

**DAPHNE II:**  
**Secondary Education Schools**  
**and Education in Values**

Fourth Report: Causes of image-based violence among the adolescent population in the Republic of Cyprus and values that contribute to its prevention.

## Introduction

This qualitative research was conducted in five secondary schools, three of which were high-schools (students' ages are 15-18) and two gymnasiums (students' ages are 11-14). Two of these schools are based in rural areas (one gymnasium and one high-school) while the rest of the schools are located in Nicosia and Limassol, the two biggest cities of the Republic of Cyprus. For the purposes of this research a youth club has also been chosen for fieldwork and this was the Scouts Club of Cyprus where a lot of teenagers spend their free time there during their afternoons or weekends or their summer holidays (the Scouts Club organizes excursions to the countryside).

In general 10 individual interviews have been conducted and 5 discussion groups with students of secondary education (each group consisted of approximately 6 students). Also 4 interviews have been conducted with teachers of secondary education but in two of these interviews two teachers were interviewed at the same time. At the Scouts club one individual interview with a boy scout was conducted, a group discussion including three girl-scouts and two boy-scouts. Also a group interview was conducted with three trainers of the scouts. Two of the trainers are dealing with scouts of 15-17 years old and the other one was responsible for scouts of 12-14 years old and even younger scouts. In total the number of teenagers who participated in this research was 46 and the number of adults working with youth was 9. For the purposes of this report when a quotation is taken by a male student the letter A in Greek (B is used for the translation) is placed before the quote while the letter K is placed when a quotation is taken by a girl (G for the translation). Tw is placed before the quotes of female teachers and Tm before the quotes of male teachers interviewed. Sm refers to the trainers of the Scouts' Club.

Also during our discussion groups we provided the students with a cardboard on which we asked them to draw a pyramid which would include the different groups of people and their placement on the pyramid in relevance to their popularity and status within the school's community. These pyramids were usually divided in three/four levels/categories so when quotes refer to moving up and down a category they are referring to the different levels of a pyramid.

## Concept of violence and stereotypes

Almost all the participants in this research tended to talk about various forms in which gender violence appears, that is both physical and psychological violence. Regarding physical violence it was noted that most often this is inflicted on girls by their boyfriends and the reasons for this violent behavior in most cases are infidelity, or suspicion of infidelity, jealousy and telling lies. All these reasons are more or less significantly connected with reputation (public image) which constitutes one of the most fundamental factors affecting gender relationships in the ages we are researching especially among older adolescents 16-18 years old.

B: 'I know this guy who was a soldier, an eighteen-year-old. I was with 2-3 girls who are friends of mine, and this guy's friends were with us, too. One of the girls was brought there by another friend of hers, who, as it later turned out, was also her cousin. The cousin had found out that the girl was driven there by a boy. So he sneaked out of the army camp, he came right there, and started

hitting her right before our faces. In the meantime, we rushed into the fight and tried to hold him back, because, after all, a guy had brought her there by herself and we later found out that this guy was her own cousin.'

B2. 'These guys beat the girls up, because...I don't know...because they just want to beat them up I guess? Those other guys we were talking about, are in lyceum and try to play it smart, they simply do it to save their images.

B2. There was this girl who went clubbing without letting her boyfriend know, so her boyfriend beat her up later.

G. At lyceum you might be in a serious relationship when you are 17-18 and yes lies or cheating

G. She might have cheated on him or it depends on the person. I have heard of occasions when some guys did it in for no important reason at all. For instance, they simply had an argument with their girlfriend and beat her up, because they couldn't control their anger.

G. And usually these boys are the most handsome ones, and the ones who are cool and got style.

It must be noted that these cases described by the participants are told in order to show what happens relatively often in a considerable amount of teenage heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless the participants in both interviews that these quotes are taken from have indicated their disagreement with the use of physical violence in any case.

According to the male participants, high-school boys become violent when it's a matter of protecting their image or reputation. A number of participants noted that this is one of the most important reasons for gender violence expressed in many ways besides physical violence. For example one common way is to target the reputation of a girl so by defaming her in sexual terms the boy regains his own reputation because he attributes the failure of maintaining control to the girl's character and actions.

B. "They might want to make a pass at a girl, or they might want to accuse her of having sex with many different guys, and this sort of things" and "it's mostly done among girls themselves, (rumors), for example they might say to themselves: "Well she is not any better than me" and 'I believe that it also depends on the person itself. There are some guys that actually like this sort of things, while there might be others who cannot stand this kind of behaviour from a girl and be annoyed by it and then start accusing her'.

G. 'because perhaps a boy might have asked a girl out, and she refused him, so in order to get revenge on her, he might spread bad rumours about her because she didn't accept to do something that he wanted her to'

B. 'or as it is mostly the case, the guy might have had sex with the girl, and then because the just had a fight, he spreads out the rumour that she has slept with him. I just believe he does it to make himself look cool.'

As will be further analysed and indicated later on in the cultural context of Cyprus reputation is a very sensitive issue in relation to girls and especially reputation that is connected with sexual activity. That is why one effective way to target a girl or bully her is by attacking her sexual reputation (her honor- honor for

Cypriot women is almost always associated with 'proper sexual behavior'). According to the participants this is done by both boys who want to improve their image after being rejected by girl or it can be done within the context of antagonism among girls for which mention is made later on.

## **Control and information regarding bullying**

### Control in heterosexual relationships

The abusive behavior that the majority of the participants agreed to either having experienced or encountered in the relationships of their friends and fellow students relates to one partner trying to control the behavior, dress, and interactions of the other. In most cases boys are the ones who try to control the behavior and the bodies of their girlfriends. This control takes various forms like prohibition to socialize with certain people, mostly other boys, or control of wearing specific clothes, especially ones that are considered 'revealing':

B. 'I believe that it's the boys mostly that control the girls...in order to have them only for themselves, they are so jealous that they don't even let them have friends. In this way the girls are secluded and hang out only with girls. I personally believe that it is OK to be in a relationship and for the girl to have both male and female friends. You simply cannot forbid her from having her friends and want her to be with you all the time...Most guys believe that the boy is the head of the relationship'

G. 'So much jealousy. He doesn't let you wear this or that, he doesn't let you go to this place or that, or even talk to a friend of yours or be teased by someone' and 'I broke up with him (laughs) Yes, he was putting too much pressure on me.'

B. 'Trivial reasons (that lead couples to fight) for example "why are you flirting with that boy, why are you talking to the other boy, I don't like you doing that." 'Jealousy is the main reason' and 'he can tell me that it bothers him when I do that, but he doesn't have the right to forbid me from doing it or tell me that "If you don't stop doing it, I will end this relationship"

Here the second participant is talking about an oppressive relationship that she herself experienced and which she decided to end due to the immense pressure she was facing. All participants agree that jealousy is the main reason behind this abusive behavior but other participants also connected this with the reputation that a boy has to maintain:

G. 'There are even students who had to change schools because of this kind of things. For example, there was this girl in our school who got into a fight with her boyfriend because of (her) cheating, and her boyfriend beat her up, and she had to change schools...she fell into disrepute'

G. Because to be cheated on, and then manage to get on the top of the situation is considered to be a very positive thing for men.

G. 'the girl who cheated on you should be ashamed of herself, and she deserved what she got'

B2. No, I agree. Girls who cheat usually fall into disrepute, while boys who cheat are considered to be "macho" guys. And when her girlfriend finds out about him cheating on her, he will be the one breaking up with her, nothing else is going to happen.

B. 'For example, if there is a rumor about someone being cheated by his girlfriend, he will try to act cool; he'll beat her up, and then break up with her and pretend that he doesn't care about her cheating on him. He will get on the top of the situation, in order to save his face'

B2. not to damage his reputation

The participants say that for girls committing adultery is considered shameful and harms their reputation while for boys committing adultery is considered a 'macho' thing to do and instead their reputation is upgraded, they tend to be admired by other boys. The participants don't give specific reasons why there is different treatment on this issue. One girl used the phrase 'it is considered' which leads us to believe that it is a general perception of the school's society. This as former research on gender in Greece and Cyprus has shown can be attributed to a sort of belief system that considers male sexual drives as 'natural'<sup>1</sup>. Therefore 'uncontrollable' sexual activity is justified for men. On the other hand the shame that a girl must feel and the sort of misogyny that goes with it can be attributed to a social belief that expects women to be sexually passive.

In addition, the above examples show that female sexuality is expected to be passive and that when it is expressed more openly it should be tamed and controlled and even punished. This is because a woman's sexuality is symbolic of her relationship with men and therefore it is viewed as capable of 'tainting' men's sexual reputation. This fear of being tainted by female sexuality still remains strong in the Cypriot context. Boys by controlling the behavior of their girlfriends are also trying to guard their reputations. In order to be masculine you have to prove that you can control your girlfriend so that is why *infidelity is the strongest reason that leads to physical violence because it puts the masculinity and therefore prestige of the boy under question*. So in order to maintain their reputations (masculinity) boys retreat to violence: they show who is really in control of the situation. How sexuality informs gender attitudes is further explored in the following section regarding the concept of love.

