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## DOING MASCULINITY, DOING FEMININITY. INTERETHNIC VIOLENCE IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*This article presents the quantitative and qualitative empirical results of our study on interethnic violence in the school environment – conducted in Austria, Cyprus, England, Italy and Slovenia. By discussing the different experiences boys and girls make with regard to the frequency and forms of interethnic violence as well as their different options in regard to violent practices we argue that violence is always gendered. Hence, rather than analysing the causes of violent behaviour, we will discuss the dynamics of the violence itself. Our aim is to address violent practices as practices of doing gender. In this context, the article emphasises the issue of how masculinity and femininity are performed and constructed at the intersection with ethnicity.*

**Keywords:** Interethnic violence, gender, doing masculinity, doing femininity

## FARE MASCOLINITÀ, FARE FEMMINILITÀ. VIOLENZA INTERETNICA IN AMBITO SCOLASTICO

### SINTESI

*Questo contributo presenta i risultati di una ricerca condotta con strumenti quantitativi e qualitativi in Austria, Cipro, Inghilterra, Italia e Slovenia sul tema della violenza interetnica in ambito scolastico. Analizzando le diverse esperienze riportate dai ragazzi e dalle ragazze rispetto alle modalità e alla frequenza degli episodi di violenza interetnica, nonché le diverse opinioni e atteggiamenti nei confronti dei comportamenti violenti, il presente articolo sostiene che la violenza è sempre connotata dal punto di vista del genere. Per questo motivo, il contributo indaga non tanto le cause del comportamento aggressivo, quanto le dinamiche attraverso cui tali atteggiamenti si verificano a scuola, secondo un'ottica di genere. Partendo da questo presupposto l'articolo si focalizza su come le caratteristiche maschili e femminili interagiscono e si costruiscono intersecandosi con gli aspetti etnici.*

**Parole chiave:** violenza interetnica, genere, fare maschilità, fare femminilità.

INTERETHNIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER  
AT SCHOOLS. INTRODUCTION

School violence has been of scientific interest since the early 1990s, gaining momentum with each school shooting, most prominent of which was Columbine High school in 1999 (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Eisenbraun, 2007, 460). Over the last ten years, the issue has also received public attention in Europe. Research into school violence has been studying the causes of pupils' violence by focussing on class, race and ethnicity. Gender and violence in the school environment is still rather underexplored and existing research into gender violence in schools has focussed on sexual harassment (Leach & Humphreys, 2007, 51; Mirsky, 2003). On the other hand, gendered violence has been on the feminist agenda since the 1970s women's movements' mobilization against male intimate partner violence against women and girls rooted in hierarchical gender relations. Only recently the debate on gender violence at the intersection with ethnicity emerged around the issue of "traditional harmful practices" such as genital cutting and honour killings in migrant communities in European countries (Sauer, 2011).

The starting point for our research was interethnic violence in school environments of pupils 10-12 and 17-18 years of age in five European countries: Austria, Cyprus, England, Italy and Slovenia, countries with distinctly different histories with respect to histories of migration, gender equality and democracy.<sup>1</sup> We examined the frequency and forms of interethnic violence as well as good practices to deal with interethnic violence, referring to the term "violence-resilient school" (Watkins et al., 2007, 61). While concentrating on the school environment, we were aware that research shows that pupils feel safer in school than they do on their way to and from school (Eisenbraun, 2007, 461). The ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the pupils we interviewed vary among the countries under examination. In Austria we interviewed mainly pupils who perceived themselves as Austrian, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Turkish or Slovenian. Pupils in England had mainly English or British as well as Indian and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds. Pupils in Italy were mainly of Italian, Albanian, Croatian or Serbian origin while pupils in Cyprus primarily had a Cypriot, Greek, English or Russian ethnic background. In Slovenia most pupils perceived themselves as either Slovenian or Bosnian or Serbian.

Defining 'violence' was one of the major challenges of our study. We defined violence as psychological and/or physical aggression where a person or a group

of persons hurts or harms or has the intention to hurt or harm another person or group of persons (Köhler, 2006, 7). Violence is conceptualized as a continuum of actions (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, 117) and as "a multi-faceted construct that involves both criminal acts and aggression" (Furlong & Morrison, 2000, 71). In our understanding, school violence includes perpetrators, victims of violence, the practice of violence as well as witnessing it, physical and verbal violence such as rumour spreading, verbal intimidation and threats, teasing, name-calling and stereotyping (Eisenbraun, 2007, 461). Interethnic violence is understood as violence based on different ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and national identities of pupils defined through the language spoken at home. Interethnic violence refers to both the violence of mainstream society's pupils towards ethnically different pupils as well as that of ethnical minorities towards pupils of from the mainstream. However, we observed that pupils very often did not interpret specific situations and actions as violent.

In scrutinizing interethnic violence, we included the gendered dimension of violence, as well as sexual violence (Mills, 2001), "the fear of violence, both *between* females and males and *among* females or *among* males" (Leach & Humphreys, 2007, 53), and specifically, patterns of violent masculinity. In general, violence "is widespread in schools, that most often such violence is perpetrated by males and can thus be understood as a violent expression of certain types of masculinity": Schools are an arena in the "making of masculinities" (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, 118). Most of the research results on interethnic violence at schools in the countries under research – often drawn from large-scale studies such as PISA or TIMSS<sup>2</sup> – focus on differences in the frequency and forms of violence experienced between boys and girls. However, this research did not elaborate on the issue of unequal gender relations and their reproduction in the school environment. Our article aims to shift the focus. We will start from the idea of gendered patterns of interethnic violence and want to interpret these differences in frequency by looking at how violent dynamics not only mirror gendered differences but how violence is a means of constructing masculinity and femininity at the intersection of ethnicity.

The article is based on the argument that pupils' experience of interethnic violence is always gendered. Therefore we focus less on the causes of violent behaviour, and more on the dynamic of violence, violence as a process and practice of doing gender and on how masculinity and femininity are performed, constructed, stabilized and changed at the intersection with ethnici-

1 The article draws on research conducted in the frame of the project "Children's Voices – Exploring Interethnic Violence and Children's Rights in the School Environment". The project was funded by the European Union's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme. The project's aim was to identify the frequency, forms and factors of interethnic violence in the school environment.

