AT THE POINT OF NO RETURN:

Intervening when Physical Violence Escalates among Teenagers

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Intervening when physical violence escalates among teenagers is a subject little researched or documented in Central Europe. The youth workers who know the most about it often do not document or frame what they are doing. This is the reason why the research methodology for this thesis is based on illuminating the subject from a first-person account of youth workers and teenagers who have directly encountered physical violence.

The research took place in the context of a project called "Midnight Basketball" in Zurich, Switzerland and therefore in an open group setting. Three youth workers and three teenagers who have been involved with Midnight Basketball were interviewed about physical violence and their experiences of intervening or engaging in it.

The analysis of the interviews leads to a list of interventions to de-escalate physical violence once it has started. Process-oriented Psychology, also referred to as Process Work, provides the basis for the analysis of the implications of these interventions.

There are several conclusions about intervening. It is sometimes possible to de-escalate physical violence and there are many ways to intervene. Intervention happens on two levels: On an outer level of the specific intervention applied and on an inner level of the attitude and the congruency of the person who intervenes.

On the outer as well as on the inner level there are certain principles that determine whether an intervention is likely to be successful or not. Matching the energy of the fight and including the overall situation are the main outer principles to consider when intervening. Concerning the inner level, it can be said that an intervener who intervenes with an attitude of pathologizing or criticizing the teenagers is less likely to be successful than a person who intervenes with a congruent attitude of liking the teenagers and believing in the situation at hand as a meaningful process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

my Karate teacher Haris Reiz who kept my own fighter
spirit alive.

   Last but not least I am grateful to all my friends
that I did not mention here. Friendship is the basis of it
all and I feel very privileged to have so many friends.

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PREFACE

Not dead which eternal lie
Stranger eons death may die
Drain you of your sanity
Face the thing that should not be

James Hetfield
Poet/Metallica

In the summer of '99 I was dancing quite extrovertly at a party, when I felt someone bump into me. I thought that another wild dancer was out there but the bumping continued until I got hit on the head. It was not until then that I realized I had got myself into a fight. Too late. I found myself lying on the ground with a bunch of teenagers around kicking me all over. I was lucky to have been trained in Karate; I guess it was the main reason why I didn't get hurt physically, although the scene must have looked quite dramatic from the outside.

I went through an interesting process afterwards. Feelings of revenge, anxiety, anger, sadness and many more took control of me. First, I intensified my Karate training and worked on becoming faster at defending myself. Then, about a month after the incident, I began to work for "Midnight Basketball", a new program for Switzerland that had just started in my neighborhood. It aims to keep "at risk" teenagers off the streets (where they would be likely to get into trouble) at weekends.

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I noticed how much I was still in shock and hypnosis about physical violence among teenagers when I began my work. I was scared of them and preferred to hide somewhere instead of being out there. But the longer I stayed and worked with the teenagers the more comfortable I became.

One night, the first fight at "Midnight Basketball" happened. I helped to separate the fighting parties but felt overwhelmed by the situation. What was to be done if kids attack one another physically? What would escalate the situation even more and what would de-escalate it? Questions like these bounced back and forth in my mind until what was about to happen dawned on me: I was pondering the research question for my thesis.

I dedicate my thesis to the young, angry and wild spirit who attacked me that late summer night. His emergency call woke me up to my unwritten thesis and started a process inside of me that has helped me to deal with myself and the world around me in many more ways than I could mention here. Thank you, fellow freedom fighter.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

<u>Problem Statement</u>

For most youth workers, physical violence is a phenomenon
that is part of their professional lives in one way or
another. Yet, in few of the Swiss education programs youth
workers usually enroll in, is how to intervene in physical
violence part of the curriculum. The discussion around it
usually happens only on the margins, when teaching about
violence in general. This is Swiss reality, but it is also
a tendency in other European countries like Germany. There
is a lack of concepts and intervention strategies for
situations where physical violence escalates. What
Breakwell wrote in 1989 still holds true today, at least
for Switzerland:

> It is strange how few members of the caring
> professions are ever trained directly to handle
> powerful emotions. The caring professions occupy the
> frontline against distress and disorder, and it is
> predictable that the caring relationship will be the
> focal point for the expression of strong emotions,
> both positive and negative. Yet practitioners have
> minimal instruction on how to deal with these
> emotions. (1989:17)

My thesis aims at filling in the lack of intervention strategies when physical violence escalates among teenagers. The context of my research is an open group setting with teenagers and youth workers present. I interviewed both youth workers and teenagers who are, in one way or another, involved with Midnight Basketball in my neighborhood.

The reason why I am focusing on physical violence among teenagers is personal. In the preface I have talked about what triggered my interest. I am very much aware that it is delicate to focus on teenagers when researching physical violence, because it assigns physical violence to them. But violence is NOT a phenomenon that happens mostly among teenagers. Investigating history, it seems to be an integral part of human nature. Far too often physical violence is projected onto teenagers (Vontobel, 1995) and I hope that my thesis will not add to this projection.

Purpose of the Thesis

My main research question is: How to de-escalate a conflict that has escalated to the point of physical violence in open group settings. In other words, how to stop the violence once it has escalated. In order to

answer this question I reviewed the literature in the field and conducted six interviews with youth workers and teenagers to find out what intervention strategies they apply or know about.

The second research question is based on my interest in Process-oriented Psychology or Process Work, a multi-level approach to human nature. I have been interested in analyzing and interpreting the interventions I filtered out of my interviews from a Process-oriented viewpoint. In this analysis my findings have been taken to a deeper level. I have questioned the effects of the interventions, not just in the momentary de-escalation of the conflict, but also in the longer run.

My sincere hope is to encourage the reader to be more curious and innovative about physical violence. Many people shy away from getting involved with certain teenagers because they fear violence. Fear inhibits relationship and makes it very hard to withdraw projections. One way to overcome this fear is by researching it. I am adding to this research and hope that it leads to a more open approach to physical violence and the teenagers involved, rather than going into shock or pathologizing judgment about it. In my experience, a true,

respectful and loving research spirit is often enough to de-escalate a tense "ready to explode" situation.

Limitations to the Study

My study is limited to physical violence involving teenagers or young men in open group settings and youth workers engaged in these settings. I believe that many of my findings hold true in general when intervening with physical violence, but further research needs to be conducted to prove this hypothesis.

I cannot claim that my findings hold true for the whole of Switzerland, Europe, or the world. My research was conducted in my neighborhood. The situation in other parts of Switzerland or in other countries may be very different. Guns, for instance, are only beginning to become a problem among teenagers in Switzerland.

I interviewed six people. Therefore, I cannot claim that there is an objective truth to my findings. I can only add my ideas and findings to the field of intervening in cases of physical violence.

The open group setting in which I conducted my research implies a further limitation: It is a different situation from that of a closed group such as a class or a children's home where the teenagers are not necessarily there by choice.

Also, I only interviewed boys. This is why I use the masculine form when talking about teenagers. At Midnight Basketball there are very few girls present. A study on physical violence and girls would need to happen in another setting than "Midnight Basketball".

Significance of the Study

From youth workers in the city of Zurich I know that many of their colleagues are in desperate need of information about how to deal with physical violence or the threat of it.

I only researched open group settings in one neighborhood in Zurich. I believe, though, that many of the intervention strategies described also apply to more open or closed settings.

Process Work has already been applied to many aspects of human behavior in individual and collective settings. In chapter VI, I discuss its application to the findings of my interviews around violence in open group settings. I believe that it may also prove useful in intervening in other situations where violence occurs.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW ON INTERVENTIONS AT THE POINT WHERE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE ESCALATES

Intervening when physical violence escalates is an issue in the fields of military, law enforcement, social sciences and martial arts. I have focused on the literature in the social sciences, mostly on that published in Switzerland and Germany, because my research was conducted in Switzerland.

The Social Sciences and Intervening in Situations where Physical Violence Escalates

In the social sciences (psychology, social psychology, pedagogy, sociology) a lot has been written on physical violence. Although many books would seem to touch the very essence of my subject with titles like "Violence – Possibilities of Psychological Interventions" (Pulverich, 1998)[1] or "Hitting or Listening: Youth Violence with Violence-oriented Teenagers" (Stickelmann, 1996)[1] they do not talk about interventions at the moment of escalation. There is very little literature available directly dealing with intervening in the moment of escalation. This is a very interesting situation and I

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[1] See Bibliography page 212 for original German title

wondered why it should be the case. Based on what I have read in the literature and my subsequent thinking about it, I have come to the following conclusion:

In general, the escalation of a conflict into a physically violent interaction, is seen as a situation that could only have happened when earlier signals were ignored (Papesch, 1993, Lünse, 1995). This view is shared by most authors in the field. Therefore, physically violent interactions represent a failure of the system in which they occur. No system likes having its failures focused on. This dynamic, in my opinion, is one of the reasons why the focus in working with violence lies so much on prevention, and on interventions after physical violence has taken place. From the literature, it would seem, dealing with physical violence as it occurs is hardly ever an issue.

The literature on violence has also often used cases to illustrate the amount of physical violence and brutality used by assailants. This shocks, and therefore attracts the reader, but is not very helpful when approaching violence as a phenomenon that is worth researching. In shockingly presenting physical violence, the taboo of not looking at it is broken, but the act of violence gets labeled as a terrible thing that should not

be. I suppose this is another reason for the small amount of literature that researches physical violence as a human phenomenon with its own dynamics and process.

Because of the small amount of literature, I have decided to use all the information found and include it in my literature review, regardless of whether the authors talk about intervening with teenagers in open group settings or other situations.

Later, I introduce the types of interventions that are currently being applied and discussed in the field. All of these interventions are designed solely to stop destructive violence when it is happening or at the very point where it is about to happen. I will not discuss intervention strategies going beyond the de-escalation of the violence.

Suggested Interventions when Intervening in a Physically Violent Situation from the Outside

What follows are the most often mentioned interventions in physically violent situations, as proposed by various authors. The most helpful books that I came across were Kuhlmann's "The Rule of the Fist: Violence in and outside

of the School Setting"[2] (1998) and Breakwell's "Facing

Physical Violence" (1989). Both provide the reader with a

set of interventions when getting involved in physical

violence, especially when it is directed towards oneself.

Most of the following strategies are suggested by both

authors.

The Importance of Being Prepared ahead of Time

All of the literature reviewed emphasizes the

importance of being prepared ahead of time to react in the

moment when physical violence takes place. The more

reflection that happens ahead of time about possible

troublesome situations, the more likely a suitable

intervention at the moment of escalation. Working on

oneself around violence and how to face it seems to be a

central aspect of being able to intervene. Breakwell says:

> Before going into a risky situation, strategies for
> handling violence should be rehearsed. Dogmatic
> statements about what should be done in any specific
> situation are pointless. The individual involved must
> be ready to analyze all available information and
> choose his or her strategies, a choice which will be
> heavily influenced by self-knowledge. (1989:71)

Kuhlmann, a key figure in working with violence and

teenagers in Germany, refers to the same principle in a

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[2] See Bibliography page 212 for original German title

checklist that was the outcome of a workshop on how to

deal with physical violence:

> Prepare! Get mentally prepared for possible threats:
> Play through situations with yourself alone and with
> others. Gain clarity for yourself as to how much risk
> you are willing to take. It is better to call the
> police than to be undecided as to whether to
> intervene or not, and so do nothing. (1998:129-130)[3]

Lünse (1995), talks about a non-violent reaction

starting at the first signs of physical violence. He

points out the importance of picking up the signals that

announce a physically violent interaction and the

difficulty of intervening once the fists fly. Picking up

these signals can be a matter of a particularly quick

moment, but alarming signals may also have been present

for a long time.

It is not the emphasis of my thesis to focus on

interventions to prevent physical violence, yet Lünse's

thoughts also underline the importance of being awake to

signals announcing an escalation.

The Use of Physical Force

Physically stepping in-between two conflicting

parties, or physically holding the fighters back is

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[3] See Appendix A page 208 for original German text

suggested in different contexts. Breakwell speaks of the importance of using the minimum reasonable force:

> One way to control violence is to use force (…) The general assumption is that the force should focus on restraint being used to overpower the attacker rather than to injure. There is no place for the macho syndrome which calls for force to be met with force. Common guidelines for physical restraint recommend that the person is held near a major joint to avoid dislocation, and not near the throat, neck, chest, abdomen or fingers. Physical restraint is really only feasible if you know you can call upon assistance. (1989:69)

Papesch suggests to simply step in between a fight and stop it happening by holding the aggressor back. He quotes the example of a Judo black belt holder that simply held an aggressor for several hours. The aggressor was relieved after these hours of being held. He made a new experience: somebody doesn't hit and can't be hit. Papesch calls this method "Resisting without hurting". (1993:87)

Time Out

This is a suggestion by Breakwell, when working in institutional contexts:

> The person who is showing signs of aggression is asked to go to a room set aside for the purpose, stays there alone for a short period of time and then returns. Time outs are designed to allow arousal levels to drop naturally and thus to de-escalate the situation. (1989:70)

Ritualizing Violence

Papesch quotes a teacher and pedagogue who worked in the Sixties, named Zulliger, who saw a group of boys fighting. He had all of them come into the classroom with him. There he told them that fights should not take place in the street but in the classroom. He then invited everybody to hit one another as hard as they could. Whoever had had enough was free to quit and go home. More and more of the boys quit the scene and went home after they had had enough. The one boy remaining at the end fought the teacher until he was all red in the face and eventually quit too. The effect of this scene was that the boys group did not fight one another any more and the teacher won the sympathy of the most resistant boy because he demonstrated to him that he was also able to talk his language. (1993:96)

Addressing What is about to happen

A student is about to explode at his teacher. The teacher grabs him by the shoulder, grins, and tells him, "To really hit me hard would be the best right now, right?" The student smiles, hits his right fist in his open left hand, replies that it would indeed be great to do so and walks away shaking his head. (Papesch, 1993:132)

Lünse suggests directly asking the parties about their intentions when observing a tense situation. The basic question is: What are you doing? Lünse illustrates this with a scene of a man annoying a woman in a bus. He suggests asking the woman: "Do you feel annoyed by this man?" and the man: "What are you doing here? Why do you annoy this woman?" (1995:101)

Contact the Victim and Avoid Physical Contact with the Attacker

According to Kuhlmann the interveners should avoid physical contact with attackers unless they have more people available on their side to calmingly holding the aggressors back. Physical contact is a boundary that leads to more aggression when stepped over. Better contact directly the victim. (1998:131)

General Suggestions

Breakwell (1989) emphasizes the importance of self-knowledge in handling physically violent situations and the nonsense of dogmatic statements about interventions. The intervener should analyze the situation and decide, in the context at hand, what to do based on his/her self-knowledge. The importance of remaining calm is also

mentioned: "Such tactical decisions can only be made properly if the individual can remain calm." (1989:71).

Doing something, no matter what, if witnessing physical violence is Kuhlmann's point:

> Demonstrate, that you are ready to intervene, according to your possibilities. A single step, a quick check in, every action changes the situation and encourages others to intervene as well. (1998:130)[4]

Suggested Interventions When Being Attacked Oneself

Following are interventions designed to protect the interveners when themselves being attacked. It was Breakwell (1989:66-67) and Kuhlmann (1998:130-131) who listed possible self-defense strategies for their readers. All of the interventions quoted below are out of their lists. For reasons of readability I am not repeating the publication years of the books or the page numbers (see above) after every quote.

Calmness

The goal of many interventions is to resolve a delicate situation by calming or slowing it down. Such

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[4] See Appendix A page 208 for original German text

interventions are based on the intervener remaining calm

and slow, and maintaining communication with the fighter.

Calmness is mentioned by Kuhlmann "avoid panic and hectic

pace" as an important aspect of communication when

intervening. Breakwell goes in the same direction:

> Give the impression of being calm, self controlled
> and confident without being dismissive or overbearing
> (…) Keep talking, using as normal a tone of voice as
> possible.

Also the use of nonverbal communication to calm the

situation is mentioned by Breakwell:

> Use nonverbal communication to calm the situation (…)
> It is impossible to make generalizations about the
> role of nonverbal communication in such contexts.
> Much will depend upon the pattern of previous
> interactions with the assailant and the reason for
> the attack (…) The vital thing is that you should be
> aware that this form of communication may be
> operating during the attack.

Communication

Regarding communication Kuhlmann points out the

following components as crucial when being attacked: to

keep in contact and establish eye contact with the

opponent, loud and clear talking, to listen to what the

opponent says and to not threaten or put them down. One

can criticize their behavior but should not personally put

them down.

Breakwell suggests "mood-matching": the assailant who shouts is shouted at, calm intensity is greeted with equal intensity.

Another communicative skill suggested by Breakwell is diversionary tactics: offer to make tea, claim to be worried about something outside, say you are hungry, make jokes, and feign submission while using talking to redirect the situation, in cases where the attacker is trying to establish dominance.

Physical Movement

Kuhlmann stresses the importance of remaining calm and avoiding hasty movements that provoke reflex reactions.