### Bullying

Regarding bullying as most of the participants as well as the teachers have noted this is often inflicted on shy people, people that are not expected to react to any of the remarks made against them or who are not part of larger groups of people and don't have friends who can protect them. As noted bullying is done by particular groups of students that in most cases are among the popular ones at school or are well-known for causing trouble. These popular people that usually belong to bigger groups but also have protection from older adolescents outside the school context abuse the weaker students by applying a sort of intimidation strategy: students that are being bullied know that if they try to contact a teacher about these issues or if they try to resist to this behavior and expose a popular

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<sup>1</sup> Loizos, Peter and Papataxiarchis, Evthymios, *Gender, Sexuality and the Person in the Greek Culture*, in Loizos P. and Paparaxiarchis E. (eds.) *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 222.

student they will most likely be more bullied in the future or even be victims of physical assault by their harassers and their protectors outside of the school context and working hours.

B. 'It is usually the people of the last row (he shows the pyramid which students were asked to draw in order to depict the hierarchy in the school's community) who are bullied, because they are the only ones who won't react. For example, an introvert person won't react because it would appear awkward to the popular guy. In case he reacted he would get more bullied in the end, so he will never react. He will tolerate his being bullied and he will keep it to himself.'

This intimidation strategy is also applied in cases of bullying that are connected with gender. Although it must be noted that the majority of students talked about intimidation from popular students independent of gender, one group made a particular connection between intimidation and bullying that relates to gender:

B. 'It's the popular people that mostly do this (all participants agree on this). For example, if the president grips a girl's buttocks, even if someone tells on him, he will still not pay the price'.

G. No one will report what he did, because he is among the popular ones. Instead, they will make fun of the girl, saying "oh, just look at her".

B. And then they even call the girl a whore.

Therefore the blame is back on the girl for presumably being provocative so, threat of bad sexual reputation is what bullies (boys) use to continue bullying.

Also a teacher made a very similar comment: girls who are harassed sexually by popular boys do not usually react to comments made about them because by exposing the bully then the bullying will most probably become worse:

Tw: 'Of course they must be offended by this, even if they don't show it. Most of the times, they don't show they are offended, because they are afraid that in case they do show it, they will be rejected by the group of the popular/macho people'.

A direct connection between this kind of bullying and popular students is also made here and if bullied students react they will be ridiculed and receive even more bullying for their reaction while they might even get marginalised. Furthermore, as this teacher also noted, gay students constitute one of the primary targets of consistent bullying exactly because they don't behave according to the model of masculinity that is expected:

Tw. 'they don't treat him nicely, they make fun at him, scoff at him, they reject him and the child gets upset... perhaps he didn't realize himself that he looks different, but then, perhaps he did realize it. I haven't figured that out yet. However, the others treat him like that.

All students agreed that homosexual students or students perceived to be homosexuals are targets of bullying. Even students who are considered 'inexperienced' with girls face danger of being considered homosexuals:

G. 'he may not even be gay, he might simply be inexperienced with girls, and they start spreading the word that he is gay, and make fun of him for being gay, while in fact he is not'

G2. 'yes, but this is a rare case, and as soon as these boys are in a relationship with a girl, the rumor spreads around and everyone knows, and they stop mocking him. But if a girl is stigmatized as a whore, she is forever stuck with it. Even if she dates a boy for 2 whole years she will still considered to be a whore,

they will say "who knows what she does with her boyfriend", and so the rumor will continue'.

Nevertheless as it is indicated this happens rarely and a boy can 'fix' his reputation as soon as he is involved with a girl. On the other hand a girl's reputation is much more sensitive and girls are not so easily 'forgiven' if they act in a way that is inconsistent to what is expected by the gender norms of Cypriot society.

### **Concept of love**

Regarding the concept of 'love' a lot of the participants noted that most girls face pressure in their relationships from boys in order to proceed to sexual intercourse. The participants noted that even if the girls don't feel ready to have sex with their partners most of them proceed to do so out of fear of losing their partners. Some of the students justified such coerced decisions on the grounds of 'love'. For example:

G. 'these girls go along and agree to do it because they love their boyfriends and do whatever they boy wishes'. (question was how most girls react in bad or oppressive relationships)

G. 'there was this friend of ours who didn't want to have sex with her boyfriend, but she did it anyway because she loved him, because she was in love with him.'

In the same context, as the participants have noted, girls submit to pressure inflicted by their partners for other reasons as well but again out of fear of not losing their partners. This again indicates an exclusionary (negative) form of affection since girls act as if they don't have other choices but to stay with a partner that is abusive:

B. 'I went to a party of a female friend of mine who was dating a boy for a long time, and I was dancing with her for quite some time, we weren't dancing provocatively or anything, so her boyfriend grabs her and pushes her outside in the street. He would have killed her, and he yelled at her "Why are you behaving like a slut?" and 'this guy is older than her and despite all this, she still loved him'.

B. 'Let's talk about another experience. It's about a boy who is a year older than us, and he we are at the same school. He has been dating a girl a year younger than him for a long time. For so many years this girl has been living in fear of talking to another boy. We went to their party, and he (he points to a boy sitting next to him) went to wish her happy birthday. So he leans forward to kiss her, as people always do in occasions like this one, and she pulls herself back and tells him "my boyfriend is right there" and 'if he sees her talking to someone else, he might beat her up'.

Despite the above conclusions most of the participants themselves believed that girls have the possibility to leave their partners if they are abusive either because there is pressure to have sexual intercourse, or because they face any other kind of physical or psychological abuse. As was noted above the psychological abuse

can be found in terms of controlling the body, and social interactions of your partner. As this research has shown this is the most common form of abuse encountered by teenage girls in Cyprus:

G. 'this is a piece of advice that they should give us, not do something we don't want to. OK, of course someone might give in, in some cases at least, as long as he does not transcend the principles he has built all these years.

G. 'I wouldn't take this (if her boyfriend was like another boy who is very jealous of his girlfriend)...I even told my boyfriend that if keeps on like this, I won't stand it any longer.... I told him right from the start that I would like him to be sociable, more sociable than he is now, and friendlier.

G. 'The boyfriend of a friend of mine makes comments on how she shouldn't talk to others, and not provoke them. I wouldn't take that kind of behavior'.

G. 'they believe that they have met the love of their life, well, talk about foolishness! They don't get it that they are simply too young and they have their whole life lying ahead of them. They think that he is the only man for them and that's the end of it; and they say "I can't live now, and I can't... etc'.

G. 'they are possessive-many guys are like this' and 'but the girls are to be blamed as well because they stay in this relationship, they have to be clever enough and say "what is this guy doing to me?".

As it is obvious there are many cases where girls stay in abusive relationships justifying their decision as an outcome of love that they can't avoid but be with someone that treats them bad. It seems that they have a very negative model of love which instead of being supported by respect, affection and understanding, to love someone means being controlling, jealous but also (for girls mostly) tolerate these behaviors from your partner. The submissive attitude/ role of the woman within the family can be one reason for this negative model.

Nevertheless some of the participants went one step further by not only avoiding to justify violence by love but also considering control and pressure unacceptable for a healthy relationship:

G. 'it depends on one's character. When they boy asks you for it and you say "no, this is not what I want to do" (to have sex) "because it is against my beliefs and principles, etc", if the boy truly loves you, I believe that he will be understanding, even if he is older than you. If he doesn't love you, he will leave you, and then you will know that he wasn't worth the trouble'.

G. 'I believe this is wrong. Why should I control what she does, it is her own life so she can do whatever she wishes to. If she wants to be with me, then so be it, but if she doesn't, then she will not be with me. But why on earth should I interfere with her life? There are many boys who beat their girlfriends up, and if you look closely you'll see, they do it in front of their friends in order to show up and play it macho'.

This boy has also noted in previous locations that the reason why boys at most times recur to violence towards their girlfriends is in order to improve or maintain their public image. This again relates to the traditional gender stereotypes still strongly persisting in Cypriot society. A boy must be 'mangkas' and the profile of a 'mangkas' corresponds to a manly, cool, macho guy that is always in control of

any situation that involves both genders. For the boys public image is the most important issue of their puberty and they are expected to be more active in order to improve this and suppress any feelings that are considered 'sensitive' therefore 'feminine'. For girls on the other hand it's normal to be passive and even when they are active either by causing a fuss, or pursuing a certain relationship, or by choosing to have sexual relationships this is not considered as a positive thing and rather acts negatively on their public image: (A girl is accepted to be active mainly in specific areas like bringing good grades, participating in school activities etc). In a small society like Cyprus these prescribed gender roles put a lot of pressure on both boys and girls to act accordingly:

G: 'And I believe that in a society like ours, when it is said that a girl is said to have had sex with a boy, she is stigmatized. But if a boy is said to have had sex, then everyone will say "Good for him! He did it at such an early age!" This is why girls hesitate more'.

G: 'There are some girls that don't care anymore because it's very easy for a girl to lose her honour' and 'she might have not done anything at all, simply because she might have gone out with a boy, she will be called a slut. They will claim that she has done this or that, and if this rumor goes around, then it's over for her. While it's not the case with boys, I mean, they might even say "This guy is cool, he did this!". They will put her down, and she will be stuck with this bad name forever.

G: 'Having sex is not considered to be a positive thing for a girl. Boys on the other hand can do whatever they want'.