2 For Austria see Bergmüller and Wiesner, 2009; Strohmeier et al., 2012; Strohmeier and Spiel, 2012; Strohmeier and Spiel, 2007; Stefanek et al., 2012; for England see Smith and Shu, 2000; for Slovenia Pavlović et al., 2008

ty. Hence, we discuss the different “options of action” of pupils due to their gender (Bereswill, 2011, 18). This perspective also allows us to go beyond the perspective on female victims and male perpetrators (see also Leach & Humphreys, 2007, 53) but to understand violence as different practices of ‘doing femininity’ and ‘doing masculinity’.

We used two different methods to collect our data, namely a quantitative survey of pupils as well as a qualitative study. Each country team selected 16 possible multicultural schools, which were attended by pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. 3524 students in the age groups 10-12 years and 17-18 years completed our questionnaire: 1837 girls and 1664 boys.<sup>3</sup> The qualitative study was conducted in four schools per country, comprising focus group discussion with about 9-16 pupils per school (N=206; 100 boys and 106 girls) and interviews with two teachers per school (N= 40). Additionally, we interviewed six to eight national experts in each country (N=32).

The article has the following structure: We will first present a brief state of the art and the theoretical concepts we used to interpret our findings on (interethnic) violence from a gendered perspective. The next section discusses the quantitative results of our study, elaborating on the differences between experiencing and witnessing interethnic violence of boys and girls. Then we will discuss these gender patterns with regard to different options of action; that is as doing gender and gendered stereotypes in frequencies of experiencing interethnic violence. Finally we present examples of how violent practices construct intersections of and reinforce the unequal structures of gender and of ethnicity.

#### MASCULINITIES, FEMININITIES AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE. STATE OF THE ART AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Previous research has suggested that minorities are both primary victims as well as perpetrators of violence – however, depending less on the number of minority pupils but more on the “various types of racisms, classism, and sexism coming together” (Eisenbraun, 2007, 463). Studies on gendered violence in the school environment mainly focus on differences in the frequency of violent experiences between boys and girls. It is no surprise that this research – like other large-scale studies on gender violence – shows that boys engage in violence more often than girls (see for example Bruneforth & Lassnigg, 2012, 92ff.). For instance, in traditional forms of bullying as well as in the case of cyber-bullying, boys are more likely bullied than girls and more often bully others as well (Li, 2006, 4 and 9). However, to focus on the “quantitative imbalance”

(Meuser, 2002, 54, translation BS & EA) between female and male violence alone turns out to be insufficient as it reproduces the view of “boys’ and men’s acts of violence as either ‘boys will be boys’ behaviour or as the [...] actions of a particular individual” (Mills, 2001, 65). Such a perspective on frequency alone fails to discuss the links between violent behaviour and gender relations (Meuser, 2002, 54 ff.; Dackweiler & Schäfer, 2002, 9). Put differently: This perspective takes gender and ethnicity as given and does not take into account how both gender and ethnicity are constructed through and in processes of violence.

It has been the challenge of feminist researchers to show that hierarchical gender relations, an unequal gender regime and the subordinate position of women in Western societies give the power to use violence mainly to men (Hagemann-White, 2002, 29f.). This research further shows that hierarchical gender relations, as well as the power to be violent, are socially constructed although they tend to be naturalised (Mills, 2001). Hence, “hetero-social violence” (Meuser, 2002, translation, BS & EA) is a way to reproduce unequal gender relations and reinforce the dominance of men over women. Pierre Bourdieu (1998) describes this process of embodying and accepting social gender hierarchies as symbolic violence. Furthermore, hierarchies between men (Meuser, 2002, 57; Connell, 1995) and hegemonic masculinity are established on violent structures that exclude subordinate masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity – with the attribution of dominance over women and other men – is the normalized or idealized masculinity. In contrast, “emphasized femininity” – the normalized femininity – is characterised by female subordination and the accommodation of men’s needs (Mills, 2001, 20f; Connell, 1987, 183). Raewyn Connell (1995; 2002) points out that a multiplicity of masculinities “come into existence at particular times and places, and are subject to change” (Connell, 1995, 185). Connell defines four “main patterns of masculinity” (ibid. 77), namely hegemonic, subordinate, complicity and marginalized masculinity – patterns which are not static, but always fluid and contested:

*‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is not a fixed type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable” (ibid. 76).*

Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity does not primarily focus on actors who practice hegemonic masculinity but on their institutionalized gender practices, patterns and claims that enable the domination of men over women. Thus, hegemonic masculinity is

<sup>3</sup> The survey gave first insights into the five country samples and it was further used to identify important topics for the subsequent focus group discussions and interviews.

rather than determined by certain powerful individuals defined by the characteristics they 'ideally' represent – characteristics of hegemonic masculinities as being strong and rational to name only a few – as well as their "successful claim to authority" (ibid. 77). Hegemonic masculinities do not only dominate women, but also other 'groups' of men which either profit from the hegemonic claims or are excluded from them: complicit masculinity describes the 'group' of men who are not able to live up to the pattern of hegemonic masculinity but who profit from both, from hegemony over men and from the subordination of women. Subordinate and marginalized masculinities, such as homosexuals or men of different ethnicities, are excluded from power.

While hegemony does not require violence – to the contrary, hegemony operates on the level of social practices and mutual recognition of authority and power – physical violence is always seen as an "option of action" by men and boys, hence of masculinity (Bereswill, 2011, 11). And moreover, women and subordinate or marginalized masculinities are excluded from the use of (physical) violence. Also, violence is used to sustain the gender order, which is based on hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, 185; 1987, 184). Hence, masculine violence is a system of social order and a "means to sustain social order" (Meuser, 2002, 54, translation BS & EA). Different practices or "signifiers" (Mills, 2001) connect violence and power to dominant forms of masculinity (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, 119). Hegemonic masculinity is a "construction that defines violence" as a "legitimate way to resolve conflict" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, 1440 and 1450).

When women or girls are violent, this is seen as a discredit to their femininity, while being violent for boys or men is viewed as a confirmation of their masculinity (Kessler et al., 1985, 37). The link between masculinity and violence is thus produced by the fact that women are mostly excluded from violent behaviour. However, violence is not only exclusive to men. Women and girls are included in violent practices of doing masculinity: Femininity is given a subordinate place in spaces of masculinity. Often – also as members of violent sub-cultures – they serve as observers rather than as leaders of violent situations (Meuser, 2002, 68 f.). Different forms of masculinities involve particular versions of femininity – the "compliance and service, subservience and self-sacrifice and constant accommodation to the needs and desires of males." (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, 120) Furthermore, if women or girls do participate in violent situations 'on the front' and are able to gain social recognition through these practices, girls are still dominated by men – especially by their partners (Bruhns, 2002, 192). Thus, men and boys are not perpetrators per se and women not per se victims; neither masculinity and violence nor femininity and victimization are naturally correlated – they are gendered constructions, which

"serve to make violence the property of hegemonic masculinity" (Mills, 2001, 65).

