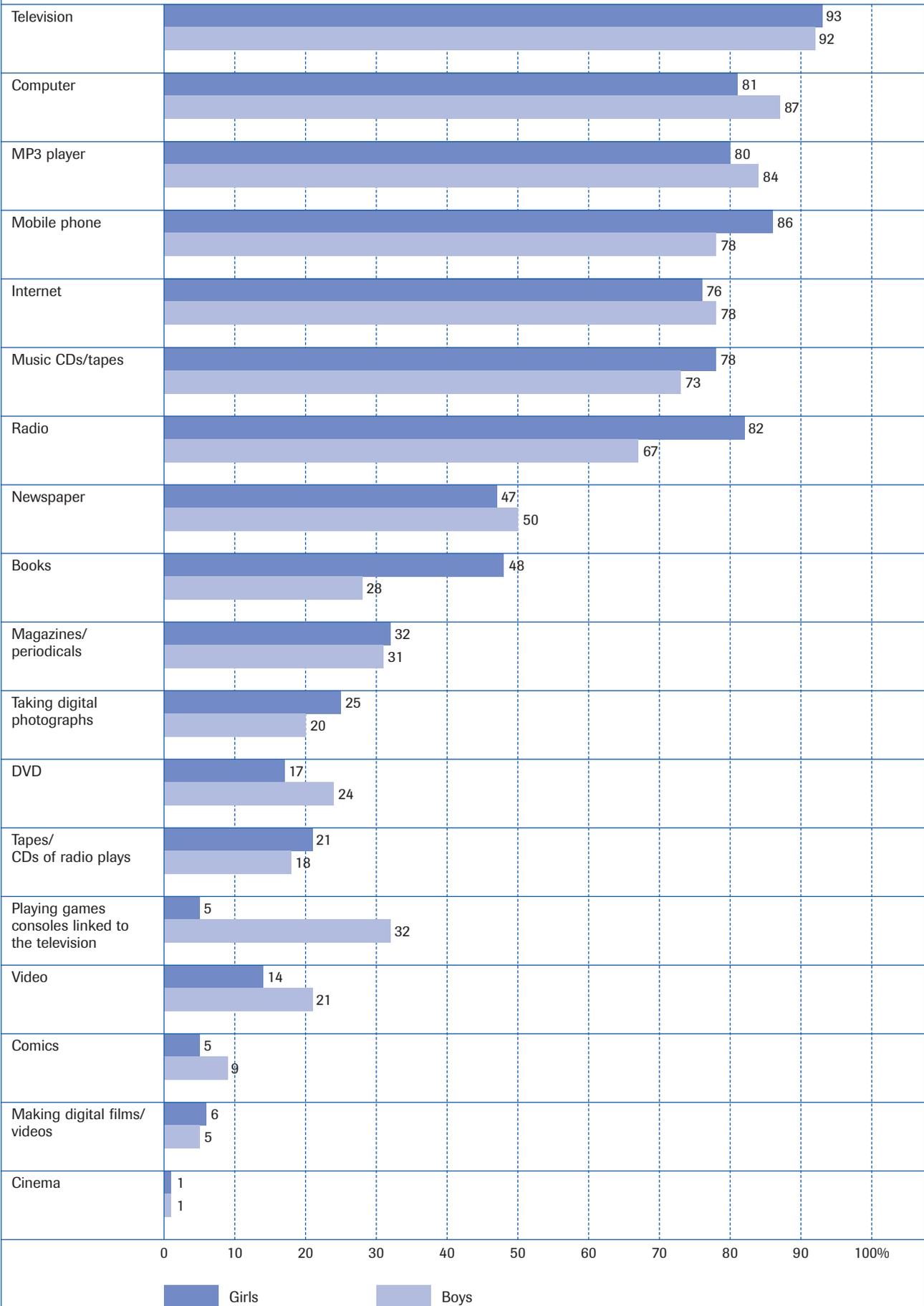
There is a slight difference in the case of older children. Boys and girls continue to be equally well-equipped with mobile phones, albeit to a significantly higher level. 95% of 12 to 19-year old girls and 92% of boys have their own mobile phone. However, whilst more girls have their own audio media (MP3 players, CD players, radios, cassette recorders, Walkmans and Discmans), boys have a significant lead when it comes to owning audiovisual and digital media. Just under three quarters of all boys, compared to just under two thirds of all girls have their own television set. A similar

ratio can be seen in relation to computers and laptops: 72% of boys compared to 61% of girls own a computer or laptop. In addition, a greater percentage of boys (48%) than girls (41%) have their own internet connection. The difference is particularly significant when it comes to games consoles: Whilst almost 60% of boys have their own games console, this is only true for 30% of girls. 16% of boys and 8% of girls have a Playstation Portable (PSP) (cf. JIM 2007, p. 10). If we then take a look at the formal education of young people, clear differences also emerge here. A large number of young people own an MP3 player and this is the only case where there is no correlation between the young people that own them and their level of education. The following statements are true as far as other media are concerned: The lower a young person's level of formal education is, the better equipped he/she is with reception-

2 The figures are taken from the latest studies. In the case of the KIM Study, the figures for 2007 are not yet available.

Fig. 2

**Involvement with media in leisure time, 2007 (daily/several times a week)**



Source: JIM 2007, information in %, basis: all survey participants, n=1.204

oriented media (televisions and DVD players) as well as games media. A higher level of formal education points to being better equipped with digital media (cf. JIM 2007, p. 11). The figures relating to computers and the internet are particularly striking. Whilst 71% of young people attending Gymnasien own their own computer or laptop, this is true of only 57% of young people who attend a Hauptschule. 50% of girls and boys at Gymnasien and 32% of young people attending a Hauptschule have their own internet connection. If we now try to consolidate these figures, we reach the following conclusion:

1. Boys with a low level of formal education are clearly particularly well-equipped with reception-oriented media and games media and
2. Boys with a high level of formal education are more likely to have their own computer and access to the internet.