Breakwell suggests checking on the availability of escape routes or exits, as soon as the risk of attack is evident. Then, that one should work ones way towards them and try to put some large object between oneself and the assailant or maneuver so that one is not trapped in a corner.

Weapons

According to Breakwell, it is crucial to:

Remove potential weapons where possible (…) An armed assailant should not be approached (maintain your distance) and should be explicitly asked to put the weapon down. You should try to take the initiative where possible in telling the assailant what you want him or her to do. Slow repetition of instructions may be necessary.

Bystanders

Regarding bystanders, Breakwell suggests to try and "disperse any onlookers who may be acting to incite the assailant" and breaking bystander apathy by making a highly specific request for assistance from a particular person in the crowd.

Kuhlmann also advises to address somebody in particular rather than an anonymous request because many people are willing and ready to help, if somebody else takes the first step or if being addressed personally.

Roles

Another approach is to try and change the situation on a role level. It is strongly suggested to refuse the

victim role and to take charge of the situation in a
confrontative manner. Further interventions suggest
diversionary tactics or unexpected role changes.

One should not try to flee the situation because of
fear but to take charge of the situation and change it.
Writing one's own script in taking the initiative to
reframe the situation according to what one wants is
Kuhlmann's point. One should step out of the victim role
that has been assigned to one when attacked, not plea or
behave submissively and show clearly what one wants.

Lünse also suggests surprising the opponent with
initiative, by stepping out of the victim role when
feeling threatened. The initiative should not threaten the
opponent but create a positive connection. Lünse gives a
helpful example to illustrate this strategy:

> A woman gets followed by a man after shopping. It is
> dark and she feels the man approaching. She has no
> possibility to call someone for help. At the point
> where the pursuer is just behind her, she turns
> around and says: "Good you're coming. Could you help
> me to carry these heavy bags? I can hardly carry them
> anymore." The man was so surprised by this initiative
> that he spontaneously grabbed the bags and helped the
> woman. (1995:49)[5]

By stepping out of the victim role the woman also
reframes the role of the potential assailant. Instead of

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[5] See Appendix A page 208 for original German text

being the scary, strong unknown opponent he becomes the still strong, but no longer scary stranger. The physical power and dominance of the opponent is being used instead of being feared.

Lünse gives another example of the same dynamic. A woman approaches a park on her way home. At the entrance she sees a group of men. She feels uncomfortable but it's too late for her to turn away. So she approaches the group and addresses them directly: "Hey guys, would you do me a favor? Could you accompany me through the park? I am scared that some stupid guys could turn up and harass me." (1995:49)

In this case the woman places the role of the aggressor outside of the situation at hand and creates an alliance with the men against it, again emphasizing their power in a friendly way.

Kuhlmann might be referring to similar strategies when advising individuals in trouble to do the unexpected, to leave their role, be creative and use the effect of the surprise for their own benefit.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

My research methodology was qualitative interviews in the context of a heuristic study. Such a study seeks to discover the nature and meaning of a phenomenon and to illuminate it using the first-person accounts of individuals who have directly experienced it (Moustakas, 1990). I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews with six people. The data from these interviews consists of direct quotations from them about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. I have categorized my findings in Analysis I. In Analysis II, I have analyzed my findings using a Process Work approach, a psychological and conflict resolution paradigm developed by Arnold Mindell.

The Interview Partners

My research is about physical violence among teenagers and how to intervene around it in open group settings. I chose to interview only youth workers and teenagers that were, or are, in one way or another, involved in establishing Midnight Basketball in Zurich to ensure there was a common base that all my interview

partners shared. We mostly talked about Midnight
Basketball, a youth club that is located in the same
neighborhood and other local situations. I told all my
interview partners in the beginning that my questions
would refer to open group situations like Midnight
Basketball or youth clubs.

Youth Workers

I knew all the youth workers I interviewed personally
before conducting the interviews. One of them being a
colleague of mine at Midnight Basketball, another involved
in the background of Midnight Basketball and playing a
crucial role in establishing it, and the third youth
worker was consulted by the project in the planning phase.

Teenagers

I decided to interview leading figures at Midnight
Basketball who are also experienced in physical violence.
All originate from countries other than Switzerland. This
does not mean that Swiss teenagers are not violent.
Midnight Basketball is frequented mostly by teenagers from
Latin America, African and Balkan countries. This is due
to the fact that Midnight Basketball takes place in a
neighborhood with many immigrants and that basketball is

not as popular a sport with Swiss teenagers as with those from the above countries.

That is why there were no Swiss around in the setting that I decided to research. I noticed only later that this is problematic, because it could support a stereotype, popular not only in Switzerland, that: foreigners are responsible for physical violence. It is my hope that readers of this thesis understand, that I researched within my neighborhood, where I live and work.

The Interview Questions

My questions of youth workers and teenagers, address mainly interventions in violent situations. In the interviews with youth workers the questions center around interventions they use and the limitations of their effect.

With the teenagers, the questions are more related to fighting. I structured the interviews more along their fighting styles, experiences and observations than along specific interventions. This is because I thought I would get more information from the teenagers if I asked them about fights they had had, what they had felt about them

and the people involved, than asking them directly about
interventions.

Treatment of Data and Procedures

My study committee and I decided that conducting a
total of six qualitative interviews would provide me with
enough data to base my research on. My interviews were
conducted in Swiss German with the exception of one person
whose mother tongue is English. All of the interviews were
audio-recorded. I transcribed and translated them from
Swiss German into English. The transcriptions of the
interviews in chapter IV were edited for readability.

Analysis I: The Interviews

The main data to analyze were my interviews. I worked
through them searching for the interventions with physical
violence mentioned, explicitly or implicitly, and
categorized them.

After having identified more than 140 explicit and
implicit interventions and many ideas about the dynamics
of physical violence, I attempted to analyze my findings.
I looked for commonalities and differences between all the

interventions I had identified. Based on what I discovered, I defined three main categories and many sub-categories.

Analysis II: A Process-oriented View about the Findings from the Interviews

How to approach the findings of the interviews from a process-oriented viewpoint? Process Work is based on the belief that the problem at hand contains the pattern for its own solution. Furthermore Process Work has no moral judgment or pathological concept towards the phenomenon it researches.

A key concept of Process-oriented psychology, congruent with qualitative, heuristic concepts, is the notion that an observer influences whatever s/he observes. Further, that whatever happens to catch the observer's attention can be used to unravel unseen aspects of the phenomenon researched. I therefore based my analysis of the interviews on whatever caught my attention, whatever I personally found interesting. The many discussions with my study committee have helped me to become clearer about what I wanted to incorporate in my thesis and how to do that best and have contributed to the outcome of the analysis.

Chapter IV

THE INTERVIEWS

All of the following interviews were conducted between spring and summer 2000, with teenagers and youth workers who are, or were, engaged with Midnight Basketball Sihlfeld, Zurich, Switzerland.

All of my interview partners were told the subject of my research and consented to participate. To ensure confidentiality, I changed their names in the text.

Before each interview, I provide the reader with a brief description of my interview partner and additional information concerning the interview.

I have chosen not to substantially alter the language used by the interviewees and leave it closer to the spoken form used.

Interview with Jeannette

Jeannette is in her late thirties. She has been a youth worker for eight years, was and still is involved in establishing Midnight Basketball in Switzerland. She has a lively and powerful style to communicate and articulate. Whenever she quoted herself or others she changed her tone of voice according to the scene she was talking about e.g. she would yell when reporting that she was yelling.

The situation Jeannette refers to when talking about her interventions is at the youth club in which she worked at the time. By "our kids" and similar sentences she means the kids frequenting this youth club.

L: What is your goal if you intervene in a scene of physical violence among teenagers?

J: My goal is that no one gets injured or at least not seriously, and that they try to resolve the conflict without the use of physical violence. I'm not trying to interrupt, suppress or put the conflict on hold. I intervene to see that the conflict is not acted out by means of physical violence, which eventually isn't a solution to resolve conflict. They should deal with one another without starting a fight.

L: What kind of interventions do you use if you intervene in situations of physical violence?

J: Well that differs very much what's happening. If, for example, it is little boys, around 12, 13 years old who are still into this wrestling with one another. Then I stay around and watch what happens. It can tilt if one suddenly grabs harder or presses or hits. Then suddenly the other has the feeling "damn it, now he hurt me I give it back to him." At this point the boys can't step out anymore because it's suddenly about who is the stronger and then it becomes serious. Stepping out would be losing face.
If that happens, and you need to have tomatoes on your eyes not noticing that, I intervene with a wisecrack or I approach them and say, "It's enough now", or something. Most of the time I broke the story with a wisecrack like, "let's go for real, I want to see blood now" or, "should I call the ambulance I want at least to cast a couple of broken arms here afterwards." Then they have to laugh themselves because that is exactly what they actually don't want - they want wrestling. I noticed again and again with the smaller ones that they are happy if somebody intervenes like that from the outside because no one was losing face, no one had to say I was the stronger… The beginning of this wrestling is not about hitting one another on the head afterwards.

L: Now you mentioned two verbal interventions that actually sound completely different. The one is, "Now I want to see blood" and the other is, "it's enough now"

J: Yeah. (Both laugh). Probably it depends on one's form of the day… that's intuitive. Sometimes it also depends a little on which boys it is. Sometimes it's fun if you do it more playfully exaggerated like going there and pretending you're filming this scene now, and say: "HOPP, now you have to repeat that once again I don't have it in the camera yet." That really breaks it! I just go there and play to the gallery. And that with the camera, they found that to be very funny. If you do it playfully then they react, you know. Then maybe someone who is on the outside comes in with an idea and says, "Yeah. Should I go call the ambulance?" Something is happening if you walk up to it and play to the gallery. The other kids watch and think what the hell is she doing again? And sometimes they join the game. There is something happening for two or three minutes. That's why I love this work so passionately and intensely because you're always challenged to be creative. I have such a theatrical side and I could always live this side in youth work and in the adult's world you can do that much less.

If you go there and say: "Come-on it's enough now" then it's like finished and about nothing else happens. The moment

for, "Now it's enough" has come when you notice that they are totally overexcited. If they're running around in the room and they're not aware anymore if they are throwing ashtrays on the floor or when glasses are breaking – then you're not having such good results with these funny interventions. Then you have to tell them once, "It's enough now" to get them down a little from that overexcitement. In the beginning you might try it with joking, "Wow! Are you on it again" or you address them and tell them that they are little hurricanes, and then you notice it's pointless. There are kids who you can't get down unless you make it clear, "It's enough now." Sometimes that isn't even enough. Then you try it with, "So what's going on?" and it sometimes still doesn't help. Those were always kids with emotional neglect tendencies who are highly sped up and always need stimulation from the outside. They can't stimulate themselves from the inside.

But with time you know them and who responds to what. One of the most important things to me is really getting to know them through observation and staying with them. You can intervene completely different afterwards if you know a little who that kid is and some of his background.

L: Now you talked about the 12 to 13 years old wrestling together, how about the older ones?

J: Between 14 and 16 this wrestling still exists, but it works differently. The older they get the more they touch one another sexually. Then wrestling among boys partially really means that they grab each other between the legs. When they are coming into puberty this wrestling changes in the direction of sexualized wrestling. The conflicts in that phase are about power, positioning and who is the stronger. You can also do that with intelligence, but with the kids that you are asking about it's about: you win because you're the stronger per muscle power or because you are better in Karate or whatever… It's a ritual with them. If I have a problem with you then it goes right away, "You want to…." (Jeannette takes on a fighting position)

L: How do you intervene in such a moment?

J: Well, if you notice it's totally serious then you go into it, but that is not conscious. It's not conscious and it's also not something everybody can do. I think that through role-play you can begin practice that but I always went in very unconscious. Maybe that's why I was mostly, actually, always successful (both laugh). When they notice you're also not scared… it's about fear, power and winning. I am not scared of you - just come-on, you know. And if I step in as impulsively as I did, simply really physically in between, then you create a barrier between the two of them and at

least with less heavy cases, they are totally perplexed that you even do that. Stepping in physically as a woman, you know.

And then they just scream around your head (grins) and you're just in between and then one has you and tries to push you away and the other maybe too and they scream back and forth like that. At some point I begin to scream as well and louder than them if possible, "Now it's OVER! Now goddamn it again, now we solve that differently" or whatever. You are not thinking anything anymore. You also don't know what you have said here again afterwards.

L: But the point is, you step in physically and are being louder than them?

J: I think a lot only happens intuitively at this moment. Instantly when you step in, you notice whether that impresses them at all or not. The less they are impressed the more they scream around your head and the more you have to play to the gallery… just productions. And mostly if stuff like that happens also the rest of the team shows up. Or other kids do. And then you turn it and then you look at it. Damn it, what's going on?

Often kids come in and try to separate or calm down the fighters as well. Kids among themselves have rules of the game too, you notice that. If two buddies are getting

involved in such a story together, then you often notice that their other friends intervene, calm down and prevent. It always depends. If it's a totally different story then it can also escalate into a mass fight. Especially if there are, for example, two kids of two different groups. Then it becomes hot. If it's inside a group, the kids settle. If it's from two groups then it can right away - BANG! Go into two blocks.

That happened to me when I started. It was the same ethnicity but obviously they hardly knew one another. Two 12-year-olds got into an argument while playing table soccer and there were older boys present, 18,19,20-year-olds. The problem was that the older ones wanted to settle but the way they wanted to settle escalated the argument into a huge story. At the end they fought one another with steel chairs and with glasses. One even raised a glass against me when I stepped in. Then I went back in the office and screamed out, "so now I'm going to call the police!" One of them came to see if I'm really doing it and I really did it. Then it made TSCHUPP! And the place was empty. Before I hung up the phone I said, "officer, you don't have to come anymore now the place is just empty."

There wasn't another possibility anymore, you know. I was at this work for 14 days and all alone in the place. I didn't know the kids, for sure I've seen them once or twice maybe but that situation really got out of hand!

L: What happens with even older kids? We were still in this phase that you defined as sexualized wrestling phase…

J: The older they get the more difficult it gets to intervene at all. You can intervene and you can stop the conflict for the moment but you have no idea what it is about and they won't tell you either. If you can stop it in your place most of times that means that it happens somewhere on the outside afterwards. These are revenge stories.

L: How do you stop them if you stop them when it happens at your place?

J: Also to step in. Step in and say, "this conflict will be solved in a different way", or something like that. To stand between the parties or just standing close, be loud and say, "STOP! FINISH!" or to the ones you know, "so come-on, stop it A. Now goddamn it!" The ones you know, you can call them back most of times. It can also be that a second group kicks in that you don't know. Then you can stop it in your place if they respect you as the person that has the word in there, but you don't know afterwards what happens outside. The problem just isn't solved and you can also not solve the problem anymore. You notice you can't get through to the information. They don't tell you anything anymore or they

tell you bullshit where you notice right away that's not true. It aren't even good stories. And you just notice that they slowly become adults. They have their own rules of the game and it's none of your business anymore. These are their things.

L: What are the limitations of the interventions you talked about so far?

J: If the background of the conflict is about women, men honor, criminal stories like a drug deal, territory fights or if it's about revenge. The beginning of blood feud stories, then you can only interrupt the fight at the moment but you know very well that it will happen somewhere else. Also if other ethnicities are involved you get to a limitation as Swiss. You can do a couple of things but there are also limitations and there you need to create cultural bridges, be able to bring in adults of the same ethnicities to help resolve the conflict. Often we also noticed that our problem solving strategies are pointless for them.
Last spring we had a knife fight in front of the club, a very harmless one thanks to luck. It was about a girl story. An Albanian girl who got involved with a black boy and after claimed that he sexually assaulted her. She told that to an Albanian friend who mobilized his ethnical group and then the knife fight happened in front of our club. We closed the

club for 14 days afterwards, created a really radical

pressure but clearly worked with all groups. The conflict

got ethnicized right away: ZACK! Here the Albanians. ZACK!

Here the Somali. And then (makes a crushing sound). We had

to show them that is a relationship story. So we worked on

the one hand with the Albanians as a group, then with the

Somali as a group and also with the girls. In the first

place with the girl who was involved. Working with all these

groups meant to get Albanian and Somalian adults involved in

the trouble their kids are having.

L: Could you report a case of a successful intervention in

relation to your goal of intervention?

J: Yeah. Once we noticed with our kids, also due to the life

circumstances they are stuck in, that they built up tensions

that made them explode every now and then. After these

explosions and the damage they caused through it, they were

speechless themselves that they hurt somebody else,

sometimes also a friend. They didn't want that. We had the

feeling that we could build up another system to protect one

another in that sense, that if one of them goes crazy that

he's been held back by the others so he doesn't attack

somebody else.