Gendered power and violence are also evident in the allocation of school space. Playgrounds or classrooms are 'controlled' by boys rather than girls (Mills, 2001, 40 ff.). Furthermore, physical violence against girls and sexual harassment are ways by which boys perform masculinity in schools.

*The four signifiers of masculinity [...] sport, work, power over women and power over other men, are imbued with the spirit of violence. Wherever one looks within institutional patterns of gender relations shaping the current gender order, one finds violence. [...] It is a violence that has filled the public domain with a hegemonic masculine presence, leaving little room for those who do not fit the 'norm' [...] a violence that underpins Western national political projects (ibid. 48).*

Gendered practices allow men and boys to perform institutionalized domination over women and other men and these practices enforce the connection between masculinity and violence. Sports, work, alcohol and power over women and other men are the most important signifiers and practices of masculinity (Mills, 2001, 22). In schools, especially sport and the use of power over girls and other boys are important practices which construct hegemonic masculinity and which connect violence to masculinity (Peguero & Popp, 2011). Sports activities such as football serve as:

*a medium for the construction of a particular kind of masculinity. It celebrates toughness and endurance [...] and connects a sense of maleness with a taste for violence and confrontation (Kessler et al., 1985, 39).*

Male dominance and relations of subordination are "often worked out through the use of legitimate (sport) and illegitimate (brawling, bashing) physical violence." This rests on "beliefs about the importance of aggressive and violent acts for gaining and maintaining status, reputation and resources in the male group, to sustain a sense of masculine identity" (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, 122). Pupils who do not engage in sports but rather practice debating or other non-violent games in the school environment are often teased as 'fat' or 'unhealthy'. Sport further links violence to masculinised bodies that are often perceived as machines or weapons (Mills, 2001, 26 and 28). Moreover, experiences of violence, which are connected to school based practices, intersect on the axes of gender, race and ethnicity. For instance, while white American male pupils' engagement in sports leads to a decrease in their victimization, the engagement of students of ethnic minorities in sports leads to the opposite. Also girls' victimization – regar-

dless of their ethnicity – declines if they engage in sports (Peguero & Popp, 2011, 7). Furthermore, participation in academic activities is risky for boys, regardless of their ethnicity, and Asian-American girls in particular – once again demonstrating the gendered and ethnic dimension of school based activities (ibid.). Boys from racial and class minorities are what Connell describes as “shock troops” – those who do the “dirty work of patriarchy” by subscribing to values of aggressive masculinity (Connell after Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, 122).

Power over other men can also be expressed through other competitive practices of gaining social recognition and prestige. Men invest in these masculine games in order to prove their masculinity (Bourdieu, 1998, 93f.). At school, boys engage in these games on the playground or the school corridors (Mills, 2001, 23; Meuser, 2002, 65 ff.). “Homo-social violence” (Meuser, 2002, translation BS & EA) is further exercised over men or boys due to their ethnic background, race, social status or sexual orientation. This form of power and violence is rather connected to dominance than competition (Mills, 2001, 23; Meuser, 2002, 65ff.). Hence, interethnic violence constructs hegemonic and marginal or subordinate masculinities.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EXPERIENCING AND WITNESSING INTERETHNIC VIOLENCE

This section presents our findings on the gendered frequency of experiencing and witnessing interethnic violence. In general, our research shows that interethnic violence is not frequent in multi-ethnic schools and ethnic or national differences are rarely causes of school violence. However, like previous studies focussing on violence in general, we found similar patterns with re-

spect to gender and violence: Interethnic violence in school environments is also gendered. While the figures for those who have never observed violent situations are similar between the two genders (44.9 % boys and 44 % girls) a larger proportion of boys (14-18.5 %) answered that they observe verbal forms of interethnic violence such as teasing and talking behind their back due to ethnic background ‘often or very often’ compared to 12-14 % of girls. Also, we found gender differences in observing that pupils were ignored because of their ethnic background: While 18.8 % of the boys observed this form of psychological aggression ‘often or very often’, only 14.7 % of the girls said so, while a higher percentage of girls (38.3 %) answered ‘sometimes’ compared to only 34.9 % of boys.

This gender pattern is even more evident in physical forms of interethnic violence, although gender difference was not significant in every given situation. 75.3% of girls in our sample stated to have never observed that pupils hit or spit at other pupils because of their ethnic background, while 69 % of boys in our sample indicated so. A higher percentage of boys (10.7 % compared to 6.2 % of girls) witnessed such situations ‘often or very often’. Also, a lower percentage of girls (20.3 %) than boys (27.2 %) indicated that they ‘sometimes’ or ‘often or very often’ witnessed pupils destroying a classmate’s property because of their ethnic background.

Our results show that both boys and girls have experienced interethnic violence as offenders as well as victims, although it is a rather small percentage compared to those who witnessed violence. In accordance with other studies (e.g. Eisenbraun, 2007, 463), boys were more often victims of verbal violence than girls in our sample. While 20.2 % of boys claimed that peers insulted or teased them because of their ethnic background, only 14.1 % of the