### Use of media

Young people, both boys and girls not only like to surround themselves with media but also like to occupy themselves with this media. Media-related leisure activities are extremely popular with young people. However, there are also significant differences between the sexes here (cf. JIM Study, p. 12). Young people agree as far as television is concerned. Virtually all girls and boys watch television on a daily basis or several times a week (girls: 93%; boys: 92%). In addition, almost as many boys (86%) as girls (84%) use the internet to this extent. Clearer differences exist as far as using a computer is concerned. A greater number of boys (87%) than girls (81%) use a computer on a daily basis or several times a week. In addition, boys are clearly ahead of girls when it comes to using DVDs and videos with 24% (DVD) and 21% (video) compared to (17% and 14% respectively). However, the difference in relation to games is particularly significant. 32% of boys and 5% of girls regularly use a games console linked up to the television.

Approximately half of all boys (49%) play computer games on a daily basis or several times a week compared to just 16% of girls. Of those who play computer games, 58% of boys play on the computer on a daily basis or several times a week compared to 28% of girls. If we take a closer look at which boys play particularly frequently, it is clear that they are largely younger boys and those with a low level of formal education. 50% of young people at Hauptschulen and 52% of those who attend an Intermediate School play computer games on a daily basis or several times a week. These figures are compared to 40% of young people who attend a Gymnasium (JIM Study 2007, p. 35).

To conclude, we should take a brief look at the use of print media. The frequently quoted idea that boys dislike reading is only confirmed in part by the JIM Study, namely, in so far as almost half of all girls (48%) pick up a book in their free time whilst this applies to just 28% of boys. Boys and girls are largely equal when it comes to the use of other print media. 32% of girls and 31% of boys read magazines on a daily basis or several times a week. A slightly greater number of boys (50%) than girls (47%) read newspapers to this extent.

3 Young people were allowed to specify up to three favourite programmes which were then allocated to the various genres.

To summarise, we can say that, initially, boys continue to be slightly better equipped with their own media than girls. With increasing age, this evens out, but clear gender differences now begin to emerge. It has been shown that boys are more likely than girls to have their own audio-visual and digital appliances. Nevertheless, there are also differences here once again as far as the formal education of the young people is concerned, which sees boys with a higher level of formal education being better provided with computers and internet access whilst boys with a lower level of formal education are better equipped with reception-oriented media and games media. This is also reflected in their media preferences, in so far as boys watch DVDs and videos more often than girls and male Hauptschule pupils make up the group that plays computer games most frequently.

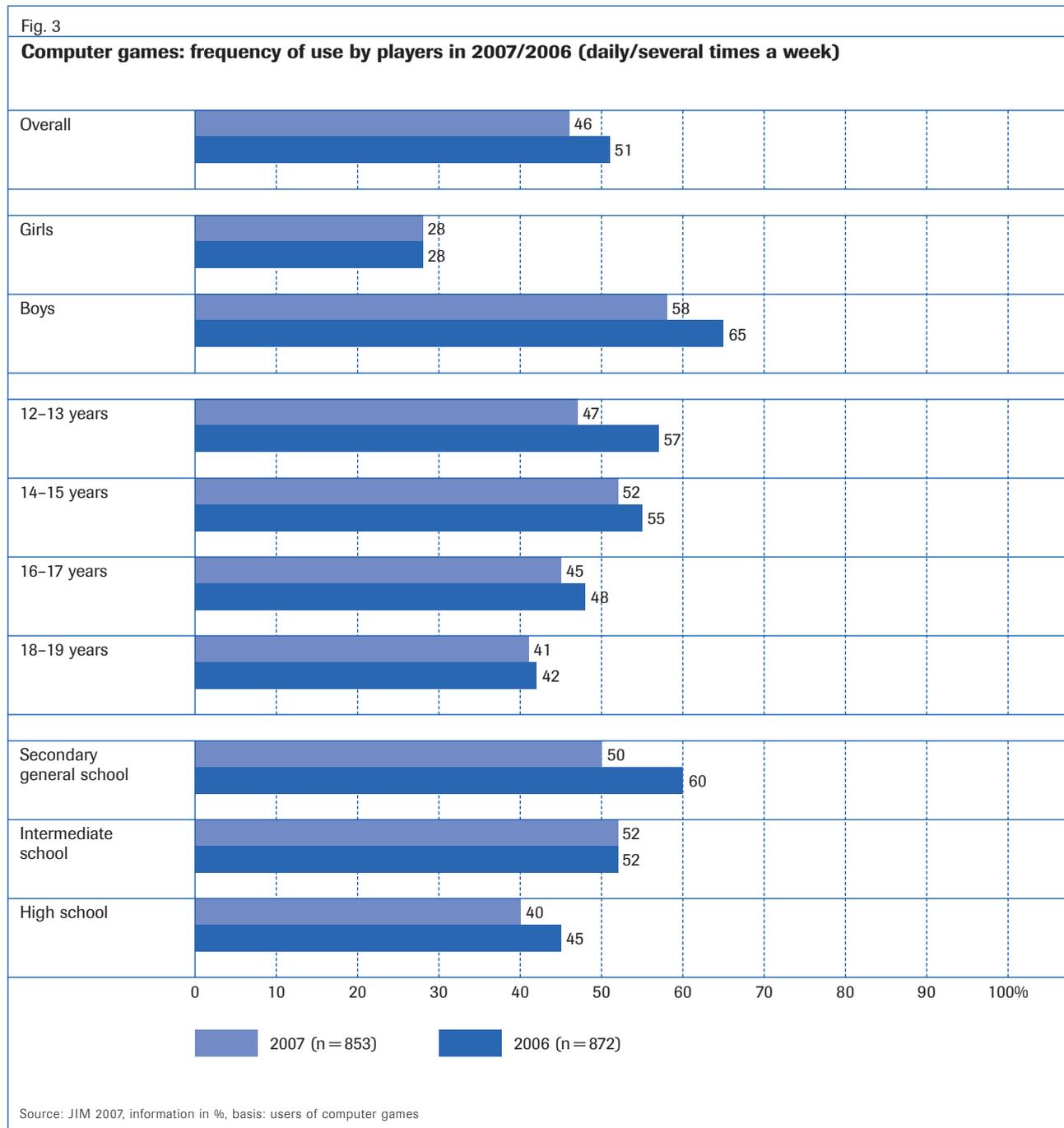
### What functions do media fulfil as far as boys are concerned?