At some point actually a case like this happened. I was

sitting in the kitchen and then L. comes running up through

such a passage we have there and I see how he tears open this drawer and wants to take out a knife. But then already comes another kid and begins to grab him, preventing him from taking that knife. For sure I went up front to see what's happening and I saw it work. Three kids held L. who went berserk like a zebra that you catch with lassos. His neck was thick and swollen; he was completely out of his mind and screamed around. I just put my hand on his shoulder and said, "L. it's all right…" with a very quiet voice because I noticed these three boys they really held him. That went for a certain time - it's difficult to be able to estimate it right in such extreme situations - in any case, at one point he broke down and started to cry. We let the boys out in the kitchen and went back to the main room when C. came up from behind and went crazy. C. was the one that L. somehow got into trouble with back there and they were really two good friends usually. I thought, now I'm going to do the same thing again, I will make body contact, and wanted to get close and then he grabbed my hand. He pressed and held it all the time and I said all the time, "C. it's o.k. Calm down everything is O.K., L. is quiet" and he went mad and screamed all the time, "WEEEE… I don't! I don't want trouble! It's O.K.! WAU! WAU! WAU! WAU!" and I just said, "No it's not o.k. C. You're blood pressure is still on 180" until he then also calmed down.

Then we said to both of them, "listen, it seems that you have a conflict and it seems that you want to attack one another. Now you go and do that. But you do that without weapons and we, the youth workers, are the arbiters. We set up the rules of the game."

They said, "We don't want to beat each other up" (grins) and then I said, "Yes you can. Now we go downstairs [the club Jeannette is working in is built on pillars] underneath the club and there you can continue with the problem you're having with one another. You can even beat each other up but you have to accept that you are accompanied by your friends, H. and Z. They stay with you and if they intervene then you have to stop."

The youth workers were the protection between the scene, the passing people and the possible arrival of the police.

Then these two attacked one another verbally. I have no idea what it was about, they talked Albanian. Their friends who were Albanians too, just stood in there and the youth workers and the other kids further back. They approached and argued with one another and all of a sudden one got pushed into a corner by the other. Then we yelled form the background, "Z. and H. take them out of the corner! They are in the corner!" and then for sure C. and L. did also pick that up and then Z. and H. led them back into the middle. It was totally clear that if C. pushes L. like that in the corner, L. can't escape anymore.

I think after 10-15 minutes it was finished and they had it out. They really cursed loud and had a loud argument but it was good afterwards and it happened without a physical fight although they would have been allowed to. And the interesting thing is really how L. never had an explosion ever after. That for me was really a phenomenon. Oh! And I also remember that I attended a meeting in Germany among youth workers some time after that incident, where we as a group played this very scene. The ones who were playing the kids going mad and being held back both stated afterwards how good and freeing it felt to be held that way and just being able to go crazy. Both were not sure what would have happened if their colleagues had let them go off after one another. It was impressive how intense the scene got there.

L: Incredible. Let's go to the next question can you talk of a case where an intervention of yours didn't work in relation to your goal?

J: Well there is something where I just don't know how it ended but where I think that the problem wasn't solved at all. It was a scene where three of our older kids, 18, 19 years old, stood opposite of two other kids of the same age underneath the youth club. From the tone of voice it was clear that it was something quite heavy and quite serious going on. We joined the bystanders just to mark our presence

and always asked the little ones, "hey, what is this about?"
and they always told us, "well, I don't understand anything"
but they got everything. Then we noticed, shit, this is
about something that none is giving out a word about. But
the conflict did neither escalate nor resolve with us
present. So they did a little production: "Well, we go now.
We split up and go." But we felt that that's not true, that
they go around the next corner where it would break lose,
and followed them. And it was just like that. I was
astonished how quick they had their belts out. The others
went to their car to take out weapons and although we needed
two or three minutes, we were eventually able to whistle
ours back and take them up in the club. There we asked them
what happened but they did not tell us. We noticed that we
can't solve that and we were quite positive that this would
now go down somewhere else but we never heard something.
Also never did one of them show up injured. But these are
stories where you know you could interrupt it for the moment
but depending on the circumstances the fight happens
somewhere else.

L: Have you ever avoided intervening in a situation of
physical violence?

J: No. I always intervened.

L: Are there interventions that you fantasize about but you don't do them?

J: Well, sometimes if one acts really stupid you would love it to just simply slap him one as well (laughs). You don't do that but you then just fight verbally very intensely. I am probably verbally very good. When I get really angry, I fight verbal or go nuts, "Goddamn it! No you can't do that! And here. Are you crazy or what? Stop letting out such fuckin' bullshit!"
But if the fight happens verbally you have to be stronger internally otherwise you'll lose it. It's only about who is psychologically stronger. Who has the longer breath. And only if they can't anymore, then you notice now they're coming down where you can talk with them again but they have to get rid of that steam first. You can only intervene if you're psychologically stronger. If they notice that you're not strong enough you DON'T have a chance and then the danger increases that you get hit.

L: You said that one intervention that you don't do but you've felt the impulse a couple of times would be to slap somebody. Why don't you do it?

J: Well, because I am actually against it. Violence is not simply a solution. But for sure, the more helpless you get

the faster you probably will become violent and I don't come

into this helplessness because I am verbally too strong.

In my eight years of intense work with the kids I did slap

kids three times. I didn't want that, but there it was not

about intervening to stop a fight but there were borders

crossed in relation to myself.

But it is an intervention that you sometimes have an impulse

towards in violent situations. Or sometimes you would like

to be superwoman or Popeye, you know, who grabs one at the

collar and KKKKK!! (Laughs) slap him one from behind.

L: And what holds you back to do that?

J: Because I am not that strong (laughs out loud). No, you

simply can't do it. These are such childish fantasies, where

you think the best would be to grab both by the collar and

to hold them up and shake them. They would be so irritated,

but then you have the power, you are then the strongest. It

is funny that it's always the ones who are still stronger

that are the likeliest to prevent violence. A huge guy

practically never has a fight.

L: What kind of support or information would you need to

feel freer to intervene in situations of physical violence?

J: You know, all these interventions, they never happened alone. I always knew there are still other people around from the team. That is really important to know that you have people in the background, you also have the kids, depending on the circumstances. I think that is actually the base that allows you to not think but just jump in there. Because you have a certain trust into the other kids and also in your team colleagues. I don't know what else it needs. Probably a naïve trust in God, although I don't believe in God. It needs naivety. After intervening like that you are knocked out. You're exhausted and sometimes you have quite a bit of shaking knees, and you ask yourself, goddamn it, why did I step in here?

With me a lot is reflex. Obviously I am a human being who goes in the offensive when I feel a threat. And you need an inner strength. If you don't have it, I wouldn't advice anybody to intervene. I don't know where that comes from. I have a strong sense of justice also that tells me to intervene sometimes where I just have the feeling no, that doesn't work. And you don't even know if you get one in the face yourself too.

Also, the more I understand about the life situation and the cultural background of a kid, the better. In my case working with Albanian adults and to know them and also knowing political people that are respected among them is very

helpful. No kid has to think that he can threaten me with the Albanians, you know.

A healthy assessment of things is also important. When I began my work at the youth club the kids threatened me with murder and everything and my colleagues told me, "you can't come here anymore they threaten you with murder now!" Then I told them, "are you crazy or what? I'm not getting killed by a 14 year old." and I stayed there and then kids came up to me, "yeah, this one there wants to kill you he's waiting for you" then I said, "yes, he should then. At some point life is over. But I don't believe that my life is being ended by his hand." And when youth workers come to me TOTALLY scared and say, "he told me that he's gonna kill me" or, "I get threats" then I always say, "Well, hold it, stop it…"

L: To what degree does the personal relationship that you have with somebody influence your intervention?

J: In order to intervene successfully you need to know the kids very well, not only as a group but also individually. The kids need to respect the person who intervenes. This is especially the case if the intervener has helped them in their lives before. You just have to like these kids they notice that very quick.

If I know the people I can at least interrupt it and deflect the whole thing onto me. Then they have to explain to me why they are doing this or that.

If you don't know anybody then it becomes almost dangerous. What happens is, "What do you have to say to me anyway, you're nobody anyway, you're not to interfere here, also you're a woman…" and there you fight…

I never experienced it like that for good luck because then it becomes dangerous.

The good thing is if the people who come notice that this is your territory. And if you go there and look at them and approach them straight away. Once I told two older guys who came into our youth club, "you are a little too old here, this is a youth club" but with a clear really tough look, "what are you actually looking for in here?" Then one of the guys looked at me and said, "you're a dangerous woman, eh?" and I said, "Yes I am." Well, like that. I was sure they were dealers. They didn't come back because they noticed that what happens in here is being observed.

L: How do you intervene if you're being physically attacked yourself?

J: I got attacked at home once in front of my house door. (Laughs). I felt it before, then that person said something and I thought, "Ah! Wen-Do course! Now I have to react the

right way." But there in such stories you react only based on your instinct anyway. I turned around and said, " what's that? Is that a hold up?" (Laughs) I really went out aggressive. Then there was not a single sound, just silence. I said, "What should that be? Do you want money?" "Yeah". I had 20 francs in my pocket and that is no money for me, "Bad luck you're having! I don't have any money with me! Bad luck you're having!" And then I felt how this person fell together energetically. Then I started to confront the offender right away and said, "are you nuts or what to attack somebody in the middle of the night what the fuck are you thinking!" (Grins) then the offender takes off the cap and says: "This is actually the first time I do this": an 18-year old girl.

I only started to notice the day after how much of a shock I actually had. I was TOTALLY knocked out when I woke up in the morning. Later that day I met a friend who is a lawyer and I told him this story and he said, "Well, damn it, she must have been armed" and I replied that I am sure she was not. But he said, "That's impossible. She must have something in her hand, if she wants to attack people." I said, "No. She probably does it with the shock" and he replied, "I don't believe that, she was armed."

I saw this girl again, soon after and I asked her. She looked at me and said, "Yeeeaah, I had such a long knife in my sleeve (size of a lower arm). You always looked at it"

And I, "What?" I never looked at her sleeve and I didn't see
anything. (laughs) She didn't use it she had it obviously in
her sleeve. I really didn't see anything.

But also with dogs. Twice dogs attacked me out of the blue
and I just started screaming and the dogs were shocked and
left. After I got away fast (laughs). If you have this
reflex, you know. There are also flight animals and there
are animals that are facing the threat. And there are humans
who maybe have more flight tendencies and I seem to belong
to the ones who start a counter attack and that pays good
obviously.

Interview with Rick

Rick is a youth worker in his mid thirties. I had talked with him a couple of times about physical violence before the interview already because he was, like me, involved in leading Midnight Basketball in my neighborhood.

The interview took place in March 2000 at the youth center where Rick works. He has been a professional youth worker for seven years; informally he has been involved in youth work for 17 years.

L: What is your goal if you intervene in a scene of physical violence among teenagers?

R: The first goal is that the physical violence itself stops. And the second goal is that we finally can look at the background of the violence, i.e. why did it come to that point. To get through to the cause and after to clean that up or at least come to an agreement that it doesn't escalate again in the next five minutes.

L: What kinds of interventions do you need if you intervene in a situation of physical violence among teenagers?

R: In the first place I draw attention to me so they notice
that there's someone coming from the outside who is like a
third person but doesn't take sides and stands in between.
The goal is that the attention the two opposing parties have
towards one another through the violence is directed at me.
Not physically that they hit me on the head, you know
(laughs) but that it's like deflected onto me. As soon as
the attention is on me they stop hitting each other. I do
that most of the times using my language in saying, "Hey,
stop!" Relatively forceful, an authoritarian intervention.
But I also put myself physically in between, to like go in
the middle.

L: Does the intervention go on or is it finished then?

R: No! In my opinion that's when it only starts. It's not
that you say after that o.k. Everything is rosy. First I
have to see that they don't hit each other anymore. Then
it's about that you check what is actually happening. So you
ask questions, "What's this?" still very much focused on me.
I noticed that I function as a translator between these
parties, that I talk to this one, he comes to me and I talk
to the other. They don't talk to each other in the first
place but it's happening through me and I translate and make
it understandable to the other.

It is really decisive what situation it is. If you have open
groups, 10 kids on this side and 10 kids on the other side
as well, then it is a totally different interaction than if
you have two on two or one on one. The more you have, the
more you can't personify it, you have to intervene more
globally like, "what do you want?" To open that up much
more. Then it looks a little like a tamer standing in the
middle and there it's also important for me that I somehow
am being accepted by both parties from the beginning.
Because if I am not I have no chance. The example from
Midnight Basketball at that evening: On this side a group
and on this side a group. Me in the middle, 50 kids around
me. For me it was decisive in that moment that they do what
I tell them. And I told them come here and sit down.
Something totally simple. And there were certain kids who
didn't want that. They were still standing or where leaning
or whatever. Decisive was that everybody sat in the end.
That is getting my way.

L: That is getting your way in relation to the whole group
that is concerned including the bystanders or just the group
who has the very conflict?

R: No, to all who are affected including the bystanders.
It's about making the circle as big as possible. You can
still compress afterwards if you're getting through to the

core and notice this guy has a problem with that guy. But in the beginning if you're only focusing on the little then it burns to the left and to the right and continues there. I had this big kind of a jungle experienced in GZ Heuried [youth club]. We had a violence prevention week and it is astounding that exactly then when you want to do violence prevention that mostly then violence breaks out (both laugh). I think there is a connection that these people are reminded so much of their violence that it really has to escalate then, you know. We made a forum theater. In the GZ Heuried, there is like an arena [referring to the architecture. GZ Heuried is built inside like an arena]. There were about six classes, six times twenty kids sitting in this arena. That's relatively a lot of kids (laughs). At the bottom there was a stage. We played out a scene of a little pushing and stuff, one reacts, then the other reacts and eventually there is a fight on stage. The question was: what can you do differently? Then stopping the scene, then coming in… The teachers were (laughs) just sitting up there and nobody told me that, through two or three skilful interventions, the kids arranged it that all of a sudden the two rivals of the school yard, who were having problems with each other for a long time, were standing on stage facing each other (laughing). Anyway, they started playing, one pushes, the other a little harder than usual, the first one

turns around and hits POFF! Full contact - nose bone broken.
On stage 120 kids around (laughs).

That was something that was happening for a longer time
already on the whole schoolyard and we had to open it in a
similar way. I mean I could have focused on that between the
two kids and left the others without attention, that would
for sure have had an effect but it wouldn't have solved the
problem. We decided on the spot there that we're going to
use all the six classes that were there. We talked about two
hours with them about what is going on, weighted up pro and
con positions, heavy stuff, you know. Finally we made
agreements on how to deal with one another on the schoolyard
and so on… we did quite a piece of work. Afterwards the
teachers, who were sitting above all the time and didn't
come in, told us that it was good what we did and if we
could continue with it. So we went to the school for five
more weeks and talked to the kids again and we brought it to
the point it didn't escalate again. These are stories where
I say the bigger you include and compress afterwards the
more likely you are successful.

L: I still think a little bit about your goal where you
talked about the background and the agreements… Do you make
suggestions for agreements or do you let them come up with
ideas?

R: Them! It's not my business I am just the translator, I am mediator, I build bridges.

L: What do you translate into what?

R: I translate that what they sometimes aren't able to express. Somebody is not able to say something, and I then ask him, "Do you mean this and this?" Then he says, "yeah", and then I say to the other, "see he means this and this" and if he doesn't understand you have to present it in another way. Really tough. That's translation work that goes through me like through a relay station. I see that as very, very important.
And as I said, it is important that you make agreements. It's not about loving the other again or whatever nobody's interested in that! Real agreements, "this and this we agree upon together", that is decisive.

L: Let's go to the next question then. What are the limitations to your way of intervening?

R: There is a level of escalation of physical violence where I already notice from the outside when I am giving myself in between that I have no chance at all. I noticed there are always these waves. It bangs and then the emotion is

relatively high and there are maybe many people who are part of it. Then it goes somewhat down, there is such a fall, and then it comes again and so on. And if I have to intervene up on such a peak, where many people are part of it, I have no chance as single person anymore. It is important to assess from the outside to see your own limit.

Other limitations are if kids are not willing to make agreements, if they are not willing to clean up the conflict. Also sometimes there are culturally defined things that are hard to follow, blood feud for instance, where you can't follow with rational arguments anymore because it somehow works on such an emotional level where you can't argue anymore.

L: What was a successful intervention in relation to your goal of intervention?

R: O.k. The situation I will describe is during a Midnight Basketball evening. The atmosphere is rather nervous, not much concentration, the kids were on the one hand tired on the other not, on the one hand they wanted to play on the other they didn't want to play and so on. Not a lot of kids present, something between 40 and 50.