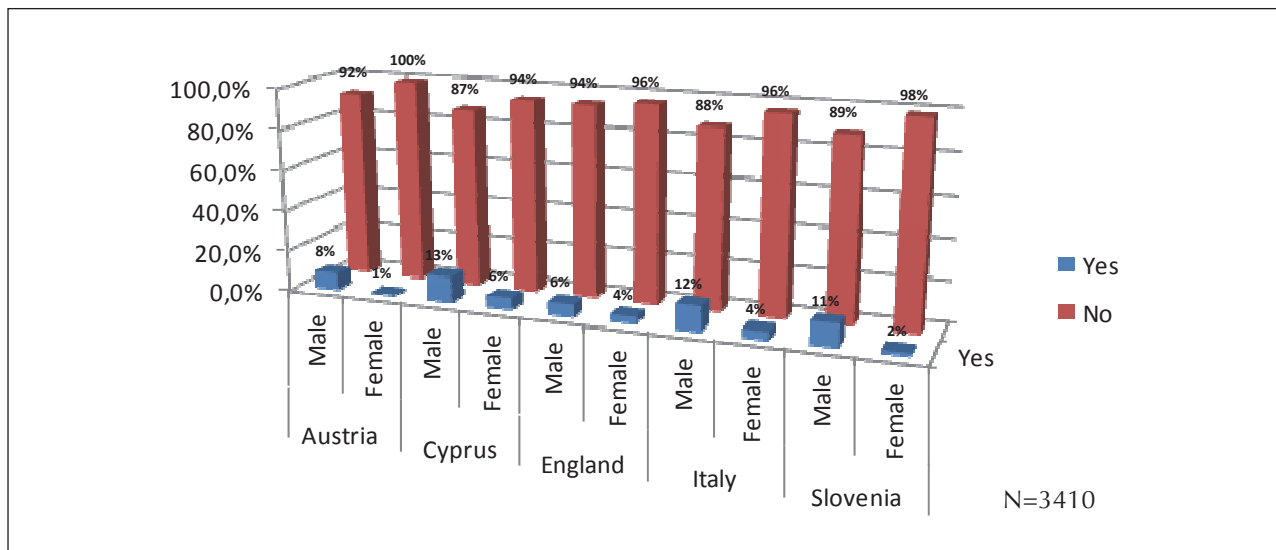
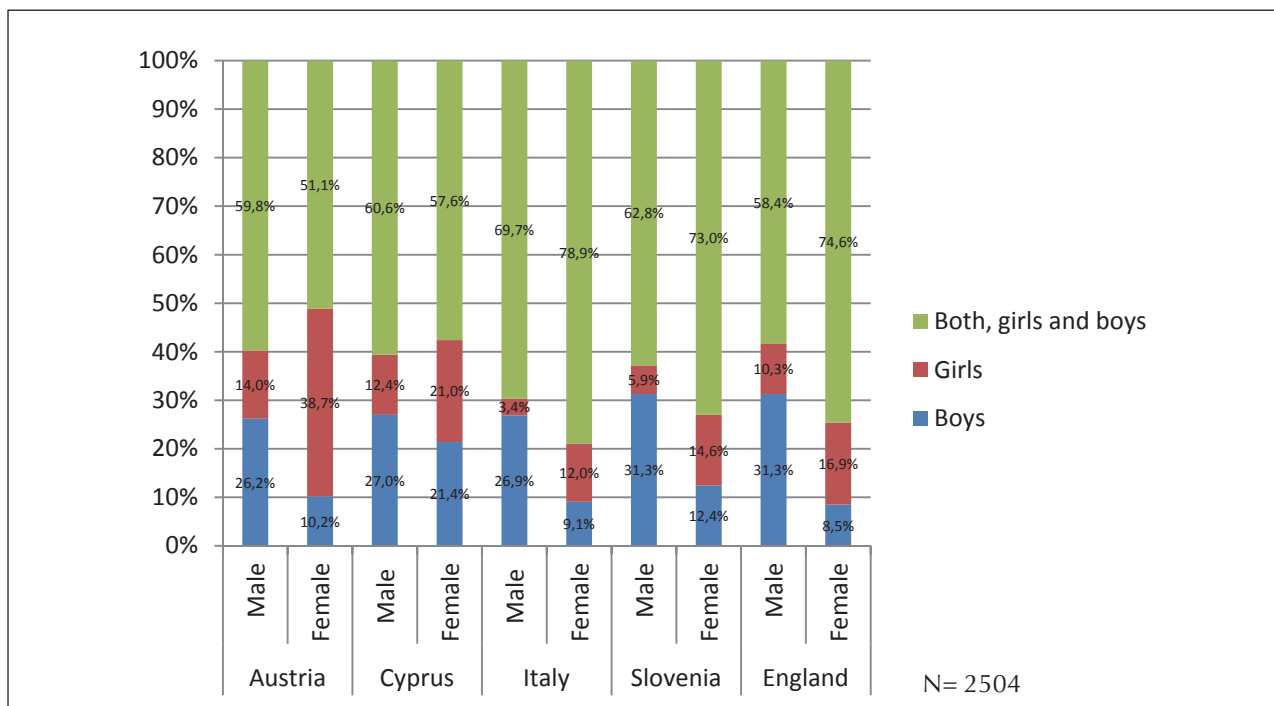


Figure 1: “Have you ever treated anyone badly because of his/her ethnic background?”  
Slika 1: “Ali si kdaj grdo ravnal z nekom zaradi njegove/njene etnične pripadnosti?”



**Figure 2: Victims of interethnic violence**  
**Slika 2: Žrtve medetničnega nasilja**

girls said they experienced the same. Similarly, while 6 % of boys said that ‘other pupils talk behind my back because of my ethnic background’ ‘often or very often’, only 3 % of girls say that this happened to them. Regarding the experiences of physical forms of violence such as being hit or spit at, a higher share of boys (4 %) than of girls (1 %) stated to experience it ‘often or very often’. 6.3 % of boys said they experience this form of violence sometimes, compared to 4 % of girls. Furthermore, while 8 % of boys indicated that others destroy their property ‘sometimes, often or very often’, 5.4 % of girls experienced this form of aggression.

