

CLD Young Men and the Impact of Violence

Summary of issues and strategies

The Impact

The impact of violence on CLD young men and indeed the entire community is unrefuted. CLD young men are both the victims and the perpetrators of behaviours that are agreed to be unacceptable.

As victims, the impact for young men is often anger and frustration. Attacks may be the result of racism or a perceived threat to family and loved ones (Bessant 2001). This may lead towards retaliatory attacks and collective aggression. Forming collective alliances with other young men who share the same socio-economic, cultural, belief structures, frustrations, issues of identity and narrow options for expressing their masculinity can provide a sense of belonging, connection and security.

As perpetrators, the impact is often the same, however, anger and frustration are internalised and externally acted out.

The impact on the community is immense, such issues as family breakdown, high unemployment, housing and mental and physical health issues have a short and long-term cost on the community.

The Setting

Often incidences of violence are exhibited in sport and in the classroom; an increase in incidences in both settings is evident through our work at CMYI. These are the most obvious and public settings. However, the perception of safety experienced by young people is at its lowest when they are on their own. Young people often don't feel safe on public transport, or in police custody or at home.

Contributing Factors

- Media, the portrayal of CLD young men in particular, has had an impact on the way the broader community view them.
- Political Factors, such as September 11 and the subsequent international and domestic response to it. The treatment of people seeking asylum in Australia.
- Post traumatic reactions to past refugee experiences which manifest in a number of negative outcomes, one of which may be the violence.
- Frustrations linked to a poor settlement experience, including, language barriers, limited educational/training options, isolation, and disconnected from community.
- Family issues, such as intergenerational conflict issues and the absence of traditional intergenerational support structures and role models.

- Cultural factors regarding appropriate behaviours and legal frameworks such as the 'common man', young men from CLD backgrounds will often react differently or more aggressively if a slanderous comment has been made about a female relative than their Australian counterparts.
- Identity issues, compounded by overt and institutional racism.
- The impact of poor settlement and lack of opportunity on subsequent generations, children of poorly settled migrants and refugees are likely to experience the same frustrations and issues as their parents before them. For example, the Lebanese community, young men who were born in Australia are still experiencing racism, low levels of education retention, literacy issues, high unemployment etc.

Addressing the Need

- Research is needed in scoping good practice in Victoria, in Australia and also overseas. Little research is available regarding the formulating of identity in CLD young men.
- Research is also needed to identify the reasons for violent behaviours in particular groups and also importantly why particular groups of second generation young men share common issues regarding disengagement with education, low employment opportunities, low socio-economic status, as their parents before them, isolation and frustrations that can be simplistically categorised as 'generational settlement issues'.
- There needs to be research and significant work done with CLD young men, second and third generation young men. Programs designed to explore issues of identity and the positive expressions of masculinity.
- Schools need to take a whole of school approach to the issue.
- The Department of Education needs to include a CLD young men's strategy into its diversity framework for secondary schools and primary schools.
- VIC Health needs to specifically target CLD young men in its delivery of services.
- Settlement services need to work intensely with young people upon arrival.
- DIMIA need to focus on the long-term settlement needs of refugee young people in partnership with State governments.
- State government and Federal governments need to work collaboratively (Office for Youth, Department of Education, Vic Health and DIMIA) to formulate strategies that specifically address the needs of these young men.