Boys like to occupy themselves with media and their preferences differ according to their age and education, but what do they expect from media? Media take on different functions for all adolescents, the most important functions being entertainment and the use of media to manage mood, the information function, the navigation function and the communicative function of media.

#### Entertainment through action and humour

Above all, feature films, television series and computer games and also the internet serve to entertain girls and boys. Entertainment media offer them the opportunity to enter into other worlds and sometimes also to slip into other roles, but also simply to distract themselves and allow things to wash over them. The importance of television as an entertainment medium for boys can be seen in their programme and genre preferences. Cartoons reign supreme in the case of 12 to 19-year old boys. 63% of boys questioned as part of the JIM Study 2007 specify that their favourite television programme belongs to this genre. Their second favourites are comedies and sitcoms (42%) and thrillers and mystery programmes (35%) (cf. JIM 2007, p. 27).<sup>3</sup> The outstanding significance of computer games in boys' use of media was made clear by the large number of boys that use them and the frequency with which they do so (see Use of media above). When it comes to media entertainment that is specific to boys, an affinity for offers that are funny and laced with humour on the one hand and action on the other hand can be observed. As far as the preference of boys for humorous media is concerned, Christa Gebel and Ursula Thum are of the opinion that: "Boys are interested in family, friendship and love, but they find the form punctuated with irony and parody more pleasant." (GEBEL/THUM 2000, p. 41) An up-to-date qualitative study on the convergence-based appropriation of media by children and young people revealed that boys particularly prefer action-based media and generally do not restrict themselves to one single medium, but rather pursue their preferences through a variety of different media (cf. WAGNER/THEUNERT 2006, p. 74 ff.).

If media are used to manage mood, it is music that comes out on top. Many adolescents, particularly young adolescents, use music to show the way they are currently feeling or to put themselves in a different mood (cf. HARTUNG/REISSMANN 2007).



**Information from the internet**

The fact that the informative function of media also plays an important role for young people, particularly boys, is borne out first of all by their use of media. Besides the genre of programmes that comes under entertainment which boys watch on television, they also count informative programmes among their preferences. Thus the JIM Study 2007 establishes that 41% of boys particularly like to watch informative and news programmes (JIM Study 2007, p. 27). However, the JIM Study also provides indicators which point to the fact that they also value the internet, not least for its informative possibilities. 46% of the 12 to 19-year old boys questioned use the internet on a daily basis or several times a week in order to research information on topics from their everyday lives outside school and 31% search for school-related information. Moreover, 44% keep abreast of current affairs using the internet (ibid., p. 40). The study Youth Sexuality 2006 by the BZgA<sup>4</sup>, which focuses on 14 to 17-year olds, likewise establishes that the internet is an important

information medium, particularly for boys, as far as sex education is concerned. The internet lies in third place with 26% as the preferred information medium, behind magazines aimed at young people, which were cited as the preferred source of information on sexuality by 31% of the boys questioned, and books (27%) (cf. BZgA 2007, p. 22 et seq.).

**A wealth of information and guidance**

The guidance function of media is of great importance, particularly during adolescence. Children and young people have a lot of questions for which they also turn to the media for answers. These concern issues related to development

4 The Youth Sexuality study is an investigation of trends which has been carried out at irregular intervals since 1980 (1980, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2006) on behalf of the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA).

and current problems, uncertainties regarding norms and values and the search for things with which they are able to identify. The most important task faced by adolescents is to develop their own social and sexual identity. It is for this reason that they also keep an eye out in the media for inspiration and guidance. They come across young people in various situations and facing different circumstances in magazines aimed at young people, in television series, in films and on the internet. They are faced with women and men who fulfil their roles in various ways. How children and young people deal with these offerings depends first of all on their age and gender, but their social class and their educational background also play a role in this. Therefore, younger children pay more attention to child-like figures, girls look more towards women and female figures, whilst boys look predominantly towards men and masculine figures. Moreover, various studies have shown that children and young people from socially disadvantaged milieus are often faced with traditional role models at home: the man's job is to support the family and to protect the woman and children. The woman takes on the role of the housewife and mother, eases the burden on the man and concerns herself with bringing up the children. Adolescents growing up in socially privileged milieus are confronted with a greater range of role attributes in their everyday lives as well as a greater number of different lifestyles. These everyday experiences are also reflected in the media preferences of children and young people. It has therefore been revealed that, above all, boys from socially disadvantaged milieus have their eye on strong heroes who are mainly found in action-packed offerings (cf. e.g. THEUNERT 2007, THEUNERT/SCHORB 1996, THEUNERT/GEBEL 2000).