G: 'But for boys, it is the other way round. It isn't perceived as something negative. They say "Good for him! He did it!" but it's something blameworthy for the girls'.

Here we see a different treatment in relation to what is expected by boys and girls in regard to their sexual behavior. Having sex is considered a major advantage for boys and increases their prestige at school (as manliness, being a 'mangkas' is also measured by sexual achievement) while for girls is completely the opposite: they get stigmatized. Here we also see that reputation is a very sensitive issue for girls who must conform to the prerequisites of being a proper Cypriot girl/woman and these prerequisites are closely connected to their sexual behavior. If a girl deviates from this 'proper' behavior' she is either excluded or stigmatized. As previous research in Cyprus has pointed out: 'Since a Cypriot woman's sexuality is important in the way she is judged and defined in her everyday life, being a *'Kypraia'* [a Cypriot woman] carries certain sexual 'prerequisites', especially her conformity to 'rules about sexually appropriate behavior, otherwise she becomes excluded'<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand boys face the pressure and anxiety of achieving the 'mangkas' status therefore avoiding any characteristics that might be considered 'sensitive' (gay, feminine) and are also expected to know all things related to sex because this proves their masculinity. As a lot of participants have noted that they consider it natural for boys to be proud of their sexual achievements. A teacher and a trainer of scouts also commented on this issue:

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<sup>2</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria, *Of Other' Others'* - *Women Constructing Women: Through the Front Door*, Paper presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5<sup>th</sup> European Feminist Research Conference, August 20-24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden, p. 14.

Tw: 'Being a sports type is something boys like a lot. First come the singers and then the actors follow, but this is something that girls mostly like' and 'they either imitate them or boys mimic these kind of things, but it is only a small number of boys or they are late in admitting that they want to imitate these things' and she goes on to explain 'because to a great extent art and this kind of things have been identified with homosexuality. What I am trying to say is that they are trying too hard to look like men first, "I'm strong", (she tries to sound like a boy) and then they discover other things later on'.

Sm: It is a stereotype according to which boys are supposed to look as if they know everything (related to sex), while girls mustn't know a single thing about it.

## **Models of attraction**

### Boys – Exclusionary models of attraction

14 students (both sexes) that were interviewed noted that one of the most important criteria in order to be popular is to be physically attractive. Girls at the ages we are researching first look at physical appearance and then proceed to other qualities. Some of the participants said that this is common for both sexes e.g. physical attractiveness is an important factor in being popular.

B: 'I believe that most girls want to date a handsome boy, regardless of the fact that he doesn't pay any attention to her, or even ignores her. She stays with him simply because he is good looking'.

G: 'I also believe that the main reason someone stands out is his good looks'.

B: 'The most important thing is that the boy is popular, then good looking, and the last thing they look at is his character. They will still go out with him, even if they don't like his character, just because he is popular' and 'they first look at his appearance, the clothes he wears, and even if he is sometimes rude, they will still want him. By saying rude, I mean that he doesn't even talk to the girl or does not pay any attention to her' and 'there are even cases when a girl likes a guy who is rude to her, because it's him, they don't care'. (what girls look for in boys)

G: 'Before I met my boyfriend I had always wanted to have a handsome boyfriend, so that all the other girls would see him and get jealous of me. It's true that all of us like that feeling when you go to a place and everyone stares at your boyfriend because he is good looking. That's a nice feeling, isn't it?

The above quotes are indicative of the beliefs that many participants expressed through these interviews. The exclusionary factor regarding the above models of attraction e.g. handsome boys is that a lot of girls are willing to disregard the bad or rude behavior of a boy if he is handsome and popular. As was suggested girls do not give enough attention to the character of the boy as to his popularity that

most times is connected to an attractive physical appearance. Some boys also noted other factors that are connected to physical appearance and can make someone become more attractive like having a modern haircut, wearing labels, having a car or a motorbike.

B: 'Being good looking and well-dressed, fulfilling all the criteria that we had set.

G: 'Most girls look for good looks' and 'they want him to have a nice car'

B: 'The most handsome (boys), you know, good looks' and 'yes, I didn't use to go out a lot before, but now I do. I've changed my appearance and this makes me more attractive, I'm doing my hair in a different, more modern style... and I've started talking to those girls that I fancied'.

B: 'In the majority of cases, it's the introvert people who end up taking drugs, because it's like smoking, what I'm saying is that they want to prove themselves as being cool and macho. They enter the group of those who smoke and if an introvert guy smokes, he feels cool' and 'Yes, it's a way to gain status for yourself'.

B: 'Now there are a lot of people who smoke and take drugs. And it's the same for the girls, too' (they think they are acting cool) and 'There are some girls who dress provocatively, I don't know... and then if something happens to them they don't know who or what to blame for it' .

It is interesting that he then goes on to differentiate about girls regarding their way of dressing as an expression of trying to be cool which indicates that there are variations between boys and girls in expressing coolness.

B: 'yes, they usually do crazy things, like sneaking out of school during class. They think that these guys are **macho** men, and they go off with them' and 'There are other girls who think that a guy is cool because he owns a motorbike or because he smokes or because he has earrings, or he does crazy things'.

G: 'Of course there are (all sort of people at school), like for example the most popular ones, the most naughty ones, and of course it is the good looking ones that stand out from the crowd'.

So according to the participants the popular and attractive guys at this age have to be handsome and manly/cool. In order to be manly a boy should either wear a lot of earrings, have a motorbike, smoke or do drugs in other words he must prove himself to be manly and demonstrate this through the use of various substances or by being naughty in class and aggressive towards the professors or illustrate this on his body. Also as the first quote suggests in order for boys to upgrade their social status at school and be accepted in groups of popular boys they must start expressing their masculinity in ways that will gain them respect, admiration by other boys and attention by the girls:

G: 'There are some people who belong to this category and want to move up higher, so they act unlike themselves, just to be liked by the rest (of the students)'.

B: 'In order to fit in with a certain group, for example in order to start smoking like the rest of the smoking group, he may shave his legs (laughs)' and 'not because someone has told him to, but because he saw others do it' and 'yes,

his behavior can radically change, just so he can get in this group, I don't know.... Just so he'll get other people's attention. Perhaps as K has just said, he changes his behavior completely so he can get into a higher category'.

B: 'If you wish to belong to this group you must break a window, you have to break in a classroom, or you have to steal something. And it is those people who desperately want to get into this group that end up doing this kind of things. They are easily carried away and misled by others (especially boys)' and 'G: especially those antisocial people who want to draw attention to themselves'.

One other important characteristic that reinforces the model of 'bad, cool boy/mangkas' in the Cypriot context is the connections that he has with people that work at night clubs (also if he has many friends within and outside the school context like hanging out with older boys). These kind of connections apply a sort of prestige to the boy concerned which makes him attractive to the girls, despite his appearance.

B: 'This happens because they (mostly boys) know a lot of people, who are usually connected to night life' and 'People that go out every Friday and Saturday night, usually have a lot of acquaintances and they get to know people who are involved in night life'.

G: 'yes, hanging out with someone who is popular or knowing this or that popular group of people'.

B: 'If two boys get into a fight and the popular one gets beaten up, then he will probably not take it, and he will bring other boys, in their twenties and they will beat up the fifteen or sixteen-year-old'.

So boys can be popular and attractive at school for other reasons and not only because of their physical appearance. As was noted by a number of participants there might be good-looking boys at school that are quiet or not very sociable and shy who despite their good looks are not popular among the girls. As a result one would say that the model of attraction regarding boys in Cyprus that is most likely to attract the majority of girls has to be handsome or stylish and have a rude, sometimes aggressive, and careless behavior. The latter translates into making noise in class, bullying people, demonstrating coolness by smoking, damaging property, behaving in an ignorant or even sharp manner towards girls. Also a lot of participants, including professors have noted that boys who are popular usually have low grades or cut school very often or have done the same school year twice.

Regarding bullying and the above the following quotes are relevant:

B: 'There are others who try to put you down all the time, they try to pick up a fight because they have nothing else to keep themselves busy with and they are trying to use their popularity and the strength which they have acquired through their friends, and act cool' and 'yes, they are useless (says this emphatically) students, they just come to school to smoke, to find .... (?) and to if they are teased then ....'.

G: 'They are the popular ones at school' and 'they are that group to which you can say nothing at all; and 'you might even get beaten up by them' Also in the same interview but from another girl: 'they good looking ones' and 'because they will start saying things about you, they will tease you more, they won't want you' and 'of course you always want to get along with the popular ones so you will be OK, too' and 'this is why at the end you keep quiet'.

G: 'They (girls) always pay attention to bad behavior, but never to proper behavior, so good behavior always goes unnoticed'.

Tm: 'Most often these people impose themselves (to others) and they become likeable'

The above quotes summarize a lot of the characteristics regarding popular boys mentioned above and about exclusionary models of attraction regarding boys. Also the intimidation strategy applied by popular boys towards weaker students which includes girls, as was mentioned in the chapters regarding violence and love is very much related with the back-up groups that provide a sort of protection to the bullies. Therefore it is connected with the well-known consequences that a victim can face if they resist or report the bullying e.g. intensification of the bullying.