In the one sports hall there are two teams playing against each other. I was standing outside in the hallway between the two sports halls when all of a sudden one comes flown

out of the sports hall. Really - WHOOOOF - and I saw him and didn't right away conclude that he's been pushed. I thought, "Hey, that's rather heavy" and went into the hall to watch. The moment I walk through the door into the hall I see that in the farther away corner of the sports hall there were two kids going into one another. Right away there clustered two parties around these two who were hitting that were also going after one another heavily. They didn't try to separate the fighters but needed them in order to hit the other party. In the beginning they were the two of them, when I went up to them there were already five, six involved. Then the police came in, but were not perceived as police men [young police men come to play with the kids at Midnight Basketball regularly] so the rest of the kids came in as well. Also the police went in too heavy, really as guys who instead of bringing apart hold (laughs). That's difficult. I did then go up to the scene watched what was going on and then simply started to scream: "hey what's that?" and stuff, "Go apart!" so I really drew attention to me through my voice, and at some point I went right into the scene and pushed them apart, and then suddenly got the attention. At the point where I got the attention, I thought it was touch and go, I was afraid that it would escalate to a point, where you don't have a chance anymore. It actually surprised me a little bit that suddenly when I was noticed, really both parties stopped, you know. Then, right away, I started

to walk around a lot. I do that in such situations. I go
from the one party to the other, go there and say like,
"hey, easy" and stuff, "hey, quiet" and stuff and go to the
other again, "hey easy, hey quiet" I did that and I rotated
that way, went to all parties involved. I told the cops go
over there, I am totally rotating. Then I went right into
the middle of the sports hall with them, rotating again and
again, "hey easy, hey come-on that's pointless" and all
stuff like that. Really calming down. Then I stood in the
middle and said come-on here everybody and sit down. There
were two or three leading figures, who got into this game: I
don't sit down all the way, I don't yet think that you're
the one here who's in charge telling me what that I have to
sit down. And I said, "No!, you sit down, we don't continue
until after you sat down." As soon as it was silent I asked
the question what we actually want here. And I told them
that I saw two things. One is to play basketball and the
other is to beat each other up. Then I said you just have to
tell me what you want! They looked at me a little confused
but I did insist on that question. I had to ask it four
times until somebody said, "hey, man, yeah. We want to play
basketball." Then I said, "Aha! You want to play basketball?
Can you then tell me what this is about? Because if you want
that, then we can do that. Then we open a ring over in the
corner, but then I want to see blood." Almost a paradox
intervention and they almost didn't get it anymore (laughs)

that I do this. Then they said, "No we want to play basketball!"

Then there was like the short flickering up of a discussion that I just listened to. They told me what was going on, the one party and the other. I realized that it actually was really just about these two guys and that the others were more present as helpers. There were no parallel conflicts around. Also it became apparent that the two guys who had the fight or who started it were not even integrated in the cliques present, it was just about one being dark skinned. Then the Dominicans and the dark skinned identified more with him but it was not a clique member that you absolutely protect. It was just, that's one of ours and we happen to have this blood and therefore we help him. It took place on this level. And that was important for me to see because then it was clear that I don't have to work with the cliques but with two single persons. That's totally different, you know.

Then I said, "O.k., now we do it like that: the two having a problem are coming with me, we are going outside. The others remembered that they want to play basketball." Then I made sure with the coaches that they immediately set up games again and went out with the other two. There we discussed what was going on, we went back to what actually happened. "Well, you shouldn't, get me off the ground, I didn't want to get you off the ground" and stuff, we cleared up the

misunderstanding also with the help of one of the kids

leaders [who works as a coach too]. The agreement was, that

they let that go for today and agree on a cease-fire for the

next time. I told them they don't have to embrace one

another but just don't start fighting again. Both of them

could agree on that and were able to finish that by

handshake. Back in the sports hall, there was still a little

weird, latent atmosphere; should we really play now or what

is going on? And I think that still swings with the

atmosphere usually.

L: Do you also have an example of a failure of an

intervention in relation to your goal of intervention that

you could tell me?

R: Well, failed…. I think I've never done an intervention

that I wouldn't have broken off at the point where I noticed

that I couldn't come through. At that point where I was able

to decide: yes, I have a chance, I can do something - I

could always bring it to an end. At least to an extent where

you could say o.k. it's possible to somehow go home for now.

I came to points where I knew for myself ahead of time that

I don't have a chance. And those were the moments for me in

the seven years that I am working professionally now, where

I had to just call the cops, you know. The escalation was

just that huge. One time, in Heuried too, in the atrium

there where twenty against twenty going at each other, bad,
with knives and stuff, radical. And I knew now, you can't go
in between that's just too much. I went back to call the
cops and then sowed rumors. I call that sowing rumors. Most
of the times it's like that: fight, big fight, and around
there's always like a circle. In the middle is the hard core
where you hit and on the outside they're less and less
involved but the ones on the outside are decisive too.
They're also somewhere part of the conflict also if they're
not inside hitting. And there I start sowing rumors. I go
there and say: "hey, listen up, if I where you I would get
out of here now because I tell you in five minutes the cops
are here."

L: Well, first you went to call the police and then you went
back and did… well, rumors, these are not rumors then, these
are facts

R: Yeah, facts, and then it goes very fast. They ran away.

L: Have you ever avoided intervening in a scene of physical
violence and if so what held you back?

R: Yes, when the level of escalation was too big. Often you
have the luck that a colleague or someone from the friends
of the ones who are fighting helps you to hold them back.

That's mostly the case; you can count on this a little too. If two are attacking one another most of times they have some colleague around who is a little more rational (laughs).

L: Are there interventions that you would do if you had the total freedom to do whatever you want to do?

R: Well, you mean: To take out the pump action (laughs). No, no. These are not my methods (laughs). I mean it's also not a fantasy; I personally don't think that you can stop physical violence by physical violence. I think that you can mark your presence and that can include that you sometimes go in between and push apart - that's then also a kind of violence but also a kind of presence: here I am! That is actually the way to divert something.
Well, so purely without limits and full of fantasy I think (laughs) that it would be cool if you could push such a chewing gum mass in between. Something that the outcome is "air hits". Something where you hit and it gives such a resistance. That would on the one hand channel the aggression but on the other hand wouldn't do any harm, you know. And I think also sometimes you are that as a human being. You go in between and are this mass then.

L: What holds you back from doing that?

R: Physical laws (laughs). I don't know… maybe you would need to take the big gymnastic mat and push it in between next time we have ghetto [problems] at Midnight Basketball (laughs). Hit in here!

L: What kind of support or information would you need in order to feel freer to intervene in situations of physical violence?

R: Information is decisive for me. The more they know you, the more you know them, and the more possibilities you have on the personal level to address the kids. Also more information about cliques and their structure. Because of this higher degree of being known you can intervene on the personal level.

The other thing is about the police. If I decide that I have to call them it shouldn't take them 20 minutes until they arrive at the place of action. That is just too long if knives are being pulled. They should take an emergency call from a professional more serious. Sometimes as a professional, you are somehow put in the same drawer, as some inhabitant who somewhere observed something out of the window.

Also when they arrive on the place they shouldn't just do whatever they think is appropriate. I am the person to talk

to and I expect that I have something to say then. And there

it is sometimes difficult.

Further support concerning intervention can only work if we

professionals who are working in youth work in the city of

Zurich network much stronger.

L: How does the degree of personal relationship you have

with a teenager who is engaged in a fight, influence your

intervention?

R: Well, it makes it easier! It makes the intervention with

him easier because I can address him on the personal level.

I know more about him and therefore he allows much more from

me. That I embrace him or make body contact for example. Or

that I hold him on the shoulder and guide him away. Such

things are being allowed much more possibly and I think such

things are also important. You can also pick up on the

history the two of you had, "think about what I told you

last time" and such things. Sometimes also agreements are

running. For instance I made the agreement with them that if

somebody fucks with them and they don't hit back for once,

they come see me and I pay them a dinner (smiles).

L: How do you intervene if you yourself are being attacked

or threatened?

R: I protect myself somehow. The one thing is that I talk, I also know my strength is to talk. One time, four or five kids attacked me. Then I just grabbed the first one and used him as a protection shield. They mostly hit him, which was actually also my idea (laughs). It's really about self-protection there. My thing is talking; calming down, "hey come down, easy, calm" with a quiet voice. I don't threaten. Once I had to deal with a kid who put his knife on my throat. He held me from behind and there I calmly took his knife away with my hand (grins) and said, "hey…", closed it and gave it back to him. But really in this complete calmness, almost shit my pants but very calm, you know (laughs out loud). You don't act so much on the cognitive level anymore, it comes like out of your stomach.

Interview with William

William is male, age 48. He has been involved in youth work for more than 30 years and works for the city of Zurich as a troubleshooter. He works with the teenagers that are labeled as the most difficult cases of troublemakers. He is well known in Switzerland in the area of physical violence and teenagers.

The interview took place in March 2000 in William's office in Zurich and was of a slower speed and of longer reflection periods than the others. As with Jeannette, William has a very lively communication style and uses movement and tone of voice to materialize what he is talking about.

L: What is your goal when you intervene in a scene of physical violence amongst teenagers?

W: My goal is to bring awareness to what's happening. When we have awareness around what's happening we normally have more choices. So my goal isn't necessarily to stop the fighting. It is to bring awareness to all the parties concerned. The parties concerned may not just be the two people fighting there might be 300 onlookers or there may be lots of people not looking but having their back turned. In

open settings particularly it's not always clear. The parts

maybe innumerable. This approach implies that what's

happening is somehow important and without the belief that

what's happening is somehow important I wouldn't be able to

carry on.

L: What kind of interventions do you use when intervening in

physical violent scenes between teenagers?

W: I could speak for like six or seven days about this

subject. You have to understand that I'm trying to limit

myself a little bit. I'm not going to answer you fully

because neither of us have time. Basically I use any

technique I can to bring awareness. I think I just have to

quote a couple of examples to illustrate first the

difference between bringing awareness and aiming for a

product, which is the end of a fight.

I noticed that two teenagers were fighting inseparably to

the point where the teachers and nobody around could

separate them. No matter how many people involved themselves

to separate them, these kids somehow found a way to get back

and kick the shit out of each other. What was apparent to me

looking at the scene from the outside was that nobody was

going to give up. But I noticed also that all the people

that were trying to stop the fight were also not giving up.

So it looked to me that I was looking at all parts of a

system, where no one wants to give up. So I stood in front of both of these kids beating the shit out of each other and I fell on my back, as if unconscious, and said "Well, I give up! I wouldn't know how to help to separate you two guys." Now what was amazing was that at that point they stopped for long enough to look at me. Once they stop to look at me they have normally come out of the extreme state, that you have to be in to fight without boundaries. Anyway, they both smiled. At this point I had them. Now, I brought awareness not only to those two kids but I was trying to bring awareness to the teachers and their staff as well because in their very pulling the kids apart they were actually escalating the whole thing. So I modeled a different way of being for several people there which was a choice. This choice doesn't necessarily mean that the fight stops but it means more awareness that there are different parts around in this whole complex field.

So that's an example of bringing awareness. I wasn't actually in that moment focused on the goal of separating the kids although it had the effect of separating the kids. Another example, which I'd like to use, does you mind if I bring more examples?

L: No, that's great!

W: In a public setting right near where you're working with Midnight Basketball two gangs attacked one another and there were two very obvious leading figures in this gang fighting. On the one side there was a guy who happens to come from a central African country and on the other side a guy who happens to come from a central Balkan country. But their gangs were very racially and ethnically mixed. It wasn't like black against white it was much more complicated. I walked up to what was happening and just my very presence was enough for the fighting to stop for maybe three seconds. Why so… simply because presence of other people helps bring awareness to the fact that a fight is going on. This is very important. Often in fight situations other people don't actually walk up to it. If anything they keep distance. So I approached not putting myself in danger and they stopped for a second.

But suddenly one of the kids thought that the other kids said, "Fuck your mother". Now, whether he had done or not was irrelevant. Other people may have concentrated more on whether you actually said it or not. But that's what he heard and he flew, FLEW as if he was about to fly, into the other guy and was screaming, "NOBODY insults my mother!" I knew if I didn't intervene fast it would go on in the same style so I screamed. The reason I copied the communication style of the kid was exactly to bring awareness to the communication style they used because most extreme

communication styles have little awareness. So I screamed
with exactly the same voice: "NO! Nobody insults your
mother!" but then I realized that if I said that, the other
side might feel alienated and one of my other goals, as well
as to bring awareness, is to support all possible sides. So
I then screamed with a very similar voice: "Nobody insults
OUR mothers!" looking very carefully at the second kid. My
screaming extremely loudly at this point had also stopped
them at least for a second 'cause they were shocked that I
screamed that loud.

I suddenly realized that if their mother as a figure had
come up she must be somehow important to the whole scene. So
I carried on screaming: "And if our mothers were here right
now, what would they say?" and the largest of the kids, who
had been insulted, hung his head and said very quietly: "go
home". I said: "Wow, we must have some pretty smart mother
here" and they both separated and went home.

Now, in both examples what I'm concentrating on doing is
bringing awareness to the different sides and supporting the
different sides but NOT to separate the kids in the first
place. Those kind of examples were incredible teachings for
me that in your very concentrating on the separation of the
kids you can end up not allowing the very necessary conflict
to happen and in fact escalating the conflict when it later
comes. There are many examples where teachers, pedagogues or

social workers separate the kids and you hear remarks like, "o.k. We separate for now but after school you're dead".

L: I get the impression that you reflect or analyze what you see before you intervene.

W: I know. You must remember I've been doing this for a long time and actually these days I'm constantly surprised by what I do. Basically I sit down for hours afterwards, "Jesus Christ, did I say that? Good heaven's why did I find myself saying that? What happened there, actually?" And then I analyze it. But at the time it happens I just do it. It's only afterwards that I realize that this habit of mine has become so much a habit that I do it before I even think about it. I also teach this stuff and when I'm teaching it, at first people are very slow, but then if they keep practicing they get a lot faster.
I follow whatever grabs my attention, and what grabbed my attention in the first example was this incredibly funny scene where there were about 30 or 40 people trying to separate two! I see this situation in the world a lot. There were a hundred countries trying to separate Albania and Serbia, you know. There are a hundred countries at the moment trying to separate Pakistan and India and I question whether that's always the most useful thing.

Let me give you one more example. Often I'm in situations where there is a completely uncontrollable situation (grins). I remember the situation of a bunch of Serbian kids going against a bunch of Albanian kids 20 or so kids going off at one another. So I simply said: "Oh God! Looks like the Albanians are really getting it here! What's going to happen next? Oh! Oh…Wow! Now the Serbs are getting it back, looks like there is revenge going on! Who's going to get it next?" and I kept this up, until at some point at least four or five of the kids started to laugh. That's also developing awareness. And at the point were they are laughing they have become no longer just fighting. More parts were involved than just the fight. At first there was just the fight. Two sides. Serbs and Albanians. But as soon as somebody could laugh about it there were at least three sides.

L: What are the limitations or the drawbacks of these interventions?

W: Well the limitations are my own limitations, which is a big thing. I can't always do it. I have limitations to my own awareness and my personal psychology doesn't allow me to take such a detached view in all situations. I may have been doing this for a while but I'm no expert at it. Besides I don't know of a drawback actually. I know that it's sometimes difficult in very mainstream settings. For

instance in a job I did for the juvenile court. I worked

with two boys and it turned into a dance and we ended up

barefoot. The very radicalness of this can in some

mainstream settings be complicated to explain as you can

probably imagine. But I don't think there is a drawback to

this work because if I had really taken care to all the

sides I would have taken care of the side of the juvenile

court as well but I've forgotten. I became so involved in

working with the two of the parts that I lost awareness of

another part, which is the whole legal system in which

mediation takes place.

L: Can you report a case a successful intervention in

relation to your goal of intervention?

W: I mentioned two examples and in both cases picked a fight

between fairly equally matched parties. It's also true that

in school playgrounds, in community and youth centers, you

sometimes see instances where a bully comes along, smashes a

smaller kid, steals his money and goes away. Brutal, you

know. My goal if I intervene in these situations is exactly

the same. I try to bring awareness rather than to try

stopping it instantly. For instance what I did last time I

saw that happening was that I screamed in pain. I started to

cry,"NO!!" (Screams very loud and long) exactly with the

loudness that corresponded to the brutality of the act. You

see the point is that in all cases one of the best ways to bring awareness to somebody's communication style is to equal it in some way, match it I would say. It's almost a neurosis of mine how much I do it (laughs).

Somebody that gets brutal like this bully - I cried according to the brutality of the act. That is often shocking for the people.

Now I show you what happened with the bully. He was walking away. Then he stops, looks at me, comes back a bit, walks away a bit. I'm still crying, he comes back a bit, walks away again, sees I'm still crying, comes back a bit and says, "OH WHAT'S WRONG!!??" (Both laugh) And I said "WELL, WHAT'S WRONG IS THAT YOU'RE JUST BEATING THE SHIT OUT OF SOMEBODY THAT IS HALF YOUR SIZE." "SO?" "SO?" (Here William makes a loud sound, the sound of crying in pain) and then we had a confrontation. The point is that the kid didn't just walk off. If somebody hadn't done this, that kid would just have walked away and split off that it was actually he that did this in some way. He is at least forced to confront that he's doing something that other people, me in this instance, are finding painful.

L: What did the kid do that was crying?

W: He smiled. He wasn't actually crying very much because for many boys, at least in Switzerland, crying is something

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you should not really do and other kids often humiliate you if you're seen to cry. So the very fact that I was actually crying, I actually did manage to produce a few tears, was a very big intervention in this system.