#### Communication made easy

A final important function that media play in the lives of adolescents is the communicative function. This has become more important over the past few years with the spread of mobile phones and the internet. Young people keep in touch with their peer group, friends and relatives via e-mail and text. Both boys and girls use "instant messaging" (for example ICQ)<sup>5</sup> and amuse themselves in fora, communities and chat rooms where they chat to their friends or make new acquaintances (cf. JIM Study 2007). Communicating using media has many advantages for adolescents, namely that even great distances can be easily overcome, for example – it doesn't take several days to receive an e-mail or a text message as is the case with a letter, but rather the recipient receives it within a very short period of time. Moreover, it is possible to chat anonymously to others on the internet. Anyone not wishing to disclose their identity does not have to and can even try out different identities (cf. SCHORB et al., 2004). However, the communicative possibilities also bear hidden dangers, for example, when taboo images or films are exchanged over the internet and more and more frequently also via mobile phone. This is a way of using media that can be seen particularly among boys, as found by FRIEDRICH KROTZ (cf. KROTZ 2007). They believe that by doing this, they are able to prove their coolness and

fearlessness. This type of media usage becomes particularly problematic if it is used to exert pressure on others (cf. SCHELL 2006).

#### Conclusion

There is no such thing as a use of media that is typical of boys. However, there are distinctive features and particularities that can be seen especially in the use of media by boys. These primarily include the following:

- Boys are better equipped with audiovisual, but also, above all, with digital appliances, such as computers and games consoles and the internet,
- Boys are very interested in computer games,
- Boys prefer media offerings whose contents are paired with jokes and humour,
- Boys are attracted to strong heroes and have an affinity for action which can be observed mainly in boys from socially disadvantaged milieus,
- Boys prefer the internet as an information medium,
- Boys use mobile phones in a way that can become problematic.

Boys value media as entertainment. Computer games play a particularly important role here. However, they also make use of media in order to gather information. The internet is becoming increasingly important in this area. The following conclusions can be drawn from this as far as the ability to reach boys is concerned: Anyone wishing to reach boys should first of all also have their eye on the internet as an information medium. Secondly, the results indicate that boys often find it easier to deal with difficult or embarrassing subjects, like sexuality for some boys, if they are occasionally able to smirk or laugh about it.

*Susanne Eggert*

<sup>5</sup> Instant messaging is a form of communication on the internet which allows you to form private chat groups which cannot be accessed by people you do not know.



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## BOOKLETS

### **Gewalt von Jungen mit Migrationshintergrund in Berlin** [Violence of boys from immigrant backgrounds in Berlin]

The Landeskommision Berlin gegen Gewalt [Berlin State Commission against Violence] has issued a publication on the topic of "The violence of boys, male youths and young men from immigrant backgrounds in Berlin". This report by a working group that personally deals with this particular issue analyses the significant risk factors for violent behaviour of young males from immigrant backgrounds, provides information regarding statistical data on violent crime in connection with social, cultural and legal influencing factors, cites risk factors and makes a number of recommendations.

The central task for the prevention of violence which arises out of the comprehensive analysis is to improve access to education and employment. Recommendations are made for areas including education and upbringing (nurseries, schools and youth welfare centres), sport, youth culture, police work, justice and organisations working with immigrants.

Thanks to its comprehensiveness and the fact that it is firmly rooted in practice, the report by the State Commission serves as an utterly unique aid for many fields of school-based and non-school based youth work. It comprises 225 pages and is also available as a PDF file:

[www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/presse/archiv/20070327.1045.75199.html](http://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/presse/archiv/20070327.1045.75199.html).

#### **Can be obtained from:**

Landeskommision Berlin gegen Gewalt  
Geschäftsstelle  
Manuela Bohleemann  
Klosterstraße 47  
10179 Berlin

Telephone +49 (0) 30 90 27 29 13  
Fax +49 (0) 30 90 27 29 21  
[www.berlin-gegen-gewalt.de](http://www.berlin-gegen-gewalt.de)

### **HPV-Impfung** [HPV vaccination]

In February 2007, the German Standing Vaccination Committee recommended that all girls between the ages of 12 and 17 be vaccinated against human papilloma virus (HPV vaccination). Since April 2007, the costs associated with this have been borne by the health insurance funds and the scheme has also since been extended to women over the age of 18. This means that many parents, girls and young women now face the question of whether to have the vaccination.

Many institutions have since begun to address this issue, for example, the Women, Girls and Health Network has produced a factsheet entitled "HPV Vaccination: New Protection against Cervical Cancer?" on behalf of the Bielefeld District Health Conference. The factsheet provides basic factual information on HPV infection and on vaccination and helps girls and women to make an informed decision.

#### **Editor:**

Kommunale Gesundheitskonferenz  
Geschäftsstelle – Stadt Bielefeld  
33597 Bielefeld  
Telephone +49 (0) 5 21 51 67 37  
[cornelia.petzold@bielefeld.de](mailto:cornelia.petzold@bielefeld.de)

### **Frischer Wind & Guter Grund – Grundlagen und Perspektiven der Mädchenarbeit** [Fresh Wind & Good Reasons – Principles and Perspectives of Work with Girls]

The latest newsletter No. 9 issued by the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Mädchenarbeit in NRW e.V. [North Rhine-Westphalia Regional Working Committee for Work with Girls]

documents lectures, workshops and discussions led by the LAG Mädchenarbeit NRW in 2006/2007. What place does work with girls have in times of gender mainstreaming, PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and postmodernism?

What are the perspectives for contemporary work with girls? Topics and contents include: Work with girls and images of girls, coeducation and single-sex education, vocational orientation and equality of opportunity on the labour market, local surveys aimed at girls as a tool to encourage participation, results of the survey of groups working with girls in North Rhine-Westphalia and theoretical contexts of justification of work with girls.