Another factor that might be partly related to the 'back-up system' is older siblings. In a lot of cases described by the participants, students who had older siblings that were popular at school are very likely to be themselves popular. This can be connected with the support by older adolescents provided to popular students, which is one of the constituent reasons that make them popular. Also the family's social status was mentioned in two schools to be of vital importance for someone's popularity: having well-known and rich parents raises the prestige of the student. Nevertheless social class was mostly important and discussed within the context of a particular rural school.

Also another factor noted by the participants is the position that someone has within the school's community for example the president of the school is very popular most of the times although it is ambiguous whether she/he is also a model of attraction.

### Boys -Transformative models of attraction

It is important to say that some of the students interviewed in a high school and in a gymnasium context noted that there are two kinds of popular students. The one group constitutes of the students mentioned above, the ones that are usually the bullies, who cause a fuss at school, and are considered cool and manly. The other group consists of students that are likeable because they are very sociable, they get along with everyone and these students don't harass weaker students but behave in a similar manner to everyone. The fact that a smaller number of participants referred to this group of popular students might mean that they are not in general recognized as a popular group. On the other hand if we consider that this was a pilot research which dealt only with 5 schools can lead us to the conclusion that this type of popular student exist in every school context but the number of these students is not as big as popular students that are considered to

belong to an exclusionary model of attraction. The following quotes demonstrate this distinction:

G: 'it really depends on the person, because if, despite his popularity, he is down to earth, then he will behave in a normal way' and 'yes, of course. I mean that guy who is popular at school, but he won't discriminate against some people and say "I will talk to you because you are popular, but I won't talk to you because you are not (popular)". If a person is down to earth and thinks sensibly, he treats others as his equals. But if popularity has turned his head, he will not talk to some people....'.

G: 'There are some people who are down to earth, I mean that they don't think that they have something more than the rest of us, so they behave in a normal way. But then, there are some others whose heads have been turned' and 'so there are **two groups**' (both sexes)

B: 'It is different in the sense that.... we hang out with them, but we don't hang out a lot with those people that act crazy. We are just acquaintances, because we happen to live in the same neighborhood, and we hang out at the same place, and also because **we are very sociable, we make jokes**. Well, I mean that we too might act crazy sometimes, but not to the extent that they do'.

What the latter boy indicates is exactly this distinction between popular groups of boys. He belongs to the group of boys that are popular due to their very sociable character and their humor. He explicitly differentiates himself and his friends from the group of popular boys who are naughty or do things that are considered inappropriate and gain attention through this behavior. The same boy attributes the attention that these boys receive to a lack of self-esteem that other students have while his quote indicates the importance of having **back-up** at school:

B: 'I believe that these people, not those who act crazy, the other ones, don't believe in themselves and think that no one will dare to tease them if they hang out with a guy, because that guy will act as their back-up. They don't believe that people won't tease them because of what they are in themselves or because they have some true friends who will back them up' and 'they think that the people who act crazy are popular at school and by hanging out with them they will become popular, too. I believe that all this is wrong, because my friends and I don't do crazy things like this, but yet, because we are cool (laughs)..... people still know us'.

This further indication to the importance of having a group of people to back you up indirectly leads us to believe that bullying is a wider and intense phenomenon in Cypriot secondary schools.

Regarding humor a number of girls that were interviewed indicated that this is an important factor in being attracted to a boy. It must also be noted that while the participants suggested that the majority of girls are attracted by exclusionary models of attraction they differentiated themselves by noting that they look for other qualities in boys like having good humor and a nice, sociable character:

G: 'yes, for example last year I used to like this guy who, even though he was a third-year-student, didn't want to show up like his friends did. I liked him precisely because he was modest'.

G: 'I believe that perhaps because they are more sociable than others, they might make friends easily' (popular and likeable people. She refers to both sexes)

B: 'Girls look at someone's appearance, but they also look at his character, at least more than boys do'

B: 'A girl will notice a boy' and 'how sociable he is, is also important' and 'yes, girls also like boys to be funny'

G: 'I like boys who have a good sense of humor, with whom you can have a proper conversation. I mean, boys who aren't dump'

G: 'I personally care about one's character, not his looks. There are many girls who say "I want a boy to be tall and fit" but when you fall in love, you will simply fall in love without caring if he is tall. What will I do with him if he doesn't have a good character or if I can't communicate with him? I will just fight with him all the time and I will be afraid not to lose him'

B: 'I believe that the mature girls....no, not the mature ones, I mean that a girl might be 14-16 but not grow up until she is 17 going to 18. Only then will she see two guys and tell who the crazy one is and who the one that makes her laugh when they are together is, the one that doesn't smoke, doesn't have earrings on, but is still cool. Girls start knowing that, when they reach this age. Of course, not all girls are like that; there are still some of them who think that it's cooler when a boy acts crazy, has a nice car and speeds when she is in the car with him'

The latter boy has observed that older adolescent girls tend to admire other qualities in boys like their character or their humor and the way they are treated by them while younger girls aged 14-16 admire qualities like being naughty in class, having a great car and good looks. This is also supported by the number of interviews undertaken with older adolescent girls during this research. Almost all of them were either having relationships with transformative elements or they were looking for this kind of relationships. Nevertheless they also might constitute a minority:

G: 'I disagree to some extent with this. I believe that girls (who are in lyceum) especially now that they are more mature, see things differently. They go out with boys who are also mature and who won't act foolishly, because girls are bored with the crazy-type of boys, they are not in the mood for that' BUT B: 'well, at our school there are only a few girls like that, very few' and B: 'yes, at our school there is a place where this crazy-type of boys hang out and you will also see a number of specific girls hanging out there with them. It is the same girls that were in gymnasium and now in lyceum...'

Regarding the Scouts club the participants said that things are quite different there regarding bullying and the values that are promoted in inter-personal relationships. This is very much connected with the qualities that are more appreciated in the context of this youth club. As participants have said people that are admired by other Scouts are usually those who are very good at training

and who reach higher levels in rank. Most importantly they must also be people who are very sociable, and get along with everybody:

B: 'Yes, there is this sort of people (the category of popular people). It might be the case that someone admires a person in matters related to education. This person can get high enough to become a scoutmaster' and 'They are very sociable, they hang out with everyone and they are funny'

The values that are being promoted at Scouts club are acceptance of the other, friendship, equality and respect. This leads to a quite opposite phenomenon than what happens at school. People that bully weaker kids are not considered as 'mangkes' but are seen negatively by the rest of the Scouts.

B: 'At the Scouts a person is taught to live with others, to make friends, to tolerate other people and their behavior, and he also learns how to make friends not only from his own club but from other scout clubs as well'.

B: 'No, I believe that at the Scouts they are all the same. What we said before about those people who try to look cool and macho, is valid only at school. This is because the people who come to the Scouts are sociable and they come here because they want to make friends, not appear better than the rest'

To conclude, it must be noted that these alternative ways of male behaviour that constitute transformative models of attraction for example being sociable with everybody, having humour etc. are not as prominent or visible in the school's context as male behaviour with the exclusionary characteristics mentioned above. Nevertheless there are youth groups like the Scout's club that offer young boys alternative ways of being a respectable and popular person among teenage boys and girls.

## **Models of attraction**

### Girls – Exclusionary models of attraction

The overwhelming majority of the students who participated in this research stated that in order for girls to be popular an indispensable criterion is to be beautiful. In addition a lot of them have said as shown below that beauty is also a determinant and exclusionary value in order to be attractive:

B: 'Well yes. I don't think that there are boys who look at a girl's grades and they are attracted to her because she gets high grades. I don't think that boys look at anything else besides a girl's appearance'

G: 'The most important thing is good looks. Even if no one knows a girl, just her being beautiful is an advantage for a guy'

B: 'No, boys don't care if a girl is popular or not, as long as she is beautiful'

Sm: 'Being good looking is definitely more important than having a strong character' (the question was which girls are more attractive for boys- they also said that it doesn't matter if she is shy or sociable)

B: 'I believe that at school it is the beautiful girls that are popular' and 'I believe that it is also the beautiful girls (that are popular at the Scouts). What I'm trying to say is that it is the same thing everywhere, because this is a place too, where there are many people and I don't think that someone is popular here because of his being sociable or anything'

Enhancing ones physical appearance is also a way to move rank at school and become more popular. The same conclusion was reached for boys as well:

G: 'or a girl may dress up for school so she can look nicer, and others might not be able to tell that she looks good because of this, and also because she belongs to a lower category she wishes to become popular, so she starts dressing up and putting make up on'

K: 'yes, how many boys a girl likes, who is the prettiest one, who has the nicest body, how many boys surround each girl (reasons girls compete with one another'

The latter quote indicates that there is an antagonism between girls regarding who gets more admirers and it is always related to beauty.