L: I imagine another intervention would have been to go up to the boy and ask him to give back the purse that he had taken from the other.

W: I'm sure. I do that too sometimes, but rarely if I don't know them. This one was fairly anonymous, you know. I didn't even imply that this other guy spoke German, you know. There was no language involved. I only found out he spoke German because he came over and spoke German to me.
I have lots of examples because this is my job. But generally speaking what they all have in common is that my goal is to somehow bring awareness to the various sides. And in fact, in this later example with the bully, I also intervened later when these two sides, the bully and the kid, would have their argument. I went to stand next to somebody who'd watch the whole thing and I said something like "scary, isn't it? I wouldn't wanna involve myself in that shit" to try and bring awareness also to the various sides that were around. There were many sides in this fight. There are always more than two.

L: Can you report a case of failure with an intervention in relation to your goal?

W: Sure. My failures are almost always where I just completely lose confidence or sight of my own goal. Very often in the last twenty years I have seen a fight and tried to be one of those people trying to pull the kids apart. Basically you can do it with brute force but it never resolves the conflict. It never helps the situation and it never or rarely helps to bring awareness and did rarely serve much purpose in the end, except that the kid wasn't injured at that moment.

Why did I do that? … Imagine yourself in a children's home setting and two kids are fighting. The consensus in this setting is that this should not be happening and must be stopped and the only way to stop it when it has gotten to a certain point is to just physically drag these kids apart. I find that's an enormous risk of personally being injured at that point. And I don't like risking my own life. The only times I've ever been injured in this work were when I tried it. But I have often done it because it's such a powerful group pressure on one to separate those kids. And the projection on me that I'm this wonder at sorting out violence. Sometimes I forget what I know and I just go in there and try and push them apart. I haven't often done this in the last years but I have in the past. Rarely successful,

it's embarrassing. Afterwards you just have to go and apologize to the kids and say, "Listen I just… wasn't…"

L: But what do you do after you pull them apart? Is the intervention over then?

W: In my paradigm the goal is to bring awareness. If something is no longer happening it's hard to bring awareness to what was happening.

L: Have you ever avoided intervening in a situation of physical violence?

W: Sure, often.

L: What held you back in doing so?

W: Laziness normally. Often my work is very demanding and there is a need for time off from my work. So I was on the tram a couple of months ago and something was happening with kids. A situation where I could have intervened so easily and so well and I just didn't 'cause I thought fuck you, I do this day in day out for the city, and it's no more fun. I need some time by myself. That's it for Switzerland.

In America I was phased a couple of times by the size of the
weapons they used. Not that there were guns being used, I'm
used to that, but in America you sometimes see machine guns
and that… just threw me into a complete hypnosis. I hadn't
seen things like that before. Not in the hands of kids.
First I thought I didn't know how to intervene although in
fact I did. The same techniques work.

I remember a shooting in Los Angeles where a girl screamed.
In her screaming she brought awareness to the fact that
there was somebody hurting or scared here as well as a
gunman. Most people if they do something really extreme like
stabbing or shooting or hitting extremely are in a state
where they have lost awareness completely. In order to do
these terrible things you have to lose awareness of the
other hurting part. And if you can somehow get through to
that part then there is more than one part around. That
normally gives choice. So this girl screams and stops a
gunman in his tracks. He turns around and drives away. She
was a very small girl and she comes up to me on the fourth
floor and I said, "How the hell did you know how to do
that?" And she said, "William that is what you were teaching
us for years". Mostly we don't scream in those moments we
normally scream afterwards.

L: Are there interventions that you would like to do if you
were free to do anything?

W: I would like to feel freer and I do work on being more free to do anything. I spend my whole time doing it. Learning how to be more free. So for instance, I notice that some years ago I wouldn't have been able to do that intervention with the two gangs. I was literally screaming with the same voice as the kids and was very aware that many of the adults around were judging me for that. These days I'm much freer to do interventions were others are judging me than I used to be! But I'm not as free as I would like to be.

L: So how would that change the interventions you do if you were even more free?

W: I'm not sure but they would probably be wilder in movement, less verbal, more physical and I would take more risks. The risks are not so much a risk of being hit, shot or stabbed. There are various codes by which one is expected to behave in Central Europe and the risks would be more about being able to step right outside this and do whatever. More freedom from mainstream expectations of behavior.

L: What holds you back from doing it?

W: What holds me back are the mainstream expectations and my OWN limitations. I keep coming back to that. My own limitations of feeling free or right. It's a good way to put it. I don't feel totally free in all situations. I notice that the freer I feel, by a million miles the more effective I am in these situations because I don't have to think: WHUP… what would my partner think, or my colleagues or the juvenile court or the schoolhouse… what will they think if I do this? When I just shouted before in the interview I was thinking, "what happens in the office just underneath?", you know, "fuck I shan't be any louder or they gonna come upstairs and say what's happening here?" These personal freedoms, you know. Hard to take.

L: What kind of support would you need to feel more free to intervene around physical violence?

W: I have found it's enormously helpful to have both, private therapy sessions and also supervision in doing this work. I do that regularly anyway. That is my support and it's very valuable. It helps me also if other people are free or find their own freedoms. That gives me a certain freedom in a society as inhibited as Central Europe.

L: Does the degree of personal relationship you have with teenagers involved in a fight influence the mode of your intervention?

W: Well, on one level very little. But it does affect the level at which I would intervene. If I knew somebody well and I knew that he was struggling with demons inside then I might make reference to those demons when I caught him fighting. If I didn't know that I might be more general in my intervention. I've worked with some kids for so long now, that they know me by certain phrases I use. So I can use these phrases and it'll immediately bring them out of where they are 'cause these are phrases that have been associated with working with me.

L: How do you intervene if you are physically attacked or threatened yourself?

W: Well, the answer on one level is, no differently from any other attack. Except I have a tendency to shit myself more. But I also try and bring awareness to all parts including myself. I'm one of those parts. Sometimes I just find it hard to bring awareness to me. I can give you an example of this working successfully and I can give you examples of it working unsuccessfully.

An example of it working successfully is this. I am in Leeds, Northern England, in a rougher working class area. An alcoholic, young guy with his head covered with scars from falling all over the place, grabs me by the neck to the extent that I can't breathe. Two inches from my face he says: "They fuckin' bastards aren't they?!" Now, I was studying martial arts at that point and I noticed my immediate temptation was to kick him well away 'cause I could have easily kicked him across the road. I was quite fit at that point. But I was also very interested in studying what was going on and caught myself with this inner dilemma. I consciously thought at this point, "how do you bring awareness to somebody who's got your throat?" So I tried to croak out a few words. He had said, "They're fucking bastards aren't they?!" and I said, "Yes! They're fucking bastards!" He was so amazed that he let go of my throat at least enough I could talk. Then I used the same voice as him, which was again this business about trying to bring awareness to the communication style, "Yes! They're fuckin' bastards! But WHY are they fuckin' bastards? I can't remember!" And he said: "Because they run away from you!" and he let go from me and staggered up to another woman at the bus stop who ran away from him. He looked at me from like 20 meters and said: "See?" And I said: "Maybe they're scared of you!" (Laughs) He just stood there completely silent, that was all.

I started a process, which in him that went on for several
years I can tell you 'cause I got to know the guy after some
years. I was the first person that had ever drawn attention
or brought awareness to the fact that he might be scaring
people in a way that this guy could hear 'cause I wasn't
judging him in the moment. I JUST simply gave it back to him
with the same kind of voice he used. And gave it back in his
language.

If I had kicked him, one possible outcome would have been
that I'd have kicked him so damn hard that he wouldn't have
known what he did and he'd never come near me again. Another
possibility is he'd have come back to me with a knife or
shot me from the other side of the street. But certainly the
conflict wouldn't have ended if I had used a violent
approach. And it wouldn't have brought awareness to the fact
that he was being violent 'cause for HIM he didn't know he
was being violent. He didn't know he was squeezing my neck
so hard that it hurt and I had to later explain that to him.
When he was drunk he had no sense of awareness whether this
was tight or loose or where it's appropriate to touch people
and where not so appropriate. He had lost all that.

An example where I failed was a long time ago when I was in
charge of a big party. There were about two hundred people
dancing in a hall and a man came who I knew was the pimp of
some of the women that were in the hall. I knew they didn't
want him to be there and I knew there was going to be one

hell of a big trouble if he found out they were there. I just simply stood in his way and pushed him. Then he went berserk on me. I didn't really handle that well at all. I mean I left him no option but to have a power fight with me. Of course he won. I was being an asshole and I was using rank. Social rank. He's black, I'm white. The society looks down on pimps generally… I was just being an asshole.

The interesting thing about the work that I do is that I am not attacked very often because I do what I do. I think what I do is actually self-defensive. I'm not trying to sound blasé but it's because I'm prepared to beat myself up before the other people do it for me. I approach a situation as not necessarily being better than the people who are fighting. I've been there myself. I'm in less danger than many people. The first situation I mentioned where everybody is trying to pull two kids apart. The people who are trying to pull them apart are actually in danger. But the very work I was doing meant that I wasn't attacked.

Actually I do that partly out of self-defense 'cause I'm a coward.

L: We're at the end of the interview. Do you still want to add something to all you said?

W: Yes, I wanted to come back to question one. I must have sounded like a cold bastard. It's not that I'm not

interested in the fighting stopping. I don't like people

getting hurt. I want to live in a world where people don't

have to get the shit beaten out of them. I am interested in

what's the most effective way of stopping them. I also

started off thinking of situations of more or less equal

groups. But, you see, there are other situations in which

kids are being attacked for instance because they are black

or they are gay or because they're small or because they're

disabled or because they're Albanians or because whatever.

Any hated group. And I don't like that happening and I want

that to stop. And to bring in awareness may be very

effective and very fast in these situations. Also I'm not so

much interested in whether kids fight or not but in how far

they're stuck in a role of being the fighter or the

disturber and to bring awareness to these kids that there

are different roles around sometimes gives them freedom.

Interview with Wilfried

Wilfried is 19 years old and comes from Columbia. He came to Switzerland four years ago because his mother married a Swiss man. He said that he got used to living in Switzerland. He was the first teenager that I interviewed. For the teenagers this was the most difficult interview for me to conduct. Although the atmosphere between him and me was very good, Wilfried is a rather shy person who does not talk that much.

The interview was conducted March 2000 in Zurich outside of the sport halls where Midnight Basketball takes place Saturday nights. I asked him the Saturday before, if he was experienced in physical fights and if he would be into being interviewed. He told me he was. It turned out that he had some experience in physical fighting but was obviously not the "bad guy" concerning physical violence that I thought he was. That was a learning for me about stereotypes and violence. Based on his appearance, which is close to my stereotypical idea of a violent teenager, and the center role he had among his friends I had assumed that he was heavily into violence.

L: Tell me about a fight that you recently were part of.

W: I was once here at Midnight Basketball with a friend. And then, while playing, someone told a friend of mine that he should go fuck his mother because he didn't pass the ball. He said that to him in his mother tongue. But we understood it. Then my friend said, "Do that yourself!" and it was finished for the moment. When Midnight Basketball was over, we were about 20 friends who said goodbye. At the end there were only the four of us. We walked along the street. All of a sudden someone grabbed my friend from behind, pulled him back and said, "What did you say again about my mother?" and my friend very calmly answered, "Well you told me I should go fuck my mother so I said: Do that yourself. That's what I understood." Then a friend of the other came in and said, "What do you want? Do you want to fight?" Then he replied, "Well, let's better go home and leave the shit." But all of a sudden a lot of them came. There were about 16 against four, you know. Then I said, "That's not fair let's make one against one" (laughs) because in my country we do it like that, you know. Instead of having a fight with 12 against four or something it's better to make one against one. So my friend went, "o.k. one against one" but he remained standing there, turned totally red and nervous, you know. The other was rather fat, and he then just hit. Others wanted to get involved but me and my friend jumped in, "one against one or what?" At the end another one of my friends came, an Albanian, and he talked with them. He knew them. He

said, "Let that bullshit be, that's also a friend of mine."
Yeah, after that we all went home and one said "if I catch
you alone then you'll get it." When we went home after, my
friend was rather angry and he needed to do something, so he
hit a garbage can. The next day a friend called. Then we
went to the house of the other and told him if he does
something again, he's going to get it. And then nothing
happened anymore.

L: Do you remember a fight where you fought?

W: Yes. Sure. That was once in school. Well, I was playing
with a friend of mine in the school room and all of a sudden
there was someone else there with whom I didn't talk,
because, how can I say, they were guys you don't want to be
with. They take everything serious, you know, they bullshit
and if you say something they feel insulted.
I was with my friend and one of those guys began to insult
me. He told my sister in my language "can I come after you?"
He thought that my sister had said something against him.
When he wanted to say something to her I insulted him. He
came up to me, "What do you want?" I said, "Let be". He came
back, "Do you want to get hit?" Then we went into the sports
hall for the sports class and there he began. Then I hit him
once, and then we began to fight. You don't think about
anything doing that, you know, we hit one another. It went

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pretty fast and after two minutes two other friends

separated us. When school was out, friends of his came up to

me and told me, "If you touch him once again you'll get it".

L: How do you feel about it?

W: It happened. It's already over, isn't it?

L: How did you feel in your body after that fight?

W: With me it's always like that: After a fight I tremble a

little. Doesn't matter if I win or lose. I tremble somehow.

But that goes away after five minutes. In that moment I

don't think about anything, you know. I only see that I

tremble, almost with every fight. I have no idea why it is

like that. Well, with other friends, I saw how they fought.

That doesn't happen, you know. Others turn red, totally red,

others go somewhere in a corner or want to be left alone.

But until now I haven't seen somebody who trembled like that

after.

L: How do you think the guy you fought with felt like?

W: Just like me. In a given moment he felt exactly as I

felt. He wanted to simply hit and get nothing. Not getting

anything, not receiving one. You are just nervous, you know.
You only think about hitting, that's all. Nothing else. You
don't hear anything. If someone other… you don't hear it.

L: If you start a fight, what is your goal?

W: If I were to start a fight: to finish the guy. But just
so you know, that was never the case up to now. Until now I
never started a fight. But if it would come to that point
then it would be to first finish the other.

L: Under what circumstances would you start a fight?

W: If the other would hit my friends or my family. If he
does something bad to me. If he would insult my mother. I
think that are the reasons. At that moment I am totally
angry. Then I want to finish him I want to see him on the
ground at the end or that he can't do anything anymore. That
he doesn't do it again.

L: What is your goal if you go into a fight with someone
like in the sports hall?

W: I don't let myself being hit. I want to stop the guy or
to prove him that I'm not some coward that lets himself

being hit, because otherwise this guy would continue hitting you or something like that. You have to set these guys a boundary otherwise they continue and everything's worse. You fight, you watch out that you don't get a fist or kick and that the other gets a lot of fists (grins) but that doesn't always work like that. There are stronger ones. There is always someone who's stronger than you. And then you get it. You can't do anything anymore, you know. Then you're finished. Either on the floor or you can't move anymore or something. You can't defend yourself anymore.

L: Does the other stop if he sees that he has won?

W: Not always. They don't always stop. Sometimes someone comes in and says, "Stop it now".

L: Did you ever get involved in a fight while a youth worker or a teacher was around?

W: No.

L: Did anyone ever come in from the outside when you were fighting?

W: Yeah, at Midnight Basketball for example. People that I didn't even know came all of a sudden, you know. It was friends of my opponent. All of a sudden there were people coming from other countries, Philippines, Turkey…. I don't know where they all come from, you know.

Or, the scene in the sports hall. My friends came in and one grabbed me, the other grabbed the other and apart, you know. They said, "it's over now with that!"

The other went to the mirror after to check whether I hit him. After I changed clothes. I went up to participate in the sports lesson and about a quarter hour later he came up as well and did the sports lesson. The teacher saw it said, "Never do it again". He didn't see anything just, "don't do that".

L: What do you think about your friends stepping in like that?

W: Well, that's good. Otherwise we would continue until the other pulls out something. A weapon or something and then someone gets injured. That would be even worse. I think it's great that they separated us.

L: Did it have an influence that those were your friends or could that have been anybody?

W: It was good that it were my friends but that could also have been somebody else. For instance, if there would be a fight in the streets, it could also be that somebody would pass by and separate us and that would be positive.

L: If you were the youth worker to lead Midnight Basketball and in the middle of doing so there was a fight between two participants. What would you do?

W: Separate the two of them. I would go into the fighting where they are and then hold the one and say, "now it's over with that". If it doesn't work I might call a friend of mine who is working together with me there and then I think it would work. In the worst case I would call the police. When I have them apart I would ask them why they started and try to solve the problem. Not that they continue after on the street or something.

L: If you see a fight happening somewhere in the streets. What would you do to stop it?

W: I can't say that I would try to stop them if it is people that I don't know. Then it could come out bad. Then they could probably think that I want to participate and then the worst fight could develop. If I see a fight on the street

and it's with weapons I alarm the police. If it's anything
else like fists and stuff, then they can continue. At some
point they will stop, you know. At some point somebody will
separate them. Friends or something. Just with fists is not
so tragic.