Newsletter No. 9 costs 8.00 euros plus postage.

#### **Address for orders:**

LAG Mädchenarbeit in NRW e.V.  
Robertstraße 5a  
42107 Wuppertal  
Telephone +49 (0) 202 75 95 04 6  
Fax +49 (0) 202 75 95 04 7  
[lag@maedchenarbeit-nrw.de](mailto:lag@maedchenarbeit-nrw.de)  
[www.maedchenarbeit-nrw.de](http://www.maedchenarbeit-nrw.de)

## SPECIALIST BOOKLET SERIES

### **Teenagerschwangerschaften in Berlin und Brandenburg. Angebote und Hilfebedarf aus professioneller Sicht** [Teenage pregnancy in Berlin and Brandenburg. Offers and the need for help from the point of view of the professionals]

The federal states of Berlin und Brandenburg are characterised by a high rate of teenage pregnancy, both those that end in abortion and live births. In addition, Berlin is among the towns and cities having a high proportion of young women from immigrant backgrounds.

In 2006, experts working in the field were questioned on behalf of the

BZgA in Berlin and Brandenburg about their experiences of advising and caring for pregnant minors.

Both female and male employees from a range of organisations including pregnancy advisory centres, youth welfare centres and employment agencies, schools and mother-child facilities as well as gynaecologists and midwives were questioned as part of qualitative interviews.

The aim of the study was to establish what kinds of offers and assistance are available for pregnant minors and teenage mothers in Berlin und Brandenburg and how the experts in this field regard the situation. In particular, the question arises as to whether young people are aware of the initiatives that exist and whether they take advantage of these initiatives. A further topic was the specific situation of pregnant minors and teenage mothers from immigrant backgrounds.

The study was published as volume 28 of the specialist booklet series "Research and Practice of Sex Education and Family Planning" and can be purchased for a nominal fee of 11.00 euros.

**Address for orders:**

BZgA  
51101 Köln  
Fax +49 (0) 221 89 92 257  
order@bzga.de  
Order No. 13300028

**Gender-Fragen in männlich dominierten Organisationen [Gender issues in male-dominated organisations]**

This study produced by the BZgA, which was published as volume 29 of the specialist series of booklets "Research and Practice of Sex Education and Family Planning" in October 2007, reports on experiences with the further education programme "Partnerschaftlich handeln" [Acting in Partnership] in the German army.

The aim of the training manual "Partnerschaftlich handeln" is to raise the awareness of young people in education and training with regard to gender-related issues. Its contents are particularly relevant in organisations, in which the vast majority of employees are men and to which women are increasingly gaining access. From 2002 to 2004, a series of seminars were carried out, supported by academics, that were aimed at teaching staff in the

army who are involved with the training of instructors. The specialist booklet presents the results for topics including the ability to reconcile family and work and sexual harassment in the workplace.

The publication comprises 156 pages and can be purchased for a nominal fee of 11.00 is available free of charge .

**Address for orders:**

BZgA  
51101 Köln  
Fax +49 (0) 221 89 92 257  
order@bzga.de  
Order No. 13300029

**MAGAZINES**

**Jungen [Boys]**

A 130-page booklet on the topic of "Boys" has been published as part of the series "School Pupils" by Friedrich-Verlag. It contains many informative contributions which over the course of five chapters deal with the realm of experience of boys, role models, the body, school and the world of work. With a total of 41 articles written by designated specialists, the editors of this series succeed as usual in taking into account all of the important aspects of the topic.

The booklet "School Pupils 2007: Boys" costs 14.50 euros plus shipping costs and can be purchased from the book and magazine shop or from the publisher.

**Address for orders:**

Erhard Friedrich Verlag GmbH  
Postfach 10 01 50  
30917 Seelze  
Telephone +49 (0) 511 40 00 04 151  
Fax +49 (0) 511 40 00 04 19  
www.friedrich-verlagsgruppe.de

**BOOKS**

**Sexualpädagogik in interkulturellen Gruppen [Sex education in intercultural groups]**

Sex therapist Meral Renz has published a book aimed at teachers and educationalists working in the non-school based sector, which provides background knowledge on the contexts of sexuality, culture and identity and raises awareness of the various ways of dealing with

the subject of sexuality. It provides information on how young people from different cultures deal with this topic, what you should pay particular attention to as far as wording and representation are concerned and how to gain acceptance from parents.

Methodical references and worksheets help to address the topic of sexuality on various levels. The worksheets are so versatile in their subject matter that they can be used across a wide range of subjects.

"Sex Education in Intercultural Groups" is published by Verlag an der Ruhr and costs 22.00 euros.

**Can be obtained from:**

Bookshops

**STUDIES**

**Bildungs(miss)erfolge von Jungen und Berufswahlverhalten bei Jungen/männlichen Jugendlichen [Educational successes/failures of boys and the behaviour of boys/male youths when choosing a profession]**

Boys are generally less successful at school than girls. Approximately one boy in ten leaves school without any qualifications.

A new study by Jürgen Budde on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) compares the school performance and grades of boys and girls in all types of school and arrives at the following conclusions, among others: the lower the level of qualification provided by a type of school, the higher the proportion of boys attending the school. Boys are more likely to have to repeat a year than their female counterparts, particularly in the case of Gymnasien. Boys from immigrant backgrounds demonstrate particularly poor educational performance. They are forced to repeat a year at primary school considerably more often and achieve lower qualifications.

The professional choices made and educational paths followed by boys are based on traditional gender models and cover jobs in the manual and industrial sectors. This may increasingly prove to be a risky strategy given the change towards a knowledge-based service economy. However, in contrast to girls/young women, boys often show themselves to be more successful as far

as the transition to university and the world of work are concerned and secure better paid and more career-oriented jobs. Some young men experience great difficulties on the labour market. This effect is intensified for immigrants. There is a correlation between excessive media consumption and poor performance at school.