A very interesting quote came from a girl who she is herself one of the most popular girls at her high-school:

G: 'I don't know why, perhaps because they see that I don't pay attention to anyone might make them curious' (typical relationships with classmates) and 'Yes, they see it as different. And they sometimes **imitate** the things I do, without me causing it. For example, I noticed that after I wore a short skirt at school for the first time, the whole school was filled with girls wearing short skirts, too. I was told that I was the first one to start this new trend, but I had noticed other girls wearing a short skirt long before I did' and 'Simply because I date a boy older than me, they think, I don't know.....that my life is just perfect. But things are not always like that. I have even noticed that if I pass by a place in my boyfriend's car or if I am outside a place, people point at me and say "oh, that's her", and make comments about me- there was a girl once, who got really excited simply because I had asked to borrow her pen, and I heard her telling all her friends about it. I didn't think it was a big deal to ask her for a pen' and 'I think that they admire the fact that I know many people who work at night. I mean that I know all the people working in every night club, so they will always let me in, I won't be left waiting in the queue, and they will find me a table if I wish. For example, on my birthday I gave them a last minute call and asked them to arrange something for me, so they cancelled someone else's reservation and let me take it.

What she says is indicative of the elements that girls admire in popular girls but also of the elements they consider attractive in boys: they admire her because she has a relationship with an older boy (who is also handsome as the interviewee confessed later on) and the fact that he has a car enhances her popularity. They also admire the fact that she knows a lot of people that work at night clubs and this was also a characteristic found in popular boys. Although one would think that this is a common factor related to popularity and attraction for both sexes she later went on to explain that she had an older brother who was very handsome, extremely popular at school and with good connections outside the school. She said that she considers this fact to have played a major role in

her own popularity at school. As was noted by other participants, people who have older siblings, especially boys that were popular usually are themselves popular too. The fact that the status of this girl is defined by her relationships with men (her boyfriend and her brother) is an indication of the patriarchal values that still persist in Cyprus where a girl does not become popular through her own abilities/ qualities but is defined as such by her associations with men.

Besides beauty which is a basic factor in being popular as many participants have noted boys also look for girls that are as they call them 'easy' that is to say it is well-known at school that they have already had sexual relationships. These girls are very popular at school but in an exclusionary way because usually boys try to have a relationship with them because of the prospect of having sex with them. Also these girls are seen very negatively by other girls at school and as was noted their relationships with boys in most cases are short-term for the reason that boys do not consider any other qualities in order to have a relationship with them:

B: 'yes, they dye their hair, put make up on and wear T-shirts which are quite revealing' and 'yes, this is the primary thing, they are not supposed to be so.... well they are not greatly controlled by their parents, they do whatever they want' and 'yes, they are more comfortable in a relationship, they are not so conservative as the rest of the girls, and they can go the whole way with it, they can have sexual intercourse in a relationship' (he defined these girls as 'αλήτισες', meaning 'trumps' and commented that the relationships that they make are superficial)

G: 'Appearance is again....but I believe that boys look for....well it depends on the boy really. What I'm saying is that you can tell if a boy wants a girl just to have a nice time with her....well, you can't actually tell, but yet again this kind of girls are already known to everyone because people can know who they are in some way.'

G: 'boys usually look for beautiful, good looking girls that are willing to do what the boys want them to, but there are also some boys who want to have a simpler relationship, they don't want to go the whole way'

B: 'Well, she and her friends have now become very popular girls' and 'Because she is supposed to have had sex and whoever dates her will have sex with her, too'

G: 'yes, boys do like this kind of popular girls, because they will not have a long relationship with them, and they won't really like her. Finding a boy who really likes a girl is a very rare thing'

Some of the participants have attributed the fact that these girls are more approachable and 'easy' to their families. Also the fact that most of the relationships between teenagers are superficial (meaning short-term and meaningless) was also attributed to the leniency of parents, something that was not the case with the older generation of parents, as participants commented. The characterization of these girls as 'easy' with all the negative connotations of this word is associated to their deviation from the model of 'proper behavior' for Cypriot women mentioned above. Exactly because these girls are sexually active they get stigmatized within the school's community. There is a very thin line in regard to girls and sexual activity in Cyprus. On the one hand they must be

'approachable' but on the other hand not too 'approachable', not too 'easy'. It is not a simple task to distinguish the limits of what is considered right or acceptable.

### Girls - Transformative models of attraction

As was shown above the first quality that most boys look for in girls is for them to be beautiful even if they are not popular. There are nevertheless boys albeit a small number of them who consider other qualities in girls besides their beauty or simultaneously with physical appearance:

B: 'to have a good character and then to be beautiful. That's what I believe myself'

B: 'there are some boys who don't care that much about appearance and pay more attention to a girl's character'

B: 'Boys too, at least in their minority, don't mind if a girl doesn't look that beautiful, and look for a girl who has a good character and whom they can trust' (talking mostly about older adolescents)

In addition as was noted girls that are popular among the boys are those that besides being beautiful are also very sociable. They tend to speak with everyone, be open and treat everyone the same.

B: 'she is more beautiful (laughs), she is cooler, and she what a popular boy is. She is cool and talks to everyone without minding'

Tw: 'it is the same thing for girls, too. Being more sociable and more willing to talk to everyone, doing a crazy thing or two, without wondering if it is the right thing to do or not'

This teacher tends to agree with the participants in saying that being sociable and open with everyone is a very important factor in being popular, and this applies to both boys and girls. As was noted above people who are being bullied are usually shy students with no friends to support them. As was shown throughout the interviews one group of these people are constituted by the straight-A students who are considered to spend most of their times reading. Nevertheless these people are not being bullied because of their higher marks but because they are not being sociable:

G: 'But there are also girls who are first-rate students and they are not sluts, but they are still popular, they are not like those stupid ones to whom you can't even talk' and 'it depends on the person. She may get straight As but you can't have a single word with her because she will start talking about school subjects, but there are others who get straight As but can still be very sociable person who go out and act normally'

So girls can be very good students but also popular ones exactly because of their sociable nature. The one does not exclude the other.

In the Scout's club beauty is not the primary factor in being popular regarding the girls but other qualities are appreciated which illustrates the mentality that is promoted at this youth club:

G: 'It's not like school, where we judge someone from his looks and whether he is handsome. For instance at the Scouts I may not be good-looking, I may not wear nice clothes, but I am still friends with everyone and I am loved by everyone there' and G: 'No, good-looks aren't important at the Scouts. What is important is one's character, how sociable he is, how funny and reliable he is'

### **Models of choice**

Regarding the models of choice, that is the kind of boys and girls that adolescents choose to have a relationship with, the answers in this section were very personal and can only be attributed to each person individually. Despite the findings above only one boy admitted to take the physical appearance of the girl as a definitive factor.

B: 'What I always notice on a girl is above all how she looks, if she is beautiful and after that, I don't like a girl to be pretentious'

Participants also noted that physical appearance is always a criterion because people tend to judge you negatively if your partner is not handsome.

G: 'of course there are exceptions to this, but there is no doubt that you look at someone's appearance, since you say to yourself I will be seen with this guy, so people will judge his looks and I will be reproached (if he isn't good looking)

G: 'It might be the case that after you get to know a boy, you may like his character, but you still wonder if you can be seen around with him, and this prevents you from liking him'

However most of the girls that were interviewed during this research and especially those that were 16-17 years old indicated that in order to be in a relationship with someone there's need for understanding, compassion and trust. It is important that three of the girls that were interviewed already have this type of relationship:

G: 'I saw something on him that I couldn't see on anyone else, his interest in me. Whenever I need him, whenever I need help for something, he is always there for me'

G: 'I imagine it (the ideal relationship) to be something like the relationship I am in right now. I mean that there must be mutual understanding and caring' and 'We have to compromise with what each of us wants'

G: 'You can always tell who the people who make a lot of fuss are. But I am not attracted to this kind of people. On the contrary, I really do detest those people who want to be in power, and I am more attracted to boys who are not pretentious and who do not show off. I could never imagine myself being with a

boy that wants to dominate over me. What's the reason anyway? In such a case, we wouldn't be equals'

The latter girl is explicitly talking about boys that are oppressive and relationships in which the girl is usually under the control of the boy. These kind of relationships are very often encountered among adolescents as was seen in the previous sections regarding violence and love. Most of the girls' interviewees despite acknowledging this they tended to differentiate themselves by saying that they would not tolerate an oppressive relationship. Some of them also talked about another form of pressure, that is pressure to have sex and stated that they would choose boys who are mature enough to understand them and not force them to do something that they are not ready to do:

G: 'Primarily, I want a guy to think like a man, I want him to know that I will not give myself to him completely because I had never had a consummated relationship before. So I want him to respect my wishes and wait until I feel ready for this to happen'

G: 'I personally want him to be understanding and not want me only to have sex with' and 'love and feelings, to have a good time when I am with him'

Also most of the boys participating in this research have indicated that they are searching for girls that are understanding, sociable and trustworthy. Despite mentioning beauty as another factor that they would consider in selecting someone for a relationship they specifically place importance on the personality of the girl:

B: 'our characters should match, and I should like her. I couldn't be with her simply because there is no else I like. I would like to take her seriously and vice versa, and I would like her to be good looking'

B: 'I believe that the most fundamental thing is that our characters should match, because I don't like fighting. And I would like a girl to be good looking, because even if she had a good character, I wouldn't like her if I wasn't attracted to her. Being beautiful and having a good character-those are the things for me'

B: 'A girl should be beautiful, but at the same time she should be a good girl, she should know how to talk to others and be sociable, to be funny whenever the situation calls for it' and 'Yes, there should be understanding in a couple' and 'And a couple should always decide together, whether for example I will go out with my friends and she will go out with hers, or if we will go somewhere together. We should not do whatever we want without caring for one another'