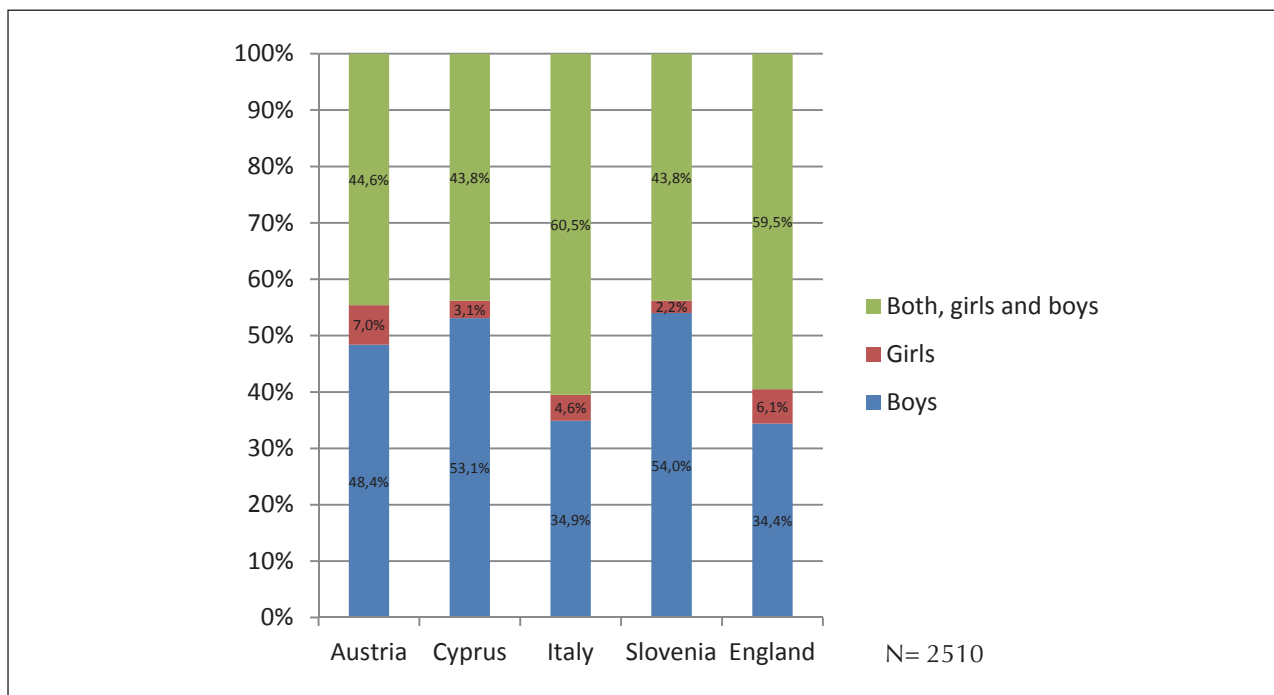
Our sample shows gender differences with respect to offenders as well: More boys than girls have (at least) once treated someone badly because of his or her ethnic background. While 10.2 % of the overall male sample had treated somebody badly, only 2.9 % of the girls did so. Figure 1 (below) shows the country-sub-sample results for this question.

We further asked pupils whether boys or rather girls are victims of the above-discussed forms of interethnic violence. The majority of boys and girls see both genders equally as victims of situations of verbal or physical violence (see figure 2). Our sample shows a slightly gendered pattern in perceiving victims of violent behaviour: In general girls more often see girls as victims of violent behaviour than boys, while boys see boys as victims of interethnic violence much more often than girls.

Responses to the question “who usually does these things” reveal more similarities between the groups.

Between 44 % and 60 % of boys and girls indicated that both boys and girls usually engage in interethnic violence as offenders (Figure 3). While the majority of boys and girls in Austria, Cyprus and Slovenia agree that boys are usually the offenders, the majority of pupils in England and Italy see both boys and girls as offenders in interethnic violence situations (see Figure 3). Only between 2.2 % and 7 % of pupils of our sample think that girls are usually the offenders in the aforementioned interethnic violent situations.

Those pupils who indicated that they were victims of interethnic violence were further asked to share their reactions to such experiences. As illustrated in Figure 4, a correlation between the reactions to experienced interethnic violence and gender is evident. A significantly higher percentage of boys than girls stated they ‘fought back or did the same to the bully’. The predominant answers of boys in all countries of our sample – except for Slovenia – were ‘I fight back’ which 35 % of the overall male sample answered or ‘I do the same to the bully’ which was stated by 15 % of the boys. The girls’ sample response was more differentiated: Similar to boys, a high percentage of girls (19 %) responded ‘I fight back’ (sub-sample figures between 18.5 % in Slovenia and 24.9 % in Italy) in most of the country samples, while 14 % of girls answered ‘I put up with it’ (between 12.3 % in Cyprus and 21.9 % in Austria). Furthermore, a higher share of girls than boys – except for Italian pupils – stated to ‘ask for help’ in such situations (12 % of girls compared to 8 % of boys in the overall sample).



**Figure 3: Offenders**  
**Slika 3: Nasilneži**

Our results show the well-known patterns on gender differences in frequency of boys being victims of, or have more fear of becoming a victim of violence more often than girls (Eisenbraun, 2007, 461). Similar to previous studies on gendered school violence, our study shows that boys are also more often perpetrators of physical as well as verbal violence (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Cornell & Loper, 1998). However, compared to studies on general school violence, gender differences are rather small in witnessing and experiencing interethnic violence as well as being victims or perpetrators of interethnic violence.

The following section will go deeper into the gendered dynamics of interethnic violence and will carve out the options of action girls and boys seem to have towards (interethnic) violence and hence, the methods of doing masculinity and femininity. In interpreting our qualitative data, we contend that these different options of agency in violent situations not only mirror the sex of pupils, but are ways of performing gender difference, and doing masculinities and femininities at the intersection with ethnicity – that is how gender is constructed with regard to interethnic stereotyping.

#### DOING MASCULINITIES, DOING FEMININITIES IN SCHOOL

Our focus group discussions and interviews with teachers revealed that the ethnicity, nationality or religion of a child do not necessarily determine or cause vio-

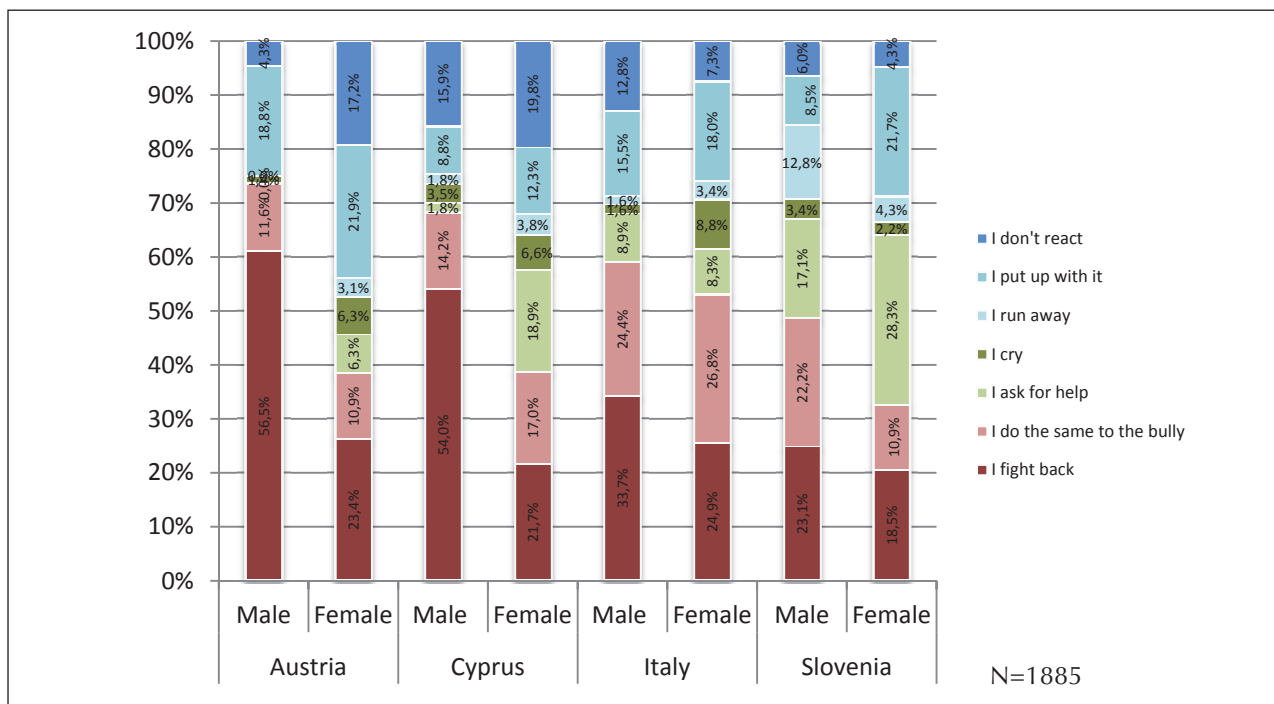
lence in the school environment. Rather, pupils refer to these categories – as they refer to bodily characteristics – to verbally hurt someone in situations where violence has already occurred. One of the teachers stated that violence is not caused by ethnicity but that it is rather a way of expressing masculinity:

*In my opinion, the reason why you have interethnic violence within schools [...] is not because the individual boys or girls, but it is predominantly boys, is not because they look at each other and say you are Muslim and I am Indian I'm going to hit you. It's because they are boys and they've had an argument over something. [...] It's rooted because they're boys and they've not received guidance from home. (Educational professional, England)*

Pupils are also aware of gender violence; they construct gender differences and reproduce gender stereotypes in describing school violence:

*That's how it is with boys, they fight, and girls, girls are just insulting. (Girl, 10, Slovenia)*

Pupils furthermore reported that boys more often use physical violence – be it 'just for fun' or 'serious fighting'. Male pupils, especially in the sub-sample of 10-12 year olds, reported to fight 'just for fun'. They perceive fights as a game, as something acceptable to do.



**Figure 4: How do you react when you have been treated badly?**  
**Slika 4: Kako si se odzval/a, ko so s teboj grdo ravnali?**

*We fight but only for fun, [...] and nobody gets hurt. And we don't fight because of religion, culture but when it comes to a dispute then pupils insult each other with such insulting words. (Boy, 11, Austria)*

Our analysis revealed that especially physical violence seems to be an ‘option’ only for boys. This might be related to adolescence, a “brutalizing” period (Li, 2006, 5): Performing masculinity through violence is a function of moving “from childhood to adulthood” in a situation where “status and identity are uncertain and when inter-male violence is pronounced in the context of growing sexual interest (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, 123).

Nevertheless, girls were also identified as participants in violent actions – not only as victims of violence but also as perpetrators in the game of hegemonic masculinity and compliant femininity. While girls very rarely indicated that they engage physically in violent situations, they do often act as observers or supporters when the boys fight – girls build the audience of the male pupils’ game. Boys and girls, as well as teachers and school personnel do not link physical violence with femininity.

*G. [m] and M. [m] arranged a fight in front of the school because they cannot fight in class, and all the boys and girls watched and also insulted G. (Girl, 11, Austria)*

Also in our sample, pupils as well as teachers report that girls are involved in interethnic physical violence. These incidences are interpreted as fights for recognition within a heterosexual matrix:

*It's interesting, that recently we had some fights among girls. A fight breaks out between two girls; mostly it happens because of a boyfriend. (Headmaster, Slovenia)*

Moreover, when girls fight physically, it is perceived as something not socially accepted, something which ‘the other’ girls do.

*They [girls of other ethnic backgrounds] mainly fight because of dudes. (Boy, 17, Slovenia)*

While boys’ violence is seen as somehow ‘natural’ behaviour, girls’ fights are seen as ‘deviant’, something which is ‘interesting to observe’ and in the case of the Slovenian boy, attributed to ‘the other’ – girls of other ethnic backgrounds – not to ‘Slovenian girls’. Thus, also in the school environment, certain perceptions of femininity and masculinity are adopted and schools are spaces where certain images are reproduced, also by viewing and assessing boys’ and girls’ violence differently. Violence and the perception of aggressive behaviour within the school context can be understood as doing gender since it seems to be linked to certain performances of masculinity. But violence is moreover a means to reproduce a heterosexual matrix as well as the ethnic “Other”.



However, we also found transgressive behaviour: In the Austrian focus group, one of the girls claimed the right to physical violence when she was sexually attacked:

*My friend and I are being touched by some boys and then I hit them. But otherwise I feel good at school. The girls are nice, and some boys too. (Girl, 11, Austria)*

A situation in which interethnic violence occurs can be caused by a lost football match for instance, which then provokes violent verbal practices, here others are insulted by referring to their ethnic or religious differences. Thus, interethnic violence must be contextualised within the dynamics of violence. Additionally, the dynamics of violence involve certain 'masculinised' and 'feminised' practices and activities in the school environment such as sports. Sports are a highly gendered arena and an arena of physical and verbal violence at the same time. Teachers and pupils in our study link (interethnic) violence to sports activities. This was, for instance, especially evident in one Austrian focus group where pupils and teachers described that fights – including verbal insults on the grounds of ethnicity or nationality – occur after football matches during Physical Education (PE). This seems to be a boys' issue. In Austria, pupils reported that following PE, boys – mainly from former Yugoslavia – fought with each other by referring to the wars in that region and their different ethnic identities.

*This happens only among boys, mainly when they have sports [...] it happens when they have sports, and after that they fight in the class and insult each other. (Girl, 12, Austria)*

As emotions are also transferred from the football field into the classroom, girls who were originally not involved also become participants. Female pupils – girls and boys are taught PE separately in Austria – would only get involved in the dispute after all pupils come together in the classroom again. The conflict would spread as other boys and girls would take sides for one nationality or ethnic identity and support the groups verbally.

*This conflict [verbal insults on ethnic grounds of two groups of pupils] happens every three months I would say and always when they play football. [It] is a boy's issue when it gets brutal but the girls are not innocent because they also are taking one side before it gets brutal. (Teacher, Austria)*

In England and Italy, similar situations linked the emotions following sports events were identified between boys.