The complete study was published as part of the Bildungsforschung series, volume 23, and is also available for download by following the link below: <http://www.bmbf.de/pub/Bildungsmiss-erfolg.pdf>

**Address for orders:**

Bundesministerium für  
Bildung und Forschung  
Postfach 30 02 35  
53182 Bonn  
Telephone +49 (0) 1805 262 302  
Fax +49 (0) 1805 262 303  
[books@bmbf.bund.de](mailto:books@bmbf.bund.de)  
<http://www.bmbf.de>

**Nummer gegen Kummer  
[German equivalent of ChildLine]**

In December 2007, the umbrella organisation of the children’s, young people’s and parents’ telephone service in Germany published the results of a study which shows that more and more children, young people and parents are seeking anonymous advice over the telephone or comfort from the voluntary advisors who work for the service, of which there are more than 3500. The organisation “Nummer gegen Kummer”, which is a member of the German child protection league, has been offering free advice on everyday problems and in difficult situations to children, young people and parents for 27 years now.

Thanks to the authenticity of the study results which are based on almost 240,000 telephone conversations where advice was given, the “Nummer gegen Kummer” study is of great importance, both for all people who work on behalf of the interests of children, young people and parents, and for specialist and academic discussion.

According to this study, the main subject that young people are concerned about is relationship problems, whilst parents are feeling increasingly overburdened by bringing up their children. Interested parties can find detailed results on the internet.

**Contact:**

Nummer gegen Kummer e.V.

Beate Friese  
Kleiner Werth 34  
42275 Wuppertal  
Telephone +49 (0) 202 25 90 59 15  
[presse@nummergegenkummer.de](mailto:presse@nummergegenkummer.de)  
[www.nummergegenkummer.de](http://www.nummergegenkummer.de)

**INTERNET**

**Unterrichtsmaterialien Jungen  
[Teaching resources relating  
to the topic of boys]**

The specialist working group on work with boys that forms part of the local youth education organisations in Hesse has compiled and presented in a clear format a comprehensive overview of the topic “Boys” using teaching resources, projects, films/DVDs, radio and television programmes and methodical approaches for the Hesse learning and education archive. Under the heading “theoretical background”, a number of recommended specialist books, articles and booklets are listed.

**Contact:**

[lernarchiv.bildung.hessen.de/  
erziehung/ezg/jungen/index.html](http://lernarchiv.bildung.hessen.de/erziehung/ezg/jungen/index.html)

**Kindergesundheit  
[Children’s health]**

A new BZgA online portal aimed at promoting the healthy development of children and young people provides parents and experts with up-to-date information and provides tips and answers to many questions that arise in everyday life with children. It familiarises parents with the specialist knowledge about the main features of child development, provides concrete advice on how to deal with babies who cry frequently and on nutrition-related questions, for example, and shows how it is possible to promote the health of children. The offer is supplemented by links to additional information and materials. For experts, the portal also provides up-to-date information in conjunction with a number of links that explore deeper. Both target groups have the opportunity to communicate with designated experts on specific topics in chat rooms. Plans are currently underway to extend the service to the target group of young people.

**Contact:**

[www.kindergesundheit-info.de](http://www.kindergesundheit-info.de)

**Girls’ Day-Aktionsportal  
[Girls’ Day Action Portal]**

Natural sciences, skilled trades, technology and IT offer prospects for girls. On the Girls’ Day – Mädchen-Zukunftstag, companies and plants throughout Germany invite female school pupils from the first year of secondary education onwards to explore future careers. A new action portal is available for this purpose at [www.girls-day.de](http://www.girls-day.de). Girls, parents, teachers and those responsible for training can find information and tips on practice here to prepare themselves. Schools that are incorporating the Girls’ Day 2009 into their vocational orientation activities can make their commitment visible in the “Schulen” [Schools] section under “Wir sind dabei!” [We are part of it!]. Companies and organisations have the opportunity to take part in the campaign day that is taking place across Germany and to enter events for girls in technical, manual and science-related professions and on the topic of autonomy on the campaign map at [www.girls-day.de](http://www.girls-day.de). The Girls’ Day – Mädchen-Zukunftstag is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and by money from the European Social Fund and takes place on the fourth Thursday in April each year.

**Contact:**

Carmen Ruffer  
Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-  
Chancengleichheit e.V.  
Girls’ Day – Mädchen-Zukunftstag  
Wilhelm-Bertelsmann-Straße 10  
33602 Bielefeld  
Telephone +49 (0) 521 10 67 37 8  
Fax +49 (0) 521 10 67 37 7  
[ruffer@girls-day.de](mailto:ruffer@girls-day.de)  
[www.girls-day.de](http://www.girls-day.de)

**FILMS**

**Lust und Frust  
[Lust and Frustration]**

Under the slogan “SEX FILM(S)”, the Media Project Wuppertal has produced a comprehensive new series of sex education feature films with young people this year, which is scheduled to be released as a new educational resource on three DVDs entitled “Lust und Frust” [Lust and Frustration].

In the projects, work is done either entirely or partially in single sex groups in order to produce a presentation that is as autonomous from the other sex and as personal as possible, both in terms of content and physically.

At the heart of the films, which are produced by girls and boys of various ages, cultural, social and educational backgrounds, under the supervision of specialists in media education, lie very personal, biographical accounts of specific aspects of their respective sexuality.