## **Interactions**

### Friendship

Regarding exclusionary factors in friendships that adolescents maintain one of the most prevalent results is the difference encountered between friendships among boys and friendships among girls. The latter tend to encounter a lot of competition regarding boys and physical appearance in their friendships. As was noted friendships among girls tend to be more fragile to clashes that do permanent damage on the friendship. On the other hand male friends are considered to be more honest, and find it easier to make amends with each-other if something goes wrong:

G: 'I prefer the boys. The girls are competitive with one another, so you won't be able to hear the truth coming from a girl, while you can hear it from a boy.....for example if I ask a boy whether my hair looks nice, he will say yes. While a girl might tell me no and that I should have done it in such and such a way, she won't encourage me to become better' and (this one disagrees) G: 'It depends on the friendship itself. If it is a strong friendship between two girls, this could not easily happen, I mean, they won't be jealous of each other'

G: 'I think that men are closer to their friends, while girls can become competitive with their female friends' and 'Yes. There is competition among girls, which is not the case with boys. You know this because girls fight more often, and I agree with Christos that boys will talk it over, while girls won't'

G: 'It's rare but it exists. Most of the girls are supposed to have a "serpent-friend". You can always tell who your true friend is, who truly cares for you in good and also in hard times, that she will always be your friend, and you can also tell when someone pretends to be your friend because you are dating a boy or because you go to a night club that she likes going to'

B: 'this is precisely why you can't find a group of five girls who are close friends, while you can easily find a group of boys who are all close friends and all five of them are like brothers to each other. You cannot find this in a group of girls'

Regarding the effect that friends have on the models of attraction of adolescents there was not a clear result at least regarding the male participants. Most of them said that if they don't like the girl who is dating their best friend they are going to tell him so and the reasons for this mostly relate to her personality, not so much to the physical appearance. Also boys would not insist on their opinion if they see that their friend is not taking it under consideration. Girls on the other hand are affected to a lower degree from their friends regarding their models of attraction. Most of the girls that were interviewed said that they wouldn't give so much consideration to the opinion of their friends if they really liked someone. This might also be related to the competition among girls mentioned above and due to the stereotypes that still persist about women being jealous of each other:

G: 'Well, a little bit. But I mostly do whatever I want; I don't listen to what others tell me, because they are not my true friends. Some people might tell me the truth, while others might be jealous of me and tell something for no reason at all, without really caring'

As friends on the other hand they would give their advice if they considered their friend to be dating someone inappropriate but as with boys they wouldn't insist on it:

G: 'You will tell her. You will know from the way she behaves and you will try to tell her indirectly. You won't tell her right in her face that he is no good, but you will make her understand that he is no good for her'

G: 'I won't talk her into breaking up with him, but I will talk her into being more cautious'

Regarding friends who enter a relationship both boys and girls said that the fact that a friendship might change after that depends on the character of each person individually and generalizations cannot be made. Some people have neglected their friends after making a relationship while some included their current boyfriends/girlfriends within their group of friends.

G: 'It's what we said before about whether a girl is a "serpent-friend" or a true friend. You can tell which it is, when she starts dating a boy and she stops hanging out with you or you rarely see her any more etc. If such is the case, then you know that she had never been your true friend and she had been just pretending to be. She simply wanted to hang out with you because she had no friends of her own, while if she was your true friend she would still spend time with you and she would want to spend some time with her new boyfriend, which is something normal anyway. But she would still want the two of you to go out alone together. Her boyfriend should tell her to go out with her friends sometimes without him, he would trust her and she would do the same for him, too'

B: 'I had two really good friends of mine, with whom we grew up together and who were also my neighbors. Last year, they both started dating at the same time. I lost contact with one of them, I asked him to meet many times but he kept ignoring me. However, the other guy introduced me to his girlfriend's friends; I met all of them while with the other one, even though we had grown up together, he completely lost contact'

## Family

Influence by the family is considered by both students and teachers to be of major importance to the issues discussed in this research. Both groups have attributed delinquent behavior, acts of bullying but also the tolerance of bullying to family circumstances and parental behaviors.

Some students blamed parents for the fact that their children are being bullied at school. The reasons for this is that parents do not let their children to express themselves or go out either out of fear or because they are very strict when it comes to studying. So according to the participants these children who are oppressed by their parents become unsocial and as a result they are more susceptible to bullying:

B: 'Their hair is always old-fashioned (he is talking about the not popular people).... I believe that it's their parents who should be blamed for it'

B: 'there are some parents who scare their children off, so the children become more introvert, they prevent them from becoming something in their lives'

G: 'Perhaps a lot of pressure is put on him by his own parents'

(reason for students to be concentrated only on studying and therefore they become unsociable and victims of bullying)

The latter quote was given as a reason for very good students who are concentrated only on studying and therefore become unsocial. This group of students from which the quote is taken, also made the distinction mentioned above: that students who have good grades are bullied not because of their achievements but because they are unsocial. On the other hand students who have good grades but are also more sociable or occupy themselves with other activities like football do not become victims of bullying.

On the other hand parents are blamed not only for the lack in confidence and shy character of their children but also for students who show a lack of obedience to school rules and lack of interest in class. Participants were more likely to put the blame on parents that have been divorced for the unsocial or naughty/undisciplined behavior of the student:

Tm: 'Of course this is the primary reason. They grow up without one of their parents or they are like a ping ball, going back and forth from one parent to the other' and 'these children are usually discontented. Do you want me to explain what I mean? They are deprived, not of material goods, but of the love and affection that a proper, composed family would have offered to them. All this has a long term impact on their future behavior' and 'they are most likely to have a tendency to be violent or delinquent' like 'shouting, making fuss and letting it all out'

This teacher made a clear connection between divorced parents and the delinquent behavior of the child.

B: 'Well, of course. He has some family problems; he also has problems with his friends because if he thought clearly about his own life, he wouldn't lose the whole year because of his skipping school or because of getting low grades'

(Talking about boys who are popular- usually these boys lose a year or make a lot of drop-outs)

G: 'It is basically people who face problems, people who cannot express their opinion (who are less popular). For instance, I think that a rich kid or an only child who has everything he wishes for also has the confidence to speak out his mind. He is the one who considers himself to be the one who has power, not a kid who has financial problems or whose parents are divorced. I believe that the latter one turns in on himself and doesn't have any power, he takes whatever others give him'

These quotes are very interesting in illustrating how the popularity of a student and his/hers vulnerability to bullying can be connected with the situation that she/he faces in the family.

Regarding gender roles and models of affective relationships students have admitted to be influenced by the situation at home. In some cases these models were exclusionary:

G: 'My mum is a very patient person, and I would also like to be (like her), but I don't think that I am really' and in many occasions, for example, if my dad tells her something.....she may not even answer him back, she won't react to it'

B: 'I think that we are also influenced by the way our family functions at home' and 'in the majority of cases it is the father who controls the family, and we are influenced by this model, and this is wrong' (he is talking about the control that boys usually impose on girls in relationships at their age)

In this case there was a group discussion about the control inflicted on girls by their boyfriends and this boy attributed it to the remaining patriarchal structures of the families. In the same discussion students admitted that they have noticed a fear or reluctance from the side of the parents to be open and talk with their children on sexual issues or love.

G: 'I believe that they are afraid to open up and talk to us about love, perhaps because they had never talked about this matter with their own parents or perhaps because they talked too late about it. While, now, because we get into a relationship earlier, and we are asked (to have sex) we have to know how to protect ourselves, so when we ask them about this kind of things they look at us suspiciously, they are afraid to open up, they are embarrassed to talk about these things with their own children'

On the other hand this attitude tends to make the children feel a sort of shame about discussing these issues with their parents. This reciprocal reluctance as participants have noted tends to be a general phenomenon in Cypriot society, there's a sort of silence and shame regarding these issues that might still be considered taboo to be discussed among family members. Also as was noted by the majority of girls participating in this research they mostly talk about these issues with their mothers. The fathers don't participate in such discussions rather they talk with children about their studies or issues of more impersonal nature. This accords with the traditional gender roles within the Cypriot family/society: fathers are more involved with the economic, employment oriented issues and not with issues that are considered more 'sensitive' and more associated with the women whose primary role is considered to be the care of family members and the household<sup>3</sup>.

The familial environment plays an equally important role for transforming models of attraction. A number of participants both boys and girls have stated that they would like to have a relationship like the one shared by their parents which includes the values of understanding, dialogue and respect:

B: 'I personally imagine myself (to be in a relationship) like the one that my parents have. I mean that, thank God, my parents have never been violent to us or to each other. Of course they do have arguments about some things but they work things out in the end. What I am trying to say is that as far as I am concerned my parents have the perfect relationship and I would love to be in a relationship like theirs' and 'there is mutual understanding and dialogue. For example they may discuss a matter they don't agree on but still they work it out; and there are times when they argue more strongly but they find the golden mean. This is how I think things work between the two of them'

B: 'And I also believe that the family plays an important role in this, because even though some girls are not mature enough, they still won't go out with

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<sup>3</sup> Nicos Peristianis, *Basic Sexological Premises: Social Change, Modernization and Gender Roles*, in R.E. Francoeur (ed.) *The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality – Volume I-IV*, 1997-2001.

boys who do crazy things, because this is what they have been taught by their families etc.