*Most of the fights start when there's like a competition, like in a football game when like [...] Football's the biggest problem. [...] Yeah because they start kicking and chanting. And then they talk about their religion and background and it goes up. That's when it all starts. (Girl, primary school, England)*

*Yes, but it can also occur when the Serbian team won and the Italian team lost the game. Then in class acts of violence, that weren't there before between the kids, are unleashed. [...] Mohammed, for example, shares the desk with Ivan. But after having watched something on television, they come back as two boys who feel to belong to different and opposing nationalities. (Teacher, Italy)*

From the focus group discussions and interviews it is evident that sports activities are able to unleash certain emotions and can be a trigger for interethnic violence between boys. Sports activities can be perceived as activities where ethicised masculinities compete with each other. Hence, certain masculinities are able to claim space for their issues or disputes and thereby determine the class culture and claim power over other boys and girls.

Another way of exercising power over others is to shape the image of 'masculine' and 'feminine' bodily practices. Sports activities or being athletic is perceived as being 'cool'. Those who do not engage in sports are not accepted and exposed to (verbal) victimization because of this.

*G [m] and J [m] are both fat but G will be insulted more than J they always are angry but they do nothing about to get thinner, they don't make any sports eat unhealthy and the others insult them and I think this is ok, because they don't want to get thinner." (Boy, 11, Austria)*

On the other hand, girls are verbally attacked due to their gender if they do not accept gender norms:

*He made fun of a little girl who was in his group telling her she was a tomboy; insulting her saying that she wasn't truly part of our community because being a female she liked male games. (Pupil, primary school, Italy)*

Furthermore, schools are places where power over girls and women is also demonstrated through sexual violence. Sexual harassment is an option of aggressive behaviour only for boys – and a way to challenge hierarchical school settings:

*As a female teacher you also have to be strong, when young boys say things like 'Oh Miss you look beautiful today, do I get an A now?' That's too much for me although I have a good relationship with my pupils." (Teacher, Austria)*

*There are huge problems in my class of 13-14 old pupils. There are problems between boys and girls, teachers and pupils and among boys. They use ethnic insults or call the girls 'bitch, slut'. Austrian and Asian girls are mainly being insulted. (Teacher, Austria)*

In conclusion: Within the school environment, 'accepted' masculinities and femininities are constructed by framing 'accepted' and 'non-accepted' practices and bodies through verbal and physical violence by engaging in certain activities and not in others, and by (verbally) victimizing certain groups on grounds of their gender and ethnic or national identities. As a result, interethnic violence cannot solely be understood as being caused by different ethnic or national identities of children who happen to share a classroom or school. Rather, it evolves out of different 'logics' where gender identity and construction is often one of them.

#### INTERSECTIONS – GENDERED STEREOTYPES

Interethnic violence – although often not caused by the ethnicity, nationality or religion of a child – does refer to certain ethnic, national or religious stereotypes. Our focus group discussions and interviews with pupils, teachers and experts revealed that these prejudices are also gendered as they are linked to certain assumptions about the 'female' and 'male' body or practices. The following section discusses this issue by presenting two cases from our sample.

#### 'MUSLIM GIRLS' – THE HEADSCARF ISSUE

As public institutions, schools were in the spotlight of the debates on whether the veiling practices of female pupils and teachers should be approved or not (Rosenberger & Sauer, 2012).<sup>4</sup> Our study revealed that the headscarf played a central role in girls' experience of interethnic stereotyping. Girls who reported to have been insulted on the grounds of their ethnicity, nationality or religion were often Muslim girls wearing a headscarf.

*But this is weird isn't it? Because when we go to their country, women have to clothe and wear headscarves; here they can just walk around in headscarves, can't they?*

*I: Mhm, do you think this is not right?*

*No, because if they come here, they should get used to our customs (Boy, 17, Slovenia)*

Although our overall results show that schools are places where pupils learn to deal with multiple cultures and where prejudices seem to be dismantled, resentments towards certain (religious) practices are also pres-

ent in the school environment (Sauer & Ajanović, 2012; Sedmak & Medarić, 2012, 12). Girls who stated to have experienced interethnic violence in the school environment mentioned to do so most often within the context of their veiling practices. Hence, mainly Muslim girls reported experiencing direct insults in reference to their ethnicity, nationality or religion.

*Because I wear a headscarf in year five, one of the teachers they said to me oh you have to take it off or you're not doing PE but I won't take it off so I ended up sitting out.*

*I: Was that a school rule or something?*

*No it wasn't a school rule. No. Miss just made it up. [...] Because with school you're allowed to wear your culture. (Girl, primary school, England)*

The headscarf is not only negotiated from a religious dimension but a gendered dimension as well. As it addresses 'the female body' and, moreover, as it links both the absence and the presence of this particular religious practice to images often attributed to 'femininity', namely 'victims' or 'sinners', the power relations behind these negotiations are evident: Girls' and women's practices are evaluated from an androcentric perspective, which in this case, is applied both by their male schoolmates and female teachers.

*I see that some of our Turkish boys have a negative opinion towards women and often say that if a woman does not wear a headscarf she is a whore. And I mean, I don't wear one and for some it's obviously difficult to respect me because of this. (Teacher, Austria)*

In the following section we will discuss that while girls in our sample were confronted with gendered stereotypes on their religious practices, a particular group of boys was confronted with gendered images prescribed to their ethnic or regional background.

#### 'SOUTHERN BOYS' – COOL AND DANGEROUS

Male pupils who migrated to Italy and Slovenia from southern Ex-Yugoslavian or the Balkan countries are also confronted with gendered stereotypes. These boys are commonly referred to as 'southerners', (Slovenian: 'čefur' or 'bosanac'), expressions which again are linked to certain (bodily) attributes and performances. These boys are seen as aggressive, physically strong and therefore as exerting a different form of masculinity.

*Typical appearance of »čefur« is supposed to be a tracksuit, and, and, and... And this little bag ... and sunglasses, and this shining hairstyle, and a*

4 For the debates in Austria see Hadj-Abdou et al., 2012, 134 f. and in UK Andreassen et al., 2012, 174 f.

necklace, a metal jewellery chain. This is typical (Girls, 16-17, Slovenia)

Bosanci are more, well, pesky, and they well, compete with others. (Girl, 10, Slovenia)

[T]hen they compete, if the southerners will get more girls, cuz them nerds can study all they want, but we'll take their girlfriends in the meantime. In here, there's more fun, it ain't terrible, but definitely interesting. This is how they're sending a message that the Slovenian boys are clumsy, that they're a bit more like »yodel yodel« and make Austrian jokes. »We're, like, hotshots, we rule in football...« In this sense ... not like, I even find it sweet sometimes, it's not rough or anything. (School counsellor, Slovenia)

This type of masculinity is thus connected to violence and feeds into the construction of dangerous masculinity.