**Information and distribution:**

Andreas von Hören  
Medienprojekt Wuppertal e.V.  
Hofaue 59  
42103 Wuppertal  
Telephone +49 (0) 202 95 63 26 47  
Fax +49 (0) 202 44 68 69 1  
info@medienprojekt-wuppertal.de  
www.medienprojekt-wuppertal.de

**Anders als geplant  
[Not quite as I planned]**

The feature film "Not quite as I planned" ["Anders als geplant"] tells the story of 17-year old Sandra, who unexpectedly falls pregnant and feels confused and helpless in the face of her situation. Her best friend and parents notice the changes in her behaviour and her reservedness, but she does not tell anyone about her problem at first. It is only when she visits a gynaecologist that her pregnancy is finally confirmed for certain.

The 28-minute film produced by the Caritasverband der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart e.V., shows among other things the reactions of the parents who are worried about their daughter, the girl's boyfriend Hassan, who is the father of the child, the reaction of the girl's brother and that of her friend. The situation in an advisory centre is depicted and only a few memorable sentences can be heard during the film.

The DVD, which is aimed at 14 to 17-year old young people, contains accompanying material to consolidate the individual components of the film, alongside material that can be used to advise and support pregnant girls and material regarding the legal situation, etc. It can be used in schools as well as in work with young people and parents and costs 14.95 euros (7.95 euros for members of the Caritas and diocese organisations).

**Address for orders:**

Aktion "Wir helfen weiter"  
Birgit Baumgärtner  
Strombergstraße 11  
70188 Stuttgart  
Telephone +49 (0) 711 26 33 11 40  
baumgärtner@caritas-dicvrs.de

**CONFERENCES**

**Jungenarbeit als Gewaltprävention  
[Work with boys as a method  
of preventing violence]**

The two-day seminar "Work with boys as a method of preventing violence – methods and other approaches for carrying out educational work with boys in schools and youth welfare centres" is being organised by the Landesstelle Jugendschutz Niedersachsen [Lower Saxony Regional Office for the Protection of Young People].

"Boys are both perpetrators and victims of violence. Both aspects must be taken into account in the work with boys to prevent violence", is the message conveyed by the advertisement. Against this background, the seminar addresses the gender-typical conditions in which violence occurs and the useful possible reactions to violence as well as addressing the skills of men and women in dealing with boys. The event is aimed at education specialists in schools and youth welfare centres.

Under the heading "Introduction to Working with Boys", conceptual principles are presented and approaches to working with boys are tested in an exemplary manner. The issues addressed include encouraging and supporting boys by providing them with guidance on life and careers and by demonstrating constructive behaviour in situations of conflict.

During the second part of the seminar, "Introduction to Violence Prevention", ways of approaching boys which serve to prevent violence in a targeted manner are presented, among other things. The issues of disability, immigration and social origin are tackled and self-assertion training courses with boys are presented.

The seminar will take place on 23 September (part 1) and 21 October 2008 (part 2) in Hannover. The seminar costs 100 euros including meals.

**Contact:**

Landesstelle Jugendschutz  
Niedersachsen  
Fachreferat der LAG der Freien

Wohlfahrtspflege  
Leisewitzstraße 26  
30175 Hannover  
Telephone +49 (0) 5 11 85 87 88  
Fax +49 (0) 5 11 2 83 49 54  
info@jugendschutz-niedersachsen.de

**Sexuelle Lebenskunst und  
Pädagogik – zwischen  
Machbarkeit und Inspiration  
[Sexual art of living and education  
– between feasibility and  
inspiration]**

From 26 to 27 September 2008, the University of Kiel is holding a jubilee conference to mark the 10th anniversary of the existence of the Gesellschaft für Sexualpädagogik e.V. (GSP) [Society for Sex Education].

"Sexual art of living" covers a wide range of meaning from the "naked" art of survival to the art of loving, from a sophisticated type of eroticism dating back to the ancient world

to the post-modern art of loving. Given the diverse range of popular ways of achieving happiness, shaping your own lust and love life is far from being a simple task and is also not an easy subject to deal with in education. The GSP celebrates the "art" of sex education in lectures, workshops and discussion fora.

Both the readings and the workshops are offered simultaneously in different rooms. Prof. Wilhelm Schmid will speak in his main lecture about the "sexual art of living" and will then open up the floor for discussion.

**Information and registration:**

www.gsp-ev.de  
www.tagung-gsp.de

**Sexualpädagogik im  
interkulturellen Alltag  
[Sex education in intercultural  
everyday life]**

The isp [Institute for Sex Education] is holding an open seminar on this subject from 11 to 12 September 2008 at the Christoffel-Blindenmission conference hall in Bensheim, which will provide an overview of all of the important areas of intercultural sex education.

**Information:**

http://isp-dortmund.de/angebote-sexualpaedagogik/offene-seminare/sexualpaedagogik-im-interkulturellen-alltag-20.html

**QUALIFICATION**

**Qualitätssiegel in der Sexualpädagogik  
[Quality seal in sex education]**

Since 1 January 2008, the Gesellschaft für Sexualpädagogik (GSP) has been awarding a quality seal to individuals and organisations involved in the field of sex education.

The aim is to ensure the quality of work in the field of sex education in Germany, as the job title sex education specialist has not been protected by the state up until this point. The GSP is therefore awarding practitioners their qualification in sex education and is thereby making a decisive contribution to making sex education a recognised profession. With the introduction of its seal, the GSP is also leading the way in the field of quality assurance in sex education in the European context.

The award of the seal is based on defined standards for education and training and work experience. Both employees and freelance professionals working in the field will have greater evidence in the future to prove their specialist status.

The award of the seal entitles the holder to write the title “Sex Education Specialist (GSP)” after his/her name. This provides the institutions and employers involved in the field of sex education with a greater sense of security and improved quality when selecting candidates for posts.

You can download further information on the quality seal, the application process and the application form from GSP’s homepage.

