PositivMasc Research

Advisory Group

Update September 2020

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our first PositivMasc Research Newsetter. This note provides you with an update of progress made to date on the PositivMasc project, in advance of the next advisory group meeting which we hope to organise later in October/early November 2020. In this document, we outline what we have done to date, and some of the very initial findings.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF POSITIVMASC?

PositivMasc seeks to understand and explore how young people (aged 18-24) understand masculinities, and how these understandings feed into attitudes and responses towards VAW. This project has four aims:

- To explore and position the discourses that young people (men and women, 18-24 years) in Sweden, Spain, Ireland and Israel use in their understanding of masculinities;
- To explore how these discourses influence young people's attitudes, behaviours and responses to violence against women (VAW);
- To explore individual and societal factors supporting and promoting anti-VAW masculinities discourses and;
- To develop strategies and resources to support and promote anti-VAW masculinities in these settings.

PROJECT PHASES

The project has three main phases:

PHASE 1

Conducting **qualitative in-depth interviews** with young men and women aged 18-24 and stakeholders working in women's or men's organisations, and/or addressing issues of violence against women to understand their perceptions of VAW and what might be done to address it.

PHASE 2

Conducting an online exercise using a methodology called **Group Concept Mapping**, in which participants (young people and organisations) will be invited to sort and rate a series of 58 statements (strategies or actions) about how we can promote more positive and non-violent forms of masculinity in challenging VAW. This is an online exercise utilising software called *GroupWisdom* (https://groupwisdom.com/engagementtools).

PHASE 3

Interpreting and disseminating the results, and drawing up resources based on the project findings. These resources have yet to be decided, and may include guidelines for policy, educational resources for schools and/or third level, or for working with specific groups of young people.

RESEARCH PROGRESS

PHASE 1 - COMPLETE

Phase 1 involved interviewing both young people and organisations working on issues of gender-based violence and/or with young men, and young people.

Plan	Outcome
15 Stakeholder Interviews	**14 Stakeholder Interviews**
15-20 Interviews with Young people	**28 Interviews with Young People**
Focus Groups	**Abandoned due to COVID-19**

Fortunately, a lot of the fieldwork for this phase was conducted before the Covid lockdown.

Thank you to members of the advisory group for either taking part in an interview or pointing us towards possible interview participants.

The stakeholder organisations interviewed were:

- Cosc (Department of Justice)
- Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
- Men's Development Network
- Women's Aid
- Traveller Visibility Group
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- Haven Horizons
- MOVE Ireland
- Youth Work Ireland
- UCC Bystander Intervention Programme

Interviews with young people were mainly conducted in-person but some had to take place by telephone due to COVID-19 restrictions. We increased the number of interviews with young people to 28 when it became impossible to carry out focus groups.

In terms of the 28 interviews:

- 16 were women, 12 were men
- We have a mix of ages across the 18-24 age category.
- In terms of current/last level of education, the sample was skewed towards those with third level education, although it also included 6 participants for who leaving cert was the last/highest level of qualification.
- Participants lived in a mix of urban, suburban and rural locations.

EARLY FINDINGS

We are currently in the process of analysing the data from the interviews with young people, and identifying some of the core themes coming out of the data.

Some of the key points are:

Young people have a broad understanding of what constitutes violence against women, where violence against women takes place and who perpetrates violence against women. That said, they link it to physical violence and domestic violence first and psychological violence and sexual violence second. Violence against women is at once recognised as a phenomenon that is 'hidden' yet simultaneously very public.

Violence against women in its different forms was of concern for young people in this study and many spoke about the problem of violence against women in general (and particularly sexual violence and harassment). The young people in this study generally had views and attitudes that were not supportive of violence against women, with many viewing certain types of violence – particularly physical and sexual violence – as unacceptable and unjustifiable. **However, there were some scenarios that generated more ambiguous responses about acceptability**: for example, the scenario which presented a woman being grabbed on the buttocks at a party.

The interviews reveal that sexual assault and harassment is a key issue for young women in Irish society. Both men and women spoke of the exhausting 'pervasive' (interviewee, woman) occurrence of sexual violence and harassment. This occurs predominantly within nightclubs, but the behaviour begins during the start of secondary school. Some young women who participated in this study did not know any woman who has not experienced some kind of sexual assault or harassment.

Two young men in this study informed us that they were directly motivated to be interviewed based on knowing a woman in their lives who experienced sexual violence. A recurrent theme among the interviews with young people was the constant presence of

sexual violence and harassment in Ireland. This is captured by one male participant:

> If I was a girl, I wouldn't be going out, basically, is what I'd say. It would be too much for me. I wouldn't be going out [...because] constant haranguing, constant harassment, constant.