People think that all Serbs and Albanians are dangerous people walking armed with knives. (Boy, 19, Italy)

I do not think so [media influence attitude towards nationalities]. To a certain extent it is their responsibility. Because they are a bit more aggressive, but that's just the way they are. (Boy, 17, Slovenia)

[I] noticed [...] that [...] migrants from the former Yugoslavia, that these boys are very popular among Slovenian boys, which we can see from the fact that Slovenian boys are trying to copy their speech, behaviour, their coolness, even style – that famous blue sweatshirt with a white line, their music is also popular. (NGO representative, Slovenia)

'Southerners' are perceived as show-offs, as those who always appear in groups – which makes them more 'dangerous' – but also as those who are cool, who know how to deal with girls. They are seen as physically strong, as heterosexual and as embodied marginalized masculinity. Again, it is evident that masculinised attributes and practices are linked to these boys. What is further interesting is that their 'attitude' is hated on the one hand yet admired on the other. A certain contrast – the one who is dangerous but also knows how to perform his masculinity – becomes apparent in this case again. Violence is also the practice of competition between different masculinities based on interethnic stereotyping.

Boys and girls are confronted with different stereotypes – either in reference to ethnicity, religion or regional background. Moreover, these stereotypes refer to

accepted 'male' and 'female' bodies, practices and characteristics. Through violent and aggressive behaviour, 'accepted' femininity and especially an accepted 'female body' are negotiated while on the other hand, male agency is reconstructed and negotiated – even within structures of inequality between men. Hence, violence helps to draw borders between different masculinities.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our research shows that boys' and girls' experiences with regard to frequency and forms of interethnic victimization differ. The quantitative results indicate that boys in all five-country samples are more often engaged in these situations – especially when it comes to physical violence. Furthermore, (interethnic) violent practices can be understood as a way of performing masculinity: Girls are not given the option to use physical violence. Their participation in such situations is perceived as 'deviant', while boys' engagement in such is often seen as 'normal boys' behaviour' and girls are attributed the role of spectator of male activities. Hence, a binary gender order is reconstructed through violence.

Our findings suggest to "reconsider the female/victim - male/villain dichotomy" (Leach & Humphreys, 2007, 61). However, gender and ethnicity are interlinked and intersecting – they are co-constructed in violent practices: If girls are physically violent they are seen as 'the other' – those of another ethnic background. Moreover, our analysis discussed different practices and performances that help to 'do masculinity' in the school environment and which are also linked to violence – as a male activity for instance, sports can be a trigger for interethnic violent situations. To sum up, these activities are competitive practices among boys, the exertion of power over other boys due to their 'non-athletic physique' or their different ethnic background. Moreover, these practices are also a form of power over girls that is exerted in different subtle and direct ways: such as by exclusion from certain practices or games – perceived as 'male games' – and by sexist comments or even harassment.

Finally, we discussed cases of gendered stereotyping and demonstrated how ethnic, national or religious prejudices are connected to the 'female' and 'male' bodies and gendered practices. They can be understood as a means by which different masculinities and femininities compete, while revealing unequal gender relations through negotiating 'accepted' and 'non-accepted' female and male practices. While violence is a way of doing masculinity and femininity at schools, schools are also an environment where violence, as well as gendered stereotypes, might be overcome.

USTVARJANJE MOŠKOSTI, USTVARJANJE ŽENSKOSTI. MEDETNIČNO NASILJE  
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## POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava spolno dimenzijo medetničnega nasilja v šolskem okolju. Preko predstavitve empiričnih rezultatov iz Avstrije, s Cipra, iz Angljie, Italije in Slovenije prikaže razlike med fanti in dekleti pri izkušnjah nasilnih praks v šolah in obravnava (medetnično) nasilje kot prakso "ustvarjanja spola". Z razpravo rezultatov prikazujemo, kako se moškost in ženskost oblikujeta v šolskem okolju preko nasilja in drugih praks in kako sta konstruirana na intersekciji etničnosti in etničnih stereotipov. Kvantitativna in kvalitativna raziskava, izvedeni med učenci in dijaki, starimi 10–11 in 17–18 let, kažeta na razlike v izkušnjah z vikimizacijo in zaznavami nasilnih praks: fantje so pogosteje vključeni v fizično nasilje. To lahko pojasnimo z dejstvom, da je fantom, bolj kot dekletom, dodeljena tovrstna "možnost delovanja". Sodelovanje deklet pri nasilnih dejanjih je – tudi v šolskem okolju – označeno kot "deviantno", zaradi česar lahko fantje ustvarjajo moškost z nasilnimi praksami, medtem ko dekleta tega ne morejo. Vendar to ne pomeni, da dekleta v tovrstne prakse niso vključena. So, vendar jim je običajno dodeljena vloga "opazovalke" ali "podpornice". Rezultati kažejo tudi, da medetnično nasilje med drugim sprožijo predstave "ustvarjanja moškosti", kot na primer šport. Te prakse ne le vodijo k tekmovanju in včasih nasilju, temveč tudi izključujejo – na eni strani dekleta iz "moških iger" in na drugi strani tudi fante, ki na primer zaradi svojega telesnega videza ali etničnosti ne sodijo v koncept "hegemonične moškosti". Ustvarjanje moškosti ne vključuje le moške dominacije nad dekleti, temveč tudi tekmovalnost med različnimi "moškostmi". Podobno velja za prakse ustvarjanja "ženskosti", kjer različne "ženskosti" tekmujejo med seboj. Slednje – različne moškosti in ženskosti – so dalje razvidne iz dejstva, da so etnični, narodnostni ali religiozni predsodki povezani z "ženskimi" in "moškimi" telesi in spolnimi praksami. Ko gledamo na etnične stereotipe kot povezane s spolom, pokažemo na enega od načinov, kako izpogajanje "sprejetih" in "nesprejetih" ženskih in moških praks in teles deluje v šolskem okolju.

**Ključne besede:** medetnično nasilje, spol, ustvarjanje moškosti, ustvarjanje ženskosti.

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