**Contact:**

[www.gsp-ev.de](http://www.gsp-ev.de)

**INSTITUTIONS**

**LAG Jungenarbeit in NRW  
[North Rhine-Westphalia Regional Working Committee for Work with Boys]**

The North Rhine-Westphalia Regional Working Committee for Work with Boys was founded in 1999. It currently has approximately 60 members including specialists, initiatives, societies, associations and regional specialist working groups from North Rhine-

Westphalia. A number of other specialists, working groups and institutions also participate in the work with boys carried out by the Regional Working Committee.

The committee’s homepage, which features the positions and principles held by the Regional Working Committee, its history, current areas of activity and provision, states that “the principal aims of the committee are to support boys and young men in their development to become people who are in touch with their emotions, socially responsible and able to think for themselves and to make equal opportunities for the sexes a reality”. The Regional Working Committee for Work with Boys wishes to systematically promote and professionalise gender-based work with boys. Conceptual and political work and networking are defined as important areas of activity.

The Fachstelle für Jungenarbeit NRW [North Rhine-Westphalia Specialist Centre for Work with Boys], which is sponsored by the LAG Jungenarbeit NRW [North Rhine-Westphalia Regional Working Committee for Work with Boys], was founded in 2002. This specialist centre puts on further education events, arranges speakers and provides advice on technical and financial matters relating to work with boys and much more.

**Contact:**

Fachstelle Jungenarbeit/  
Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft  
Jungenarbeit e.V. NRW  
Sandro Dell’Anna  
c/o Union Gewerbehof  
Huckarder Straße 12  
44147 Dortmund  
Telephone +49 (0) 231 53 42 17 4  
[info@jungenarbeiter.de](mailto:info@jungenarbeiter.de)  
[www.lagjungenarbeit.de](http://www.lagjungenarbeit.de)

**Fachstelle Jungenarbeit  
Rheinland-Pfalz/Saarland e.V.  
[Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland Specialist Centre for Work with Boys]**

As a result of the 1st BZgA European Specialist Conference “Sex Education for Young People”, which was held in 1994 in Cologne, the inter-regional and inter-sponsored model project “Jungenarbeit Rheinland-Pfalz/Saarland” [Work with Boys in Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland] was created in 1997, sponsored by the Paritätischen Bildungswerkes Rheinland-Pfalz/Saar-

land, out of which the Specialist Centre for Work with Boys was developed. Its aim is to thematise gender-conscious approaches to working with boys and young men in youth welfare organisations and in schools and to develop and test concepts for working with boys and men in a gender-conscious manner and to establish these in everyday practice.

In addition to offering further training courses and specialist conferences, advice and collaboration on the development and implementation of qualification events in youth welfare establishments, the specialist centre also provides individual and group supervision and provides speakers for further training initiatives.

A material and information exchange scheme and a specialist library are also available.

**Contact:**

PARITÄTisches Bildungswerk  
Landesverband Rheinland-  
Pfalz/Saarland e.V.  
Fachstelle Jungenarbeit  
Lothar Reuter  
Feldmannstraße 92  
66119 Saarbrücken  
Telephone +49 (0) 681 92 660-22  
Fax +49 (0) 681 92 660-23  
[l.reuter@quarternet.de](mailto:l.reuter@quarternet.de)  
[www.pbw-rlp-saar.de](http://www.pbw-rlp-saar.de)  
[www.jungenarbeit-online.de](http://www.jungenarbeit-online.de)

**Dokumentationsstelle Jungenarbeit Hamburg  
[Hamburg Documentation Centre for Work with Boys]**

The Documentation Centre for Work with Boys has set itself the task of providing information on activities relating to all areas of gender-conscious and gender-sensitive youth work/boys’ education with its main focus on boys and to strengthen and promote the exchange of ideas and networking in the area of work with boys. On the website sponsored by the Stiftung Mensch [People’s Foundation], interested parties can find a wealth of dates on which events are taking place, further training opportunities, addresses of organisations, establishments and networks in and around Hamburg and throughout Germany. As well as providing additional services, the site contains a comprehensive database of experts and literature.

**Contact:**

Dokumentationsstelle Jungenarbeit

c/o Stadtteilverein Im Tarpenwinkel  
Käkenkamp 3  
22419 Hamburg  
Telephone +49 (0) 173 91 65 030  
info@jungenarbeit.de  
www.jungenarbeit.syncope.de

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## 50 Jahre Lebenshilfe [50 years of Lebenshilfe]

On 23 November 1958, Lebenshilfe was founded to help mentally handicapped children and their parents at a time when handicapped children were still hidden away by their parents, who were full of fear and shame, as a result of persecution by the Nazis, as reported by the Federal Association of Lebenshilfe in a press release in January. The self-help association now has 130,000 members, over 60,000 full-time employees and over 15,000 volunteers and cares for more than 160,000 children, young people and adults in around 3000 establishments and services.

In 2008, which marks its jubilee, there are a number of special events taking place such as for example a large culture festival, which took place on 6 June in Berlin and a ceremony which is to be held on 23 November in Marburg. The Lebenshilfe homepage provides detailed information on additional events and publications.

### **Contact:**

[www.lebenshilfe.de](http://www.lebenshilfe.de)

## Reports

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### **FORUM** *Sex education and family planning*

A series of publications from the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA).

Department of Sex Education, Contraception and Family Planning

Ostmerheimer Straße 220

51109 Köln

[www.forum.sexualaufklaerung.de](http://www.forum.sexualaufklaerung.de)

The German Library – recorded under CIP as Forum Sexualaufklärung; Informationsdienst der Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung/BZgA

Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung, Abteilung Sexualaufklärung, Verhütung und Familienplanung – Köln: BZgA

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