L: What do you like about fighting or hitting?

W: You can free your energies. If you're under stress
somehow, in school or at work or at home… in the end you
can just let it all out. You free yourself for a short
moment of the stress and stuff. You see, if I for instance
hit and the other lies on the floor then I see that my fist
has an effect. And then I feel somehow better.

L: What don't you like about fighting?

W: If somebody takes out a weapon, you don't like that.
Something really bad is coming then. If somebody takes out a
pistol… then you are powerless. Either you get it or you're
away fast then. That's bad.
If I get injured a lot when fighting or if somebody, for
example a brother of mine, would get hit, you don't like
that either.

Interview with Jack

Jack is 16 years old, very tall and strong. His country of origin is Yugoslavia. He is from Kosovo. Jack has been involved in a lot of fights and trouble because of it. He is a leader among the kids in his neighborhood and works as a coach at Midnight Basketball. The interview took place in March 2000 at a wine shop where Jack was working at the time.

L: Tell me about a fight that you were recently involved in and how that happened.

J: Well, I was sledging with the whole school. All pupils of the third high school where there. A class of boys cursed two friends of mine and threw snowballs at them, they were looking for trouble. At the end of the cable railway my friend came up to me and told me, "Listen up, they're fucking with me". Then I said, "Well, easy let's go and ask them what's the problem". So we went up to them and my friend said, "Hey, what problem you have that you come against me?" The other didn't answer his question and tried to walk on. So my friend said it again and pushed him while doing so, "What do you have against me? What did I do to you?" Suddenly the other let go of his sledge and started to hit my friend. Half of the school came running

up there after. I didn't want them to hit as well, so I took them apart. Then the one who attacked my friend hit me in the face with his fist. I said to myself, "Well, c'mon this fist doesn't matter." I went in a second time to separate them when I had his fist in my face again but this time harder. Then I didn't hesitate. I hit him twice in the stomach and twice on the head. Side effects of his were broken skull, broken nose bone and a heavy concussion.

L: What happened to you while this fight was on? How did you feel?

J: I became stressed right away. It was weird because I have to be aware in school that I don't drop out, you know. But exactly on that day when the teacher told me, "Jack, watch out – don't fight" there had to begin a fight. And that was a fucked up feeling because I didn't go into the fight with the agenda to beat this guy up but to take them apart. But now I'm just the one, they say, who just went in to hit. I have been reported to the police now. I was at the criminal investigation department already. I was invited one week ago and youth prosecuting department is going to send me a letter now they told me.

L: How do you feel about it?

J: Well, when I hit I thought it was fucked up because I knew I'm going to hurt him. It's not a beautiful feeling. When he had the fist on the head I felt something breaks here. After I took some distance I saw how he bled. The whole face started to bleed. And that is not…. No good feeling, you know. Other people describe it's an exciting feeling but it's just bullshit what they say. With every fight I don't feel good except the other sets it off or they are more or older.

L: But did the one you have just talked about deserve it?

J: He did. He was searching it and he didn't want to understand that he could be getting it. But he did it nevertheless. Maybe he thought I wouldn't hit but I did it and he for sure doesn't do it again. I don't think it's the last time for me that it happened.

L: I am interested again in the feeling you have when you are in a fight. How does it feel in your body?

J: Goose bumps! It's a kind of goose bumps. It's a tickling in the hands. Yeah, and it's so unprepared. You don't have that feeling always. It's like if you would have played lottery and the first four numbers are right already. With a fight you don't know what's going to come,

whether you'll do the right or the wrong thing. That's the problem.

L: How does the body feel when the fight is over?

J: Well, if I won and the other lost then it's the feeling like you had all the six right. You still simply have your heart trembling. Very trembling. You are still in a panic somehow. But I'm not addicted to that. I don't search for trouble just… where there's trouble I have to be around, I have to get in and I'm pissed off with that.
But if you lose in a fight then I'd have the feeling I get my friends. I only lost a fight once and all I thought, "I'm going to take revenge."

L: What do you think, how did your opponent feel?

J: Oh, shit. That's bullshit what happened (smiles). That took anyway just five to six seconds with the fists. For sure in that moment where I hit he realized that he's wrong. He only for sure realized it there because he received a couple on the head. I think he thought that he's the boss. Understand? He thought I am strong they can't beat me up. When he got it he realized that he wasn't. There are people I don't even have to argue with just because they see me. They know, over. For instance

here in Seebach [part of Zurich where the wine shop is] I
got to know people here already. It has already begun. I
found good buddies (laughs) in a week…

L: What is your goal when you start a fight?

J: It depends exactly what fight it is. If, for instance,
once again I'm not the one to blame, my goal is to either
get out of it. If I can't go away anymore then I also have
to hit. Then either he's damaged or I'm damaged…

L: So the goal is to damage the opponent when you begin?

J: Yeah. If he's beginning that already you don't just
simply give the fist and the other hits you with the
baseball bat. You damage him until he gives up. Until he
doesn't come anymore. They stop automatically. You don't
even have to think about that. They know if they can't
anymore.
If I am already fighting then I have to watch out that
nothing happens to me but to him until he doesn't come
anymore. It's important to make it clear to him that I am
the boss. He will understand that quickly.

L: In what situations do you start a fight?

J: If someone harasses my girlfriend I become very sour. Also if somehow someone feels strong in a group of five, six persons, screams around in the city. You walk by; push him a little and they come already. I wouldn't even discuss. I would just hit them. I did already hit eight persons at once. And older ones than me. You need to somehow set a certain boundary once, you know. Because at one point there is something happening, a knife pulled out or pepper spray.

L: Can you say more about that boundary I haven't fully understood it yet?

J: Look, for instance, if you're strong you know you are strong. I am 1,90 meters tall, 95 kilos heavy and got quite some power when hitting, you know. If you know you are that strong then you need to know exactly when you should use it and be careful when you use it. For instance, in this fight where we were sledging in the ski region… that was completely wrong. I hit much too hard. If lose it in a fight you just don't know how hard you hit. You just simply hit and if you lose it even more, you also hit with the legs. But I hardly do that.

L: Aha. So you have to set a boundary towards yourself?

J: Yeah, I have to be careful about what I'm doing. I also have to watch with whom I'm arguing. If this guy knows too many people I have to watch out. On the other hand if the other really wants it and the argument is on I could organize quite a lot of people like a demonstration (hundreds). I can get people.

L: Did you ever get involved in a fight with a youth worker present?

J: Yeah. At Midnight Basketball against that Black one that was there. I cursed him and everything and he felt so much as a hip-hoper that he said, "motherfucker" in English and I hate that, if someone says to me "fuck your mother." I cursed him, "shit nigger" but you know how many Dominicans are there. They didn't feel insulted. Never, because they knew I only meant him.

L: And what did the youth workers in this situation do?

J: They held me. Everything was fixed. I couldn't move anymore (both laugh). Well, I pulled them with me but I was also tired at one in the morning. If that had been at six in the evening they would never have been able to hold me. But it felt good somehow because something would have happened. He had a nightstick with him, one of the

military of the early times that you have around the joint
of the hand and then it opens (indicates the size). It's
out of metal and hurts quite a bit. That's also why he had
a certain pride. Just because of the nightstick that he
had otherwise he wouldn't have dared. But he would have
only hit me once and then I would have had it in my hands
from him. That wouldn't have been good. Had the youth
workers not held me I would have gone in hit. So that
protected him. He would be in the hospital. And for me
that would have sucked because on that day I was just
talking to X. [leader of Midnight Basketball] about
becoming a coach. That was fucked up that I just got right
in there, you know. What kind of impression does X. have
of me? Also the others who were there. But thankfully it
wasn't that bad.

L: When you were hanging in there didn't you get angry
with the youth workers who held you?

J: No. Angry, no. In that moment where I was still very
angry I was upset that they held me but I knew it's good
that they held me.

L: Does that have an influence whether you know the youth
workers who hold you or if you don't know them?

J: That doesn't matter.

L: Did it happen that people who were around you intervened while you were involved in a fight?

J: That did happen on the Josefswiese [park in Zurich]. I was 13 and was fighting with a 14-year-old. His 18-year-old bigger brother came and started to hit me. Then a friend of my brother stepped in and grabbed the big brother of the other and said, "what do you want?" The other was still provocative towards him so my friend who is a kick boxer kicked him with the leg somewhere on the shoulder. The other defended himself and more Albanians came to help my friend. It was three or four. They beat him up but not that bad. Blue eye he had and a couple of pains on the leg and stuff. I was still young there and I felt a little proud that I have friends.
I don't have fights in my neighborhood often. When I am in Kreis 5 [his neighborhood] every kid knows who I am. I know almost everybody. As soon as I go out of my hood I get into fights more often. People don't know me.

L: Did it ever happen that someone intervened into a fight and wanted to make peace?

J: That happened often. It was more bigger and stronger adult people that I know. They grabbed me, grabbed the other, took us apart and said either, "go home" or, "you don't fight anymore." But those were adult people over 30 or something. The ones who are under 20 would have fought (laughs).

L: How did you feel about that?

J: Shit, fuck it, I go home then…

L: They didn't try to discuss with you?

J: No, not at all. They knew that anyway nothing's going to happen if we would make peace. If I argue with someone I don't make peace so quick. That happens only after a year or something (grins) when that gets forgotten. But I don't forget that so quickly.

L: Let's take Midnight Basketball. Say, you were leading Midnight Basketball and in the middle of doing so two participants start a fight. What would you do?

J: Take them apart. I always do that. I step between them, grab one and pull him away. Doesn't matter which one. Then we're talking with one another. Whatever he did, I don't

care. I ask what happened. Then I take the second out and place him next to the other. I talk with them and if they're not ready to make peace I tell them, "you simply don't come here to play anymore."

L: Oh! You want them to make peace but you don't make peace for a year?

J: Yeah, I don't. Well, I have to do something that they make peace. They have to play with one another, understand? They play basketball together. And the ones I have problems with I hardly ever got something to do with them. I don't argue with friends. They play together. They're also friends and either they don't come anymore or they make peace. The last time I did it the two guys involved made peace. They don't talk that much with one another but there's no problem anymore.

L: Would you then in turn make peace, as a player again, if you had a fight with someone, and the youth worker would tell you "So, now you make peace otherwise you won't come anymore"?

J: I wouldn't make peace. I would look for him in the streets afterwards. With the guy I talked about earlier, I

would have probably made peace in order to be able to still come and play, but I would have looked for him.

L: Aha. But in your position as leader, when you have responsibility, you do something completely different than if you're not responsible?

J: Yeah. I am standing there as a role model and many know that. If I make bullshit what kind of a coach am I? If they see that I fight then they say, "Well, then we're also allowed to fight." That's why I have to take care. There are two worlds. If you have responsibility that's different than if you don't have responsibility.

L: If you see a fight somewhere what would you do to stop it?

J: If it's a fight between two guys, it's not difficult. I would do the same thing as I described before. But it depends on who you are whether you can do it. If somebody goes up to them who never had a fight he will have trouble if he goes on the soft tour, "He! C'mon… please stop it…" or something. Nobody's going to stop like that! But if someone goes in and takes them apart who fought himself or is the fight-guy-character, he can resolve conflicts

because he knows how he has to do it, other than someone who doesn't know about fighting.

Let's take two persons, a painter and someone who doesn't know about painting. Who can paint the house better, the painter or the one who doesn't know how to paint?

If it's a group then it's more difficult. If you're lucky and they haven't yet begun then I can still do it. I address everybody about it. I scream at them that they're assholes and everything! A situation like that happened where I knew both groups. That's why I could scream at them. It was close to a youth club. The majority of the one group was Albanians, the other group Italians, Swiss, Croatian, Bosnian… a couple of nationalities. They stood opposite one another. Not yet a fight. I just wanted to swing by the youth club and I always walk that way where they stood. From the distance I thought they were doing something. After I realized they were just about to begin fighting so I went in between. At first they didn't even notice me. Then one runs into the other group - I take him away. Then a couple of this group thought that I am from the other group. After comes one of the group that they thought I was siding with. Then I also held this other one so they noticed I am not with them. Then I began screaming, first to the Albanians, "Typically Albanians! Assholes you are! Because of you we're in trouble" (grins) Afterwards it's again all about the Albanians, you know

how it is. And to the others I screamed, "Are you stupid?
First, if the others will call people they will be a
little more than you!" They would have made a mistake. So
I screamed at them as well and after they split up. They
were annoyed. I knew both sides, that's why I went in. I
was pissed off that two sides, both friends were going
against each other.

L: What if the fight is already on between the groups?

J: Five minutes from here, there was a fight between eight
or nine Philippines against an Albanian. The Albanian held
two or three at once. Philippines are not the biggest ones
here. But the others ran against him. I had to go hold the
others but I can't hold six at once, you know. I tried to
hold them and then one of the Philippines hit the Albanian
right onto the nose. He started to bleed instantly. Before
my friend was able to begin, one of the Philippines pulled
a gun and pointed it at him. I was a little scared but I
stood in front of him, took the gun away and threw it in
the nearby stream. I also hit a Philippine then. After the
Albanian left, I went inside the party. Half an hour later
there were around 100 to 120 Albanians waiting outside the
party. The one who left gathered them in Oerlikon and I
know all of them. Each of them knows 20 more which means

that there can be around 1000 of them. It looks like a demonstration with Albanians.

L: But you went in there. You wanted to take them apart, you didn't want to…

J: Yeah, I was the doorman there. That's why I couldn't really hit. Otherwise I would have helped the Albanian because I grew up with him since I was eight. But as doorman I already had a certain responsibility. A friend of mine organized this party.

L: What do you like about fighting?

J: Nothing at all. Except that if you win you're just the boss. They won't come back unless they come with friends. But to let off steam I go to American Football. There you bump into someone, he goes to the ground and you have to demonstrate condition and you exercise your body. It's another feeling, you know, it's also a sports discipline and not a fight. The opponent who throws me on the ground: I don't hate him.
I often get involved in fights but I don't like fighting. My friends are not as big as me, understand? And they always involve me. They feel safe when I am with them, understand? It's the way I look. My experience is that

it's all just built on my body. I am that tall, I am that strong, that's why. I noticed my friends are assholes because they put me through all this bullshit. I am reported, I have to go to see the cops again later today, understand? All the fights I've had so far where something happened - always my friends are to blame. They always felt so secure next to me although that's not true. There are also people who are provoking me on purpose.

L: What don't you like about fighting?

J: That I have to destroy somebody. Because once I am in it I can't get out so easily again, except I notice, "Over, go away, take distance."

L: And how or when do you notice that?

J: If the other is beaten. For instance the one I hit four times – I noticed he only still stood there but he wasn't able to move anymore. I stopped and he passed out. He has been in the hospital for one and a half weeks and is still lying in bed. Actually I don't even want to injure somebody but I always get in there.

Interview with Ali

Ali is 16 years old. His country of origin is Bosnia. He came to Switzerland as a refugee of the Yugoslavian war at the age of eight. He is a central figure at Midnight Basketball. He has been around ever since we started and also got involved in organizing a tournament. When he was younger he had physical fights regularly. Today he's not getting involved directly into physical fighting anymore but is around it a lot as it happens.

The interview took place in a friendly atmosphere at my apartment. Ali was a little bit shy in the beginning but opened up more and more in the course of the interview.

L: Tell me about a fight that you were recently involved in.

A: A friend of mine had a problem with Blacks. They provoked him and stuff. He's not the kind of guy that lets that happen to him. He just goes up and hits them while I am the kind of guy who holds them back and says, "not now" and stuff. So my friend got provoked. We were playing basketball and he's no professional, you know. The others thought that they are hip looking because they're Black.

They are the hippest and can play and they provoked with
language, talking American English. So they tell us things
we can still understand. They also provoke with looking,
eye contact. They put you down. So my friend gives it back
to them, also with language. Then I went up to him and
said, "Not now. You don't have to proof that you're
stronger, that doesn't matter." The others were about five
or six but they wouldn't have had a chance against him.
Also a couple of other friends of ours were behind me but
it was only me that went up to him and did something. The
others were just behind and watched. Then I say, "Better
leave them alone, you can get 'em next time." And that was
it. The others did not go after him; they were also a
little scared because others were behind us.

L: How do you feel about that?

A: I feel proud that I talked to him and held him out of
this fight. For me that is good. I find this situation
stupid, very stupid. They are not better. I mean, I don't
know what to say to that! That's not necessary at all.

L: What do you think how did the ones feel that provoked?

A: They felt as if they are the winners. They thought that
they're the strongest. Macho like. "Fuck off" and "yeah",

"motherfucker" and bullshit like that. And I like "Stay
cool we'll get them later. Later, but not now. We can get
them sometimes and beat 'em up." But now we became friends
with them. I went to play basketball alone and they knew
that I was there and I thought that I would now be getting
it. Then I played a game and I went playing the next day
too. They were there too and in about a week we became
like friends. Buddies. And now we know each other longer
and everything's all right there. Everything's set.
They're now also friends with this friend of mine who
almost got into a fight with them.