Values transmitted through the family are also important for the behavior that the children will have with their fellow students and in regard to bullying:

B: 'It depends on one's character, if you ask me. And it also depends on whether one is close to his family. If he is, then he is a better person to his fellow-beings and fellow-students' (regarding popular guys who treat people well and they are not snobs)

B: 'the family plays a determinant role in all this, in whether someone is popular or crazy, or anything' and 'yes, this is exactly why a parent should control his/her children and teach them what they have to do, he/she shouldn't let them go out till late from the age of 14'

The latter participant emphasizes a point made by a number of students but also by teachers. They believe that the lack of obedience by popular students for example or the nature of superficial relationships that students form is a result of the leniency with which parents treat their children.

Nevertheless in a discussion about the control that boys inflict on their girlfriends this boy supported that due to the fact that their parents grew up in a more patriarchal society teenagers should not be influenced by their model of relationship:

B: 'yes, I believe that we should not be greatly affected by how our family works at home, because we are all equals now, so we should not claim that boys are on a higher level than girls. A girl can sometimes be the one controlling the relationship, it is not always the boy who controls it'

#### People to whom they have maintained sexual-affective relationships

In general participants did not mention any influences that they had from their current or previous relationships regarding the models of attraction. Only two girls that are currently in long-term relationships have stated that they discuss issues regarding their relationship and sexual matters with their boyfriends.

G: 'Yes, we usually advise one another, but I also discuss this more with my boyfriend' (about their relationship)

#### Educational system

Problems encountered regarding professors and the general educational system:

1. There is no separate class in which to talk about values in inter-personal relationships like respect, gender equality and co-existence in a culturally diverse society

2. There is not enough time to devote on these issues:

Tw: 'It (the essay writing class) doesn't give us many clues. It just provides us with ways of behavior depending on the occasion and which may have some similarities or differences. There are any specific things, and we don't have much time in order to delve into this more deeply and it (the class) talks about teenagers, regardless of their sex. For instance it presents the behavior and attitude of teenagers without specifying what boys do and what girls do'

3. Teachers are not trained to deal with issues concerning relationships or family issues

This quote made by a teacher summarizes a lot of the points mentioned above which refer to the basic deficiencies in education in values in Cyprus:

Tw: 'It should be normally be taught during the Civil Education class, where students are taught about parliamentary matters, the laws, different types of constitutions, and generally speaking, about things which are completely useless to students of this age. Whereas, they are not taught how to construct their own system of principles and values' and 'Civil Education class, should teach students how to become good citizens, how to belong to a group, how to treat the opposite sex and others who are different from themselves; it should teach them how to retain their dignity and self-respect. However, this is not what this class does. On a theoretical level, this is what Civil Education class is supposed to be doing' and 'yes, school does not interfere educationally in any way in matters such as these' and 'yes, of course (there is no time) and we are not sufficiently trained on matters of psychology or anything, in order to be able to support such an attempt'

4. Most professors and especially the older generation don't show an interest in approaching the students or talking with them about these matters. A lot of students complained that most of them just want to finish their class and leave and this is an attitude made clear to the students (demographically only recently we had younger teachers in high schools in Cyprus):

G: 'it is only a small number of professors who are close to students, who will talk to them and to whom students will feel comfortable talking to. Most of them are remote' and 'yes, they only care about teaching their lesson, getting over with it and that's all'

A: 'When one of the "old" professors walks in –well, of course it always depends on the person- but the majority of the old professors walk in the classroom and are not sociable at all, they just say to themselves "I just want to teach my lesson and get our of here", while the young professor will walk in and ask what how we are doing'

5. Some students also mentioned that issues regarding affective and sexual relationships are still considered taboo by teachers who don't feel comfortable discussing about them:

B: 'in truth, professors themselves are embarrassed to talk about these matters. There are times when we want to get deeper into some matters, but they think that it is embarrassing to talk about this stuff and if we say something, they just reply "please, how can you be saying this"

G: 'and this is the case, especially if the professor is of older age, he/she feels uncomfortable talking about this kind of things. While, the younger ones are more ...'

G: 'there are some things missing' (regarding what it's taught at school) and 'they should talk more openly to us, they should tell us the truth and not try to hide things from us'

Furthermore some of the student interviewees have connected bullying with a discriminatory behavior applied by the teachers to students who are smoking, or don't have good grades or show disobedient behavior. This behavior by the teachers seems to intensify the bullying inflicted on other students:

B: 'discriminations are being made against some students, and they are perhaps enraged by this and so they tease the good kids' and 'because they are considered to be bums, because they smoke and stay out of the class, the teachers think that they are bums. They place them in a lower category than the rest of the students'

G: 'I mean that you can see this in teachers' behavior. The teachers themselves discriminate against some students. If they see that someone is not a good student or that he smokes, they push him aside, in a way they marginalize him'

B: 'yes, and sometimes, if he does the slightest thing, they may report him or blame him for whatever happens at school without really being his doing, and they won't believe that he is not the one to be blamed for it'

After taking under consideration the opinions of both students and professors it seems that a lot of the awareness and information regarding equal treatment and values in relationships among the genders lies on the willingness and discretion of each professor individually. The educational system does not provide the time, or the material, or the training in order for the professors to deal effectively with these issues. As professors have noted there is no counselor at school with whom the students can talk to if they have any issues that concern them. On the other hand there is reluctance especially from the older generation of professors to discuss these issues with their students. Furthermore as the students indicated there is a general lack of concern and willingness by most professors to involve themselves and show interest in any issues that concern the students and which go beyond their official syllabus.

There was a completely different attitude regarding these issues at the Scout's club. As the trainers suggested part of the training provided to adolescents aged 15-17 includes presentations by the teenager scouts on various issues that concern them:

Sm: 'One of the subjects will definitely refer to affective relationships, sex education etc, one of the scouts makes a presentation on a certain subject and then we discuss it so we always try to keep our scouts informed on these issues

as well as on issues regarding contraception, sexually transmitted diseases and relationships in general. We try to have discussions within our community on general social problems that we observe. Basically we choose subjects that are of interest to the youngsters and we discuss them'

Furthermore there is an attitude by boys to presume and declare that they 'know everything around sex'. As trainers say this is what is expected of them so the role of the trainers is to try to discuss these issues with them and educate them correctly:

Sm: 'the problem lies in their believing that they know everything about it, and when we have to tell them that things are not what they believe them to be, friction is caused. This is why we have this kind of discussions'

Sm: 'first of all, about sex. They believe that they know a lot of things about it'

Furthermore the way the Scout's system is structured leaves little room for discriminatory behaviors and bullying:

Sm: 'A person is valued and rewarded in his own virtue, about the deeds that he has done, while his sex and religion have nothing to do with it' and Sm: 'He/she will be rewarded for an accomplishment h/she has made in matters related to scouting, and not for anything irrelevant to that. He/she will be rewarded because for example he/she has learned something new in relation to his/her training'

Sm: 'precisely because the two sexes are equally blended, they cannot be distinguished in specific issues. A girl won't start thinking that she has not been appointed scoutmaster because of her sex, because there are a lot of girls who have been scoutmasters. And in relation to other organizations, I believe that a lot of our high offices are occupied by girls. This is the case at Scouts in general, not only at our own scouts' club'

### Mass Media

There was general agreement by both students and teachers regarding the negative models of affective relationships transmitted via TV programs. They specifically referred to soap operas which are very popular in Cyprus especially among the younger population. As they stated these programs promote

relationships that are superficial and short-term and which are based on mistrust. They don't promote values such as love, respect, acceptance and understanding:

Tm: 'well, look, if you turn on the TV, let's say from 5 o'clock in the afternoon until 12 o'clock at night, what will you see? You'll see people cheating on each other, you'll see who is trying to sleep with whom and so on. Things are like that, aren't they? Take the soap operas for instance. So what will children watch on TV?

B: 'young girls who are led to have sex, the thirteen and twelve-year-olds learn these things from the TV. For example, if you turn it on at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when you sit down to have lunch, all you see is those Brazilian soap operas. I don't want to tell you what goes on in those series, everyone sleeps with everyone'

There was specific mention regarding girls and their effort to imitate beauty icons or standards projected by TV. For this reason and because as we saw earlier beautiful girls are the most popular at school girls start from an early age to be very much concerned with their image and their physical appearance:

B: 'yes, they (girls) mimic the role models they watch on TV' and 'they put too much make up on like the TV-show hostesses; they dye their hair from a young age' and 'from TV but also from society in general. For instance, they read all those tabloids and gossip magazines, and they are trying to imitate those women'

G: 'yes, but this is not always what the case. These things are also promoted by the TV and commercials' and 'they want to look like those girls who are beautiful and successful' and 'they mostly want to be beautiful. Instead of trying to do something important, instead of doing something because it is right, or going to study, they dream of doing other things, they only think of how they will become more beautiful' and 'yes, they do this because they want to attract boys, they want to look older than they are, so they dress up'

This girl clearly believes that this behavior is wrong while other participants have commented that there is an obsession by girls to look older than they are but also to act older:

G: ' in general, they are trying to look older, they don't enjoy their age; for example you see a fourteen-year-old, who is practically still a baby, and she has already dated plenty of guys, she might even have had sex, and unfortunately she has neither the common sense, nor the experience to understand that what she did was wrong. She will know and understand the consequences of her actions when she is 18-19'  
(the cause is mainly TV as explained later)

Nevertheless many of the girls' interviewees expressed transformative views and like the girl above, refused to be influenced by media idols but emphasized their individuality and uniqueness:

G: 'I don't agree that this is the case. I believe that every individual has a character of his own, and he supports what he really is'  
(The question was if there are any idols-role models that students follow)

G: 'Many girls try to imitate some singers. For instance, there's this friend of mine who is always acting to be Kalomira in the way she dresses and imitates her style.....she does it because she wants to attract people to her. I don't know if I would ever do it. I believe that I have my own character, my own personality and I don't think that we should have a role-model (to imitate). On the contrary, others should have us as their role models'

The same stands for male interviewees:

B: 'well, because these people are famous and have beautiful girlfriends, you like watching them and admiring them, but that's the end of it...' and 'I am not trying (to look like them), I am just trying to be me...'