(male young participant)

> Mob mentality is massive in boys. [Peer pressure] with boys is huge. And girls can be just as bad, but in this way it's dangerous because if one boy at the party says, 'no man, we won't intervene, that's their business', the rest will go, 'Ah man, he's right, like, that's their business', I guess.

(female young participant)

Expressing vulnerable emotions is stigmatising for men. This was a common theme brought up by both young men and women who argued that the suppression of emotions is normal for men. Furthermore, the difficulty that young men face with dealing with emotions is implicit in how young people explain men's controlling or violent behaviour.

Peer pressure and the desire to adhere to the norms of the male peer group is a significant motivator in young men's inappropriate or violent behaviour, but also in decisions/willingness about whether to intervene or not. Interview participants described some male peer groups containing elements of 'lad culture'.

Related to the theme of peer pressure, young people commonly stated that 'men listen to other men'.

Social change is opening up new ways of being both a man and a woman but not in a progressively linear way. Despite increased options for women, social media increases pressure to work on appearance and keep up with norms around beauty, body shape etc.

Young people attributed the development of ideas about gender to a wide variety of factors, including peers, social media, the internet, television (such as reality TV shows and Rom-Coms), parental and sibling influences.

The pursuit of status and popularity at a young age seems to be achieved by making claims about romantic and sexual prowess. **For boys and young men in particular, status is strongly linked to behaving in ways that reinforce ideas of heterosexual masculinity**.

CONCEPT MAPPING

PROJECT PHASE 2 - Planning

We have begun planning for Phase 2 which involves using a method called Concept Mapping to identify how participants think more positive ideas of masculinity might be promoted in trying to challenge violence against women.

Based on interview responses from young people and stakeholder organisations across all four countries in PositivMasc, **a list of statements has been devised about the ways in which VAW might be tackled and how more 'positive' forms of masculinity or manhood might be promoted** (see Appendix A). These statements will form the basis of Phase 2, which is an online exercise.

Approximately 70 participants in each country will be asked to sort and rate the statements – this means putting the statements into similar themes/groups, but also rating them in terms of how important they think they are.

On the basis of this analysis, we will be able to map which actions are seen as priorities by young people in addressing VAW and promoting positive masculinities.

The process of putting the statements together has been a very lengthy process and it is our intention to pilot this in the next few weeks before proceeding. **We would very much welcome your insights on the list of statements, in terms of whether they make sense to you and/or are overly repetitive!**

OTHER PROJECT ACTIVITIES
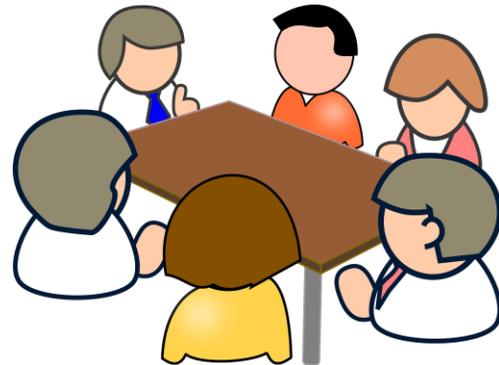
Consortium Meeting

We had hoped to have the consortia partners over to Cork in July this year, but that has not been possible with the Covid restrictions.

Instead, the consortium researchers met online on a weekly basis in June and the start of July.

Writing Papers

We have also been involved in mapping out the literature in the area, and have been involved in producing three working papers, which we are happy to share with you. These papers are as follows:

Working paper 1: Conceptualising and understanding young masculinities & violence against women

This working paper aims to situate the *PositivMasc* project within the conceptual and theoretical literature on VAW, gender and masculinities, whilst also setting out what we already know about young people's understandings of masculinity and attitudes towards VAW.

Working paper 2: Young people's construction of masculinity: a cross-national comparison of Ireland, Israel, Spain and Sweden

This working paper explores how gender relations broadly and the construction of masculinities and violence against women amongst young people in particular, have been studied within Ireland, Israel, Spain and Sweden. The paper is not an exhaustive discussion of the literature relevant to these themes in each county. Rather, the paper is intended to contextualise the PositivMasc project in relation to these key areas.

Working paper 3: Mapping the policy and legal landscape in addressing violence against women in Ireland, Israel, Spain and Sweden: a cross-country comparison

This working paper explores the policy, legal and institutional landscapes which underpin understandings of and responses to tackling violence against women (VAW) at the scale of the European Union, and in each of the four countries in the *PositivMasc* study: Sweden, Spain, Israel and Ireland.