L: You said the others felt like winners after the first
confrontation. How was your friend doing with that?

A: Well, he wanted to go in there but I said, "No, no.
Let's play basketball" and after we went playing on. You
have to motivate him to play basketball. "Let's go play
on, forget them!"

L: What is your goal when you start a fight yourself?

A: My goal is that he doesn't stress me anymore and, most
of all, if he provokes me that he feels that I just finish
him. Then he doesn't go on with what he started with. He
stops and we're friends again. It's always like that with

boys. With girls it's very different. If they have

problems they have problems longer than we do. A month or

so. We are fighting but the next day or the day after

we're normal again: buddies.

I am never the first one to hit, I would never do that.

But if he provokes me then I would wait until he begins.

First they want to finish you with words but that doesn't

work with me. I also finish them. I can talk too. I wait

until he hits me. Then I hit back. Two, three times. Then

I look if he wants to go on and if he wants to go on, you

hit him again. But nothing else. You always have to wait

and to stay calm, not letting yourself be stirred up to

much. Then he maybe notices, "what was that for?" –

nothing. Then he thinks, "He was right, what is fighting

good for?"

L: How is the feeling in your body when you fight?

A: You tremble a little; your heart goes "ZZZZZZZZ". It

begins inside. You're scared a little; you don't know how

strong he is. That's it. You can't describe the feeling.

That's before it begins. When it begins it feels good

again. You don't know what's going to happen. You're

scared a little until you've checked it out. When the

fight is over it comes again. The same as in the beginning

a little like "Ah", good luck I finished him. This feeling lasts for 10 or 20 minutes.

L: Were you ever involved in a fight where there were youth workers around?

A: No, and I also wouldn't do that.

L: Did you ever observe situations like that?

A: Yeah, often. It looks stupid. After the adults say, "Yeah these children. The kids keep getting worse and worse. They always fight" and stuff.
I remember something happening with my teacher involved when we were in the class vacation. A couple of people and another one started to argue and then to fight. Then the teacher, who also took his wife with him, came in to take them apart. He stepped in, "Now stop it!" and stuff. Really loud. But they continued and also hit the teacher. Then the teacher lost it. He gave one a slap on the cheek. After that one threw a slipper at the teacher and stuff, it was bad. It was so embarrassing. The guy who got the slap quickly sat down, got up again and went on. They went on against each other and still hit the teacher in between. He became more and more angry but couldn't stop them. All that together was so embarrassing, I tell you.

It was good that the teacher wanted to take them apart but he couldn't make it. Sometimes it helps if the teacher or a man or somebody comes in between the people and, for example, holds them back. That's good. But at the end he sometimes also gets it.

L: Do you have the feeling that it matters whether the people who come in know the people who fight?

A: It doesn't matter shit. If he's a buddy they also beat him up. They don't get anything in this situation. They say, "go away" and push him too, you know.
But you should also be courageous and stop these two. Two or three people at once, "Are you nuts, stop it now!". One holds one on the spot, the other pulls the other away and one in the middle.

L: Did it ever happen that somebody intervened in a fight that you were having?

A: When I was fighting they said, "Come-on, hit him!" and stuff. They screamed and I said "shut up!" But they screamed, "Finish him, hit him!" and I said, "No. For sure not." They could scream for me the whole day I didn't react. They heated up the scene. Like blood sport (laughs).

L: How did you feel about that?

A: "Shut up now!" At the end they said, "Finished so quickly?" They would have liked more.

L: Did it never happen that somebody came in when you were fighting and said, "Stop it now!"?

A: Yeah, it did. A couple of times. Then I stopped right away. But the other sometimes wanted to continue. Then the one who held me back went to him and said, "stop it too" and stuff, "come against me instead of him!" And I liked it that they held me back.

L: When people from the outside come in, do you think it matters whether they know you personally or not?

A: Well, if they wouldn't know me they wouldn't come in to hold me back. They would just let us do it – that's something completely different. Friends hold you back. If I'm fighting, for example, at Central [spot in Zurich], no one knows me there. No one would come in to stop it. They would simply watch and say, "Ha, fuckin' cool!" But whether I know the guys watching or not doesn't matter. If somebody came in that would be good. It would also be good for my opponent if they held him back.

But I would never start a fight where I don't know anybody. Only if somebody attacked me I would try to defend myself. Everybody would defend himself if somebody attacks, right?

L: If you were to lead Midnight Basketball and while doing so a fight breaks out between two kids who are playing or watching: what would you do if you were responsible?

A: Well, to go in between the two, I don't know how to say it, with the hands something like that (moves his hands) and then say loud, "It's over now!" and "If you continue like that there's no more Midnight for you anymore!" or something like that. Then I would talk with the two of them outside and listen what they exactly say. Check out whether they calm down and make peace.

L: If it didn't work and they started hitting you like your teacher?

A: I can't imagine that they'd hit me. It was a little stupid there with my teacher. How could they do that? I didn't understand. But if it happened to me… I don't know either what I would do there. For sure not hitting myself. What for? I am older, you know. I became the leader.

L: Now if you see a fight somewhere in the streets, what would you do if you wanted to stop it?

A: First I would look if I know them. If I wouldn't know them I wouldn't go in because it's also dangerous. If I hold 'em back maybe both of them come against me or they say, "Hey, who are you". So I'd watch from the outside and if it were friends I would immediately step in, "stop it" and stuff.

L: What do you like about fighting?

A: I often watch TV. Karate movies. I have my own videos at home and I always watch movies. When if I'm fighting I try to do such things like in those movies. It's fun to just try it out. I think I could imagine doing something like Kung fu but I don't even know where there is something like that. I would like to go to China to observe the old Shaolin. I would love to do that. If you know how to fight you don't need to prove it. The ones who know how to do it they don't show it. The ones who don't know how to do it they show it.

L: So you did things like that in fights, tried hits that you've seen?

A: Yeah, to hit somewhere where there are nerves or something. That's what I'm learning these days: the nervous system. Where you hit and you can't move the arm anymore. I've seen that on TV. I would really love to learn that. Not for showing off, just that I know how to do it.

L: What don't you like about fighting?

A: I don't like to hit someone who doesn't deserve it. I don't like it neither if he deserves it. What did I reach in doing so? Almost nothing. I beat him up, over. He will come back at some point and start again. What is it good for?

Also my hand hurts after I hit him. Or I hit myself, which happens sometimes, knee against knee for example.

I also don't like it if others heat me up like, "Hey, come-on!" I only fight to defend myself. But in the end fighting is good for nothing.

ANALYSIS I: INTERVENTIONS MENTIONED IN THE INTERVIEWS

I filtered the interventions in physically violent situations out of the interviews with the teenagers and youth workers. All of them have the common goal of stopping the violence in one way or another. They came up either explicitly or implicitly in the content of what the interviewees said. I categorized them into three major categories and further subcategories. What follows is an index, to help the reader get an overview of the interventions mentioned.

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>> Stepping in between
>> Holding back
>> Combinations of stepping in between and holding back
> Threatening / Counter Violence
>> Enforcing rules
>> Banning the fighters from territory
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Stopping the Physical Violence by Verbally Communicating with the People Directly Involved in the Incident

> Proposing Alternatives
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Stopping the Physical Violence by Intervening in and Interacting with the Larger System in which the Physical Violence is Occurring

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Stopping the Physical Violence by Using Power and Rank to Overpower the People Directly Involved in the Incident

There are different kinds of rank (for detailed information see page 153). The role of the one who intervenes has a certain rank per se. It is not everybody's cup of tea to intervene at all. Besides the rank that goes along with the intervening itself, many youth workers in open group settings have "structural" rank.

There are also different kinds of power. In this context power refers to physical strength. All the interventions described below, refer to situations where the rank and/or the physical power of the interveners is

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used to directly intervene in the fight in an overpowering manner. The fighters have to stop because they are not strong enough to fight off the interveners. Their power is being subdued.

Physical Interventions

This category was talked about the most, throughout the interviews. At least within the given frame of physical violence among teenagers in open group settings, intervening is very often linked to physically intervening.

It also becomes clear in the interviews that this involves a potential risk of injury for the interveners. Before they step in, it is important to assess the situation (Rick:56) and to know the people who are fighting (Wilfried:93 and Ali:119). If the interveners do not know them, they are themselves at risk of being mistaken for wanting to participate in the fight and the fighters might side against them.

To intervene physically demands a certain authority and determination. Ali (115-116) mentions a situation where his teacher unsuccessfully tried to step in between

two teenage fighters and the embarrassment he felt when he saw his teacher's intervention fail.

Stepping in between As stated in the interviews the most common intervention to stop physical violence is to physically step in between the fighting parties, pushing them apart if necessary and to say or scream something like "Stop it". The chronology can also go the other way around: first approach the scene and scream "Stop it", then step in.

Holding back Another very popular intervention is to hold back at least one of the fighters. In most of the cases this is an intervention that requires teamwork either among the youth workers, teenagers or both.

The teenagers as well as the youth workers talk about teenagers themselves intervening, holding back the fighters and calming them down as being something that often happens. This is especially so if the teenage interveners and fighters belong to the same group as each other.

There are also hints in the interviews that the teenager exploding somehow likes to be held back. It helps on a rational level, "it felt good somehow because

something would have happened" (Jack:101) and sometimes on a physical level. Jeannette gives an example of how a kid's attitude changed from anger and physical aggression, to breaking down and crying, when being held back for a while (38). Also she talks about how good it felt for participants in a workshop for youth workers to play the role of attacking their opponent physically and to be held back by their colleagues (40-41). To sufficiently de-escalate a conflict that the violence stops, seems to involve holding back the fighters for a certain time – long enough for the aggressor to calm down. The length of time they are held is then another factor in the potential success of this intervention.

Combinations of stepping in between and holding back

Many combinations of stepping in between and holding back are reported by the interviewees: stepping in and holding one side, holding both sides back and stepping in between (requires at least three interveners), pulling one of the fighters away, grabbing both fighting parties and pulling them apart.

Threatening / Counter Violence

The threat of counter violence is often applied as an attempt to stop violence in many settings around the

world. This can be seen in international politics through diplomacy, war, economic embargoes etc. and involves the following elements: An authority position takes charge of the situation, by threatening consequences, after "non-repressive" approaches have failed and tries, to enforce rules that the trouble makers stick to. If that does not work, the authority position tries to force the trouble makers to stick to the rules in applying "counter violence", putting the threats into effect. If that still does not force the trouble makers to stick to the rules, they are isolated, banned from a community that they depend on.

Because this pattern is so popular, it is no surprise that it is also applied in intervening with physical violence involving teenagers. The elements of this collective pattern come up often in the interviews (see below).

Enforcing rules The interveners appear as the authority in charge who enforce the boundaries of what is allowed to happen and what is not.

The first step is to simply try and stop what is happening without giving a reason, in effect implying the

rules: "It's enough now" (Jeannette:31), "Now stop it"
(Ali:117), "Don't do that" (Wilfried:94).

If that does not stop the situation, the next step is
that the authority faces the rule breakers and argues with
them until they give up and agree. According to Jeannette,
it needs a lot of presence and psychological strength to
intervene in this way; the interveners have to be
psychologically stronger, otherwise they are lost. Having
decided to intervene, they have to be able to maintain
their intervention until the teenagers have had the chance
to let off steam and give in. Jeannette describes how
"knocked out" and exhausted she has sometimes felt after
having intervened like this (47).

Banning the fighters from territory In open group
settings banning, or threatening to ban someone can be
used as an intervention. In the interviews, this
intervention was especially popular amongst the teenagers
(Jack:107 and Ali:120). It is based on the idea that if
you do not behave according to the rules, you are out.

Closing the locality down Jeannette describes this
intervention in the case of a knife fight that had taken
place outside the youth club where she works. As a

reaction to this incident they closed down the youth club to create pressure on the participants (39).

Involving the police In four of the six interviews I conducted, the police come up in the conversation. There is a tendency for both teenagers and youth workers to follow a favorite intervention strategy and, if it does not have the desired effect, to call the police.

Rick and Jeannette use the threat of calling the police to intervene: "now I'm going to call the police" (Jeannette:37). If that still does not help, they really call the police. For both Jeannette and Rick, as well as for Wilfried on the teenager's side, the police are the last resort intervention in violence de-escalation.

Stopping the Physical Violence by Verbally Communicating with the People Directly Involved in the Incident

All the interventions listed in this category are based on the verbal communication with the conflicting parties. The interveners try to bring content that is helpful in stopping the physical violence.

Proposing Alternatives

Proposing alternatives is an intervention that comes up in the interviews with the teenagers when Wilfried (89) talks about fairness, "That's not fair, let's make one against one". Ali (114) reminds a friend of his, who is about to start a fight, that getting into a fight is not the only possible reaction to the situation, "You don't have to prove that you're stronger", "Not now (…) you can get 'em next time."

Asking What is Going on?

To try and find out what the fight is about is an intervention strategy very often mentioned in the interviews, both by teenagers and youth workers. Intervening, in that sense, means asking questions like "What's going on?" or "What do you want?" These questions address both, the behavior of the fighters and the conflict in the background. Translating what the different sides want to express also belongs to this category (Rick:51). The goal is to have the conflict out more on a verbal level than a physical one.

Calming Down

This is an approach that comes up in the interview with Rick (58). He calms down the fighting parties by talking to them with a quiet voice "hey, easy…"
It also comes up with Jeannette in the scene where she calms down two fighting teenagers, who are held back by their friends. While she calms them down with a quiet voice she also makes body contact.

Giving Feedback

The interveners feed back what they are observing from the outside to the people involved in the fight. In three interviews this intervention comes up. Jeannette (31) tells her teenagers that they are little hurricanes. William (72) comments loudly on what he observes happening between groups of Serbs and Kosovars attacking one another and Jack (107) screams at two groups of teenagers who are about to attack one another. While Jeannette and William simply comment on the situation without interpreting it, Jack brings in his own opinion about what he is observing.

Stopping the Physical Violence by Intervening in and Interacting with the Larger System in which the Physical Violence is Occurring

When physical violence escalates in open group settings, there are always people around, who are not physically participating in the confrontation. It is obvious, that these people are affected by the violence that takes place, because they directly witness it. They may even be responsible for the escalation to a certain degree. Ali and Rick describe situations where the onlookers co-create the fight.

The term "larger system" refers to everybody who is part of the field in which a fight takes place. This field consists of people directly affected by the physical violence, as described above, but it also refers to the roles and the atmosphere prevailing. William (69-70) talks about the role of the "mother" that is often present when teenagers curse one another "motherfucker". By "atmosphere" I mean a situation that is momentarily present. Rick (56) gives an example from Midnight Basketball, "rather nervous, not much concentration".

Drawing Attention

Drawing attention to themselves and away from the people fighting is an idea that came up especially in the interviews with the youth workers. The point is, that once the fighters become aware of the interveners, the physical violence stops for at least a moment. The interveners need to match the energy of the situation to have the attention drawn on them.

Noise It becomes apparent in every interview that a loud voice is a central point when intervening in physical violence. The idea behind making noise is that the noise is loud enough to draw attention on the noise maker.

If the interveners manage to be louder than the fighters they have a greater chance of being able to interrupt the fight and attract attention (Jeannette:34). In most of cases where a loud voice is mentioned in the interviews, it goes along with a verbal content like "Stop" or "Finish" or "It's enough now".

On the other hand, it also becomes apparent that the content is not the most important point when intervening with a loud voice. Jeannette and Rick were both not always sure about the verbal content of their intervention but

there was no doubt that the loudness of whatever they said was important.

Shocking   The attention is also on the interveners when they succeed in shocking the fighters. William (70,74) mentions twice that he shocked fighters by shouting out loud.

Diverting Energy

The idea is that the physical energy is not prevented from expressing itself but diverted onto something, or somebody else.

Come against me!   Rick (51), Jeannette (46) and Ali (117) mention the intervention of having the fighters fight against them instead of fighting one another, "come against me instead of him!" The interveners draw attention to, and divert energy onto themselves. The fighters should have it out with them!

Channeling the energy onto an object or a behavior Ali (113) suggested something that is more fun than physical violence, but still physical, to his friend who was in a situation about to escalate, "Let's play basketball". Rick (59) talks about this too when he makes

sure that basketball is played again, right after a conflict had escalated at Midnight Basketball.

The principle of diverting energy onto an object is apparent in the interview with Wilfried (88) where he describes his friend hitting a garbage can in anger, and with Rick where he fantasizes about having a big gymnastic mat to put in-between the fighting parties.

Amplification

Amplification came up as an idea in interviews, with both Jeanette and with Rick. Jeanette (29) describes it in a setting where she intervenes between her teenagers. Instead of calming it down, she overheated the scene by saying "let's go for real, I want to see blood now". Rick (59) talks about amplification in the context of Midnight Basketball, when he first interrupts a conflict by screaming and pushing the people involved apart. Then he has them all sit down. He offers that they have their fights out in a corner for real. If they do so, then it should be until blood flows. In suggesting this, he brought their awareness back to the fact that they actually wanted to play basketball, just as Jeanette brings awareness to the teenagers about the escalation

that is about to happen. In both cases the situation de-escalates.