B: 'OK, there are many guys who imitate those role models. I don't personally care about how they do their hair, how they talk or sing'

## **Conclusions**

- Infidelity or suspicion of infidelity is the strongest reason that leads to physical violence towards girls by their male partners because it puts the masculinity and therefore prestige (reputation) of the boy under question. Jealousy is another reason that can lead to violence in heterosexual relationships
- Reputation is a very sensitive issue for girls within the Cypriot context, especially reputation connected to sexual activity. In many cases one effective way to target a girl or bully her is by attacking her reputation, by defaming her in sexual terms.
- The most common abusive behavior found in heterosexual relationships between teenagers is the control usually inflicted by boys on their girlfriends. This control can take the form of prohibition to socialize with certain people, or prohibition to wear specific clothes or go to certain places. This is again a form of behavior that boys retreat to in order to maintain their reputation according to the model of masculinity within the Cypriot context that expects boys to be and show that they are in control of their girlfriends

- Bullying is mostly inflicted on shy, unsocial students usually by popular students who belong to bigger groups and have protection from older adolescents outside the school context. Bullying related to gender is again inflicted by popular students and applies the same intimidation strategy as in other cases: if the victim reports it she/he will receive more bullying as a consequence while she/he will also be marginalized by the other students who want to get along with the popular students. Gay students constitute one of the primary targets of consistent bullying. Furthermore as was seen through this research the importance of having a group of people to back you up inside or outside the school leads to the conclusion that bullying is a wider and intense phenomenon in Cypriot secondary schools.
- The majority of teenagers as participants have noted follow an exclusionary form of affection, especially girls who consider their submission to abusive behavior by their partners as an indication of love. Most of the female participants rejected this negative model of love and stated that they would not tolerate abusive or oppressive behavior by their partners. Some of the male participants also indicated that they don't understand why girls remain in abusive relationships while others justified this as indication of love.
- Traditional stereotypes regarding gender roles are still maintained among adolescents in Cyprus. Boys are expected to be active (in sexual terms as well) and fit the profile of 'mankas' that is the macho, manly and reckless guy. Sensitivity and passivity is still associated with femininity while girls that are active either by being naughty in class or by pursuing affective/sexual relationships are usually stigmatized or excluded. Pressure is inflicted on both genders to act according to these prescribed roles.
- The most popular male model of attraction is the boy who is 'mankas', has connections outside the school, especially in night clubs and who in most cases also has a good physical appearance. Girls in a lot of cases are willing to disregard his rude or ignorant behavior if he fits the above exclusionary model. There are however boys who are popular because of their humor and their very sociable personality but they are less visible within the school context and constitute a smaller number than boys included in the exclusionary model of attraction. As was noted by participants this transformative model of attraction mostly attracts older adolescent girls aged 17 to 18 years old.
- For girls the exclusionary model of attraction that is to be beautiful is very prominent in the Cypriot context. Improving your appearance for both boys and girls is another way to move rank within the school community. There is nevertheless a group of girls that because of their very sociable nature are popular at school but in most cases these girls are also beautiful. Another group of girls that are popular but in a negative way are those who are characterized as 'easy', who have already had sexual relationships and are more easily approachable by boys. Boys approach these girls only with the intent of having a short-term sexual relationship with them while participants tended to blame the families of these girls for the fact that they are more approachable and 'easy'. Parents were also blamed for the superficial nature of most teenage relationships nowadays as they are more lenient (for example in terms of letting them stay out late at night and permitting them from a young age to go to night-clubs) with their children in comparison with older generations. Furthermore the behavior of these girls is vilified because it comes in contrast with the characteristics applied to 'proper' Cypriot female behavior
- Regarding the models of choice of the participants, most of them had a transformative element. Girls especially aged 16-17 indicated that in order to have a relationship with someone they need him to have qualities like

understanding, compassion and trustworthiness. Three of the girls interviewed already maintain this type of relationship. Also most of the boys participating in this research, especially third-year high school students noted that they are looking for girls that are understanding, sociable and trustworthy and to whom they can be physically attracted.

- Finally in the context of the youth club which was investigated in this research, namely the Scout's club in Nicosia, it was concluded that both teenage girls and boys by participating in its relevant activities found other ways of being a teenager rather than the traditional gender-specific models applied by Cypriot society. In the context of the youth club participants said that appearance didn't matter, neither the depiction of power but humor, sociability and observation to the values of Scouts were the key elements for someone to be popular. These values included equality, tolerance, understanding as well as learning to be part of a community and a group. Also through the organized activities Scouts were able to discuss issues that concerned them including affective relationships. It is important to note that in this youth club teenagers felt freer to express themselves and their personalities beyond the demanding models of attraction which set the standards for the behavior of students in the school context.

#### Factors that influence adolescents' affective relationships and models of attraction:

Friendship: Both boys and girls stated that they would say their opinion to their friends if they didn't like the person who was dating them. It is unclear however if boys would act upon the opinions of their friends regarding their relationship with girls. Most female participants on the other hand said that they usually don't get influenced by the opinion of their friends regarding their potential or current partners. A clear conclusion from this research is that girls tend to be more antagonistic in their friendships while boys have more relaxed, brotherly-type relationships. Girls' antagonism is mostly centred on physical appearance and boys.

Family: Influence by the family is considered by both students and professors to be of major importance to the issues discussed in this research. Both groups have attributed delinquent behavior, acts of bullying but also the tolerance of bullying to family circumstances and parental behaviors. Also as some students noted traditional stereotypes about gender roles are perpetuated through the family while there is a general reluctance in discussing issues of emotional or sexual nature between parents and children. On the other hand the familial environment plays an equally important role for transforming models of attraction. A number of participants both boys and girls have stated that they would like to have a relationship like the one shared by their parents which includes the values of understanding, dialogue and respect.

#### Educational system:

- There is no separate class in which to talk about values in interpersonal relationships like respect, gender equality, and co-existence in a culturally diverse society
- Professors do not have enough time to devote on these issues due to their overloaded schedule
- Professors are not properly trained to deal with issues concerning adolescent relationships and family issues
- Most professors and especially the older generation don't show an interest in approaching the students or talking with them about these matters. A lot of students complained in most cases professors just want to finish their class and leave and this is an attitude made clear to the students
- Some students also mentioned that issues regarding affective and sexual relationships are still considered taboo by professors who don't feel comfortable discussing about them
- Any awareness and information regarding equal treatment and values in relationships among the genders lies on the willingness and discretion of each professor individually. The educational system does not provide the time, or the material, or the training in order for the professors to deal effectively with these issues

Mass Media: Both students and professors agreed that TV programs mostly promote negative models of attraction and of affective relationships. Also girls try to imitate the physical appearance of TV personas and beauty icons from magazines. For this reason they also try to look older than they are and behave accordingly. Nevertheless most girls and boys participating in this research said that they are not influenced by models of attraction transmitted through the media but they rather believe in and act upon their own personality and character.

From the conclusions stated above it seems that abuse but also the tolerance of abuse are generally considered accepted ways of expressing affection within the Cypriot adolescent population. The fact that expressions of masculinity are still associated with aggressive, careless or indifferent behaviour leaves limited space to other alternatives such as masculinity as expressed through respect, tenderness, tolerance, acceptance of others, creativity etc. In Cyprus both boys and girls are in need to be given or to be presented with alternatives ways of being that emphasise the values of respect towards others regardless if these others consist of the opposite sex, the homosexual students or the culturally diverse students. Also the negative idea of love and its association with abuse that a lot of students pertain can also be targeted and changed via education. In Cyprus the lack of communication between students and professors but also parents, and the indifference especially of the former and of the educational system in engaging in conversation with the students on these crucial matters has let to a perpetuation of traditional stereotypes and prescribed models of behaviour for both genders. As a final point this report wants to emphasize the immediate need for a separate period in the curriculum in which students can express their concerns regarding gender relationships and the current changes in their society but also be motivated and educated in developing values such as respect, equality, understanding and co-existence. Also the development of critical thinking throughout all these processes must constitute a concurrent objective to achieve.

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