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Appendix 1:
Concept Mapping Statements List

1. Develop male role model mentoring programmes for men

2. Establish anger management treatment as a legal requirement for men who are convicted for domestic violence

3. Develop men's skills to help them feel comfortable when they break macho norms and reject peer pressure and violence against women

4. Help men identify and recognize that they have the qualities and abilities to contribute in the fight against violence against women

5. Promote mixed-gender group work to discuss men's perceptions and attitudes towards violence against women

6. Promote positive, non-violent and respectful forms of parenting in parents' groups during antenatal /post-natal care

7. Invite young men who are actively opposed to violence against women to give lectures and classes to boys and young men

8. Use personal stories of women who have experienced different forms of violence as an educational tool

9. Provide men who reject violence against women with a wider platform to speak out

10. Educate young people on the negative impacts of using pornography and its effects on relationships

11. Support parents to discuss the negative effects of pornography that children see via mobile phone use and other forms of social media

12. Promote legislation for age verification restrictions for pornography use.

13. Educate about prevention of violence against women in work places

14. Promote continuous, fresh, and relevant male-led campaigns designed to prevent and reject violence against women and promote gender equality

15. Provide or expand rehabilitation programmes for men who perpetrate violence against women

16. Have stricter measures and longer sentences for people who commit acts of violence against women

17. Raise public awareness, including among teenagers, of the problem and extent of violence against women

18. Change the way the criminal justice system treats rape cases to understand the specific difficulties faced by rape victims, and to be more attentive towards their experiences

19. Promote forms of manhood that reject violence against women in religious institutions, meetings, and congregations

20. Present male role models who reject violence against women, for children and young people in families and communities

21. Teach boys and men conflict resolution methods and non-violent communication skills

22. Educate about positive and nonviolent forms of manhood and prevention of violence against women in sports organizations and clubs

23. Appoint more women in the process of policy decision-making regarding violence against women

24. Support teachers to question their own prejudices on gender norms and violence against women

25. Educate young people to recognize and reject gender stereotypes in the media and popular culture

26. Conduct events like seminars or presentations to raise awareness with both parents and children on violence against women

27. Develop men's skills to recognize, manage and express feelings in a non-violent way

28. Provide education on what healthy, positive and non-violent manhood looks like

29. Provide on-going financial security to activists and organizations which promote non-violent forms of manhood in preventing violence against women

30. Provide education and knowledge on gender stereotypes and equality within the education system and school curriculum, starting at a young age

31. Reduce representations of violent forms of manhood in media, social media and popular culture

32. Promote age-relevant and relatable mass media representations of positive and non-violent forms of manhood

33. Implement mandatory sex education and sexual consent education in schools, universities and community programmes

34. Encourage open, supportive public discussions around diverse sexual orientation

35. Support and train youth groups like different associations, student unions, gaming clubs to promote a culture of gender equality and reject violent forms of manhood

36. Improve how inappropriate or violent behaviours are addressed and tackled in schools.

37. Educate male romantic partners for non-violent, trustworthy, and respectful behaviours towards women from the beginning of the relationship.

38. Help people understand about the relationship between macho norms and behaviours and violence against women

39. Establish special units of police trained to identify and prevent violence against women

40. Implement after school activities where students discuss norms around gender and violence.

41. Establish an award and quality ratings for organizations and educational institutions that engage men for their work in preventing and tackling violence against women

42. Promote men's empathy towards women experiencing violence, including understanding its effects on women's lives

43. Educate parents about how to treat boys and girls equally

44. Promote understanding among men and women on how different groups of women experience violence differently, based on class, race, ethnicity and citizenship status

45. Raise boys to respect women, reject violence against women and oppose unequal gender norms

46. Educate men on how gender roles and violence against women can harm their own health, happiness, and wellbeing

47. Develop women's and men's skills on how to act when they witness

different forms of violence against women

48. Ensure that messages about not being violent towards women are communicated and integrated across the school curriculum

49. Introduce age appropriate compulsory education on attitudes and behaviours relating to violence against women

50. Recruit high profile public figures (actors, football players, film makers) to embrace gender equality, and non-violent forms of manhood, that reject violence against women

51. Establish a central government unit to improve coordination between different organizations, services and programmes working towards non-violent forms of manhood

52. Provide skills for men to recognize and actively prevent and stop violence against women

53. Raise awareness about public responsibility in preventing violence against women

54. Promote governmental support for men taking paternity leave and undertaking caregiving tasks/roles

55. Establish a wide activist movement that opposes violence against women and rejects violent forms of manhood

56. Provide a non-judgmental space for men to reflect on how their behaviors can foster violence against women
57. Educate men to recognize how their upbringing, society, and life-experiences influence their attitudes, values and behaviors towards violence against women
58. Broaden the understanding that men's violence towards women is strongly related with other forms of violence, discrimination, and inequality in society in general