Role-related Interventions

Role-play interventions are interventions that require certain acting skills on the side of the interveners. The interveners do not stick to their usual behavior but transforms according to the situation.

Copying the communication style This intervention challenges the actor in the interveners. According to William, who mentions and names this intervention repeatedly, the chance of being noticed as interveners is very small if the interveners do not pick up the communication style of the fighting parties. His psychological explanation is, that by communicating in the same extreme style as somebody fighting, the interveners make the fighter aware of what he is doing. This de-escalates the situation because it opens up his perception to other parts of his personality (74). In my opinion this principle is also implicitly referred to in all the other interviews, in the loudness that all of my interviewees suggest when intervening.

<u>Playing or referring to a role that is not</u>

<u>represented</u> The idea here is to take on a role that is not represented. There are different ideas mentioned in the interviews about how to find such a role to take it on. One possibility is to listen to what the fighting parties say and to check whether there is any referral to a person not being present (third party). William (69-70) talks about an intervention where "fuck your mother" was part of the content. "Mother" was mentioned but there was no mother around. William brought in the role of the mother and that de-escalated the fight. Bringing in the police is another role as mentioned by Rick (61) in his "sowing rumors" strategy.

Another example of playing a role not represented, is expressing the pain not expressed when physical violence escalates, by screaming out loud or even crying. William has used it often and describes scenes in his interview of it working, even in a shooting in Los Angeles.

Playing or referring to a role that is not present widens the focus. All of a sudden the mothers are part of it too or the police are coming. Opening up the picture of the scene also opens up the people involved and brings distance to their "fighter only state".

Playing to the gallery This is one of Jeannette's
favorite interventions. She keeps comparing fight
situations and interventions with productions. Especially
with her smaller kids, she reports interventions where she
played first to the gallery. This made the kids think,
"what the hell is she doing again?" and got them involved
in the intervention. Sometimes the kids joined the game:
"Yeah. Should I go call the ambulance?" (30).

Playing to the gallery interventions that Jeannette
talked about were: pretending to be a camera man filming
the scene, "Hopp, now you have to repeat that once again I
don't have it in the camera yet" (30) and "should I call
the ambulance I want at least to cast a couple of broken
arms here afterwards" (29). Also in more serious
circumstances she refers to her fighting as playing to the
gallery (34).

Bystander-oriented Interventions

Another possibility is to direct interventions first
towards the bystanders. The importance of these
interventions is implicit in every interview.

Rick (52) talks about the importance of beginning an
intervention in an open group by addressing the whole

group and to only focus afterwards on individuals. He
mentions the importance of this principle throughout his
interview. The way he does this is to address the whole
group about what is happening. At Midnight Basketball he
tells everybody to sit down. He only addresses the whole
group after everybody has really sat down. Then he
addresses them about the fight. Only after having done
that, does he put the focus back on the fighters. It was
important for him that everybody respected him and sat
down, before he started to talk about the incident with
them.

William (76) talks about intervening with a bystander
by standing close to him and saying "scary, isn't it? I
wouldn't want to involve myself in that shit".

Creating Community Frameworks

Community frameworks focus on the point that physical
violence escalates and develop strategies of how to
intervene, that the community involved consents to.

There were some interesting strategies mentioned in
the interviews that grew out of such community frameworks.

Working in the background, before violence escalates, can mean talking with the teenagers in an open group setting about violence and how to handle it, as mentioned in the interview with Jeanette (38). In the course of the discussion, it became apparent that the teenagers themselves were not interested in being physically violent with each other. Out of this came an agreement that, if physical violence escalated, the fighters would be restrained by their peers. Indeed, next time a fight escalated, the teenagers really protected one another by holding back the fighters. Then the youth workers came up with a further intervention as follows: All the bystanders, including youth workers form a circle, an arena, into which the fighters should step each accompanied by a friend. These friends should follow instruction given by the youth workers as "arbiters". Then the fighters are free to have their fight out in whatever way they want. Whenever the situation becomes too delicate e.g. when one of the fighters is getting cornered the arbiters tell the fighters' friends to restructure the situation by taking them out of the corner.

The outcome of this framework in the example reported by Jeanette was that two teenagers screamed at one another and pushed around a little, but there was no physical escalation of the conflict. After 15 minutes it was all

over and fights between the two teenagers never escalated
again.

Another example of a community framework intervention
comes up in the interview with William (78-79). He reports
the case of a little girl who intervenes in a shooting by
crying out loud. He had trained kids in that neighborhood
for years to respond.

Observing / Approaching

Jeannette (47), in her confrontative style, suggests
approaching the trouble makers straight away to make sure
who the person in charge is.

There are also less direct methods to intervene than
approaching which can de-escalate a fight.

According to William (69) staying around watching or
studying exactly what the people are doing in fight
situations can help de-escalate the situation. He
describes a scene where his walking up to the incident was
already enough to stop the escalation for a moment.
Observing a fight is something different from walking away
from it. Somebody witnesses what is going on. If it does
not help to de-escalate the situation it definitely helps

the interveners study fight situations. Furthermore

William suggests approaching fighting situations with an

attitude of "not necessarily being better than the people

who are fighting" (84).

Chapter VI

INTRODUCTION TO PROCESS-ORIENTED PSYCHOLOGY OR PROCESS WORK

Process-oriented Psychology or Process Work has been a very useful, sometimes enlightening, aid to understanding whatever I was working on professionally or privately over the past ten years of my life. No wonder I couldn't wait to apply Process Work to the subject of my research. In order for the reader to understand the Process-oriented paradigm of the following analysis chapter, I provide here a brief overview of the tenets and vocabulary.

In the early 1970s Arnold Mindell began researching the connection between night dreams and body symptoms, taking Jungian psychology in a new direction. In his first book "Dreambody: The Body's Role In Revealing the Self" (1982) he defines the "Dreambody" as a model to understand the mind-body relationship. If body symptoms are worked on in the same manner as dreams (e.g. experienced and amplified) they lead to experiences which mirror those found in night dreams. Mindell says:

> I would define the real body as the result of
> objective physiological measurements, and the
> dreambody as the individual experience of the body
> (…) the dreambody is created by individual

> experience, personal descriptions of signals,
> sensations and fantasies which do not necessarily
> conform to collective materialistic definitions.
> (1982:11)

Out of what he first called "Dreambody Work", Mindell developed Process-oriented Psychology or Process Work (today's term). In the meantime Process Work has been applied to all kinds of human systems (individual, couple, family, group, organizational, community, tribal, cultural) as well as to many states of human consciousness (conscious, unconscious, altered and extreme states of consciousness, people in coma or near death). Process Work deals with human interaction on a verbal (language content), non-verbal (signals) and a dreaming level (unintended or double signals, dreams). Furthermore, Process Work has also developed into a philosophical approach to explaining human nature. Presently Mindell works on the creation of a unified field theory by unraveling the parallels and connections between psychology, modern physics and indigenous approaches to nature ("Quantum Mind", 2000).

Process Versus State Orientation

Instead of trying to work towards a predetermined goal, Process Work supports the individual, couple or

group in following the flow of intended and unintended

signals. Bringing awareness to these signals helps unfold

the underlying process. The word "process" refers to this

flow. In Mindell's words:

> I use the word process to refer to changes in
> perception, to the variation of signals experienced
> by an observer. The observer's personality determines
> which signals he picks up, which he is aware of and
> which he identifies himself with and therefore which
> he reacts to. (1985:11)

The most simple, but also the most radical assumption

in Process Work is that there are no wrongs in what nature

does. Human beings are part of nature, therefore cannot be

wrong in what they perceive or do. Whatever somebody

perceives or does, is seen as a striving towards this

nature unfolding (the person's process).

Process Work understands seemingly pathological

behavior or symptoms as indicating the direction of

transformation into a new life style which is more

inclusive of all the parts of the individual, couple or

group. It is the goal of Process Work to support this

transformation. In other words, the way in which a problem

is perceived or enacted contains its solution.

Processing

"Processing" is a term used to mean working on an issue, applying the principles and techniques of Process Work.

Here is an example of processing the suicidal tendencies of a client: Instead of only trying to talk the suicidal person out of it, a Process Worker would understand these fantasies as indicators of a background process. The problem contains its solution. In other words suicide is the right direction if processed. This could mean helping a suicidal person identify those parts of themselves that need to die (e.g. a strong inner critic) and supporting them to become a skillful enough killer to specifically kill this inner critic without having to kill their whole physical body.

Primary and Secondary Process

Mindell's psychological model is based on identity more than on consciousness. Instead of talking of the conscious and the unconscious, Mindell talks of the primary and the secondary process.

The primary process is used to denote all those
signals in the various channels of perception (visual,
auditory, proprioceptive, kinesthetic, relationship,
global, spiritual) that an individual identifies with. The
secondary process are those which he does not identify
with. Other people often perceive or act out these
signals. A pacifist who accuses the military of being
violent, while his right hand is forming a fist, is not
identified with the violent behavior of his fist. He is
identified with being a peace maker. The military becomes
his fist for him so to speak; the military becomes his
secondary process.

Secondary processes are usually in conflict with
primary processes and are the source of trouble and
problems. Integrating secondary processes is a very
powerful act that can transform problems, conflicts,
dreams and body symptoms.

The Metacommunicator

The metacommunicator here is that part of an
individual which is able to communicate about her
experiences and perceptions. It is a more neutral
position, able to transcend the identification of an
individual in a given moment.

The Edge

Primary and secondary processes are separated by edges, communication or transformation blocks that hold people back from experiencing their secondary processes. They are the boundaries of the primary process and the boundary between what is known and what is unknown. Edges are defined by the belief systems of the individual. They are guarded by "edge figures" close to the primary process or belief system.

If somebody is identified as being too heavy to dance and wants to start dancing, an edge figure may appear telling them that heavy people will be laughed at if they dance. Working with these edge figures is often required and important before crossing an edge. Simply ignoring them can be a very dangerous dynamic that is found often in the background of addictions. A substance or behavior eliminates the edge. As soon as the substance is no longer in effect, the person will be back again, put down by the edge figures even harder than before.

Signals and Double Signals

The terms "signal" and "double signal" are used in Process Work to describe how communication happens in addition to the verbal content. The distinction between signal and double signal goes along with the primary and the secondary process. Signals are intended expressions of the body and indicate primary processes. Double signals are unintended expressions of the body and indicate secondary processes. They are experienced as "happening" to oneself. There is no control over them. For example, a big strong man welcomes someone and shakes hand. The handshake is very strong and intended. The man is identified as being a strong man. When ending the handshake, a quick smile runs over his face that is not going along with his primary process of being a strong man. That was an unintended or a double signal. The man might not have noticed it himself, or if he has, he is maybe criticizing himself internally because he hates these "stupid" smiles that happen to him all the time. Most probably this signal indicates a secondary process for example: shyness, sadness, happiness, weakness etc. To find out about it, would mean to work with this double signal. This is a difficult but powerful intervention. While working on conflicts of all kinds, bringing

awareness to double signals often helps the polarities express themselves.

Field Theory

Arnold Mindell (2000) provides a helpful analogy to understanding what he means by a "field":

> The atmosphere or the field in which we live is like an electromagnetic field. If you want to imagine that field, imagine putting iron fillings on a piece of paper and holding a magnet beneath the paper. The result is that the fillings appear organized in oval forms around the magnetic poles. These poles represent the field, which can be described by the polarity of the magnetic poles beneath the paper, or by the apparent forces and tensions manifesting in the organization of iron fillings on the paper's surface. The magnetic field creates roles. Likewise, fields polarize group life. (2000:548)

The field concept is at the base of Mindell's approach to working with groups. A field view ultimately is a global view. Every field is influenced by and is a part of other fields. The biggest field on this planet then is the whole planet. In physics, David Bohm (1980) came up with the concept of "unbroken wholeness", an attempt to base physics not on separate parts and separate states but to base it on the assumption that the universe is a field of unbroken wholeness.

Fields have no defined borders. It is never clear where a field starts and where it ends. Still it is helpful to think in terms of a field as an entity when working with a microcosm such as an open group situation. The field here, as in any microcosm, is organized by the polarizations within it.

There are outer, tangible, measurable aspects of a field, and inner aspects that can only be sensed or intuited. Outer aspects are functional given aspects, such as, the number of people in the field, the hierarchical system or explicit and defined goals or belief systems.

The inner aspects are less tangible: the emotional aspects like the overall atmosphere, dreams or other irrational experiences of individuals or subsystems, altered states of consciousness that occur within the field, addictions or relationship conflicts. Inner aspects of a field are often under the surface, especially in Central Europe.

Role Theory

Role theory first emerged in sociology in the 1920's and 1930's. George Herbert Mead (1934) came up with the

idea of taking a role. Society provides roles that people slip into, and once a person has slipped into that role they unconsciously start to identify with it and it becomes the person's perspective of him or herself. Berger (1963) defines roles as a typified response to a typified situation.

Process Work uses role theory to work with fields. The polarizations that structure a field show up as roles within it. A role being the appearance, or identity, of a certain way to feel or perceive the world. Sometimes these roles are explicit and structured by the culture or belief system of the field e.g. the role of the father or the mother, the director or the secretary. Other times they are defined by the polarities of the field like the disturber, the shy or the freedom fighter.

Working With Roles in a Field

For a Process Worker it is very important to try and find the polarities and the roles in the field, and to help these roles express themselves. Everyone has the potential to assume any role in society. A role is bigger than the person that identifies with it and the person is bigger than the role assigned to her. Working on the roles in a field allows people to step into and out of them. The

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"director" can identify with the role of the "secretary"
and vice versa.

   Severe problems of individuals and groups are often
due to people being stuck in their roles. Knowing that
someone's behavior belongs to a role they are stuck in,
they can be helped to move in and out of it, and someone
else encouraged to take the role over.

   Working with roles in a field, can be a very delicate
thing. On the one hand it can be a very freeing experience
to understand and experience that one is more than just a
role. Focusing on roles is less personal and can protect
the people currently occupying them. On the other hand,
distinguishing between a person and their role can be
confusing. Hurt and abuse can be the result of only being
identified with a role. Seen from the other side,
individuals can refuse to acknowledge what they as a
person are doing and assign this personal behavior to a
role in the field.

Occupied and Unoccupied Roles

   Roles in a field may be "occupied" or "unoccupied".
An occupied role is one that is represented by a person or
a group. Unoccupied roles are those, that are not

represented by a person or a group. They are "floating" in the field and can be felt by those present but are somehow not represented. Process Work refers to them as "ghost roles". For individuals and groups to transform or develop greater awareness of conflicts between polarities, it is important that these ghost roles are identified, noticed and encouraged to express themselves fully.

Rank and Privilege Awareness

The importance of rank and privilege awareness in Process Work grew out of Arnold Mindell's work with disavowed groups in the United States.

When working on conflict, Process Work focuses on the emotional level of the conflict. The dynamics of rank and privilege are the main factors in the emotional structure of a conflict. The term "rank" refers to the position, an individual or a group has in the context of a given system e.g. organization, society, world. Privilege refers to the benefits that a group or individuals draw from their rank.

Almost by definition the individual or group that have rank are not aware of it. It is often those who do not have this rank, and thus experience the disadvantages

of not having it, that bring awareness to those who do. People who have enough to eat are hardly ever aware that food is an issue for many people in the world. If food is not an issue for me, I unconsciously assume that food is not an issue in general. This unconsciousness of rank is normal, but often inflammatory to those who do not have it. Process Work identifies four different categories of rank:

Social Rank

Social rank includes: education, gender, economics, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, caste, sexual orientation, language and communication style, physical ability, age and health.

Psychological Rank

Psychological rank includes: the ability to feel and perceive, the sense of spiritual and emotional well-being, self-esteem, joy of life, feeling loved, the ability to handle tension and problems, the freedom to express oneself emotionally etc.

Structural Rank

Structural rank is the rank given by a community to certain positions of power. In some communities, teachers, parents, bosses and leaders of organizations all have structural rank. Wherever hierarchies are in effect, the further up in that hierarchy someone is, the more structural rank this person has.

Spiritual Rank

Spiritual rank is an attitude of feeling close to an energy source bigger than oneself. People with spiritual rank tend to feel more secure about deep issues of life and death. The more spiritual rank one has, the more one transcends the outer world of every day life and the problems and sufferings in it.

Rank also shows up in signals. Arnold Mindell gives an example of a conflict between a quiet White and a furious Black American:

> The White man gives out another primary signal: "I don't like anger". But the double signal of white privilege appears when the White man turns away from the Black man, implying that he does not have to endure the Black man's behavior if he doesn't want to. In this way, social pressure is brought to bear on the Black man to make sure he endures the white man's behavior. With his primary signals, the white man calls himself a liberal. But with double signals,

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he announces that he is supported by the white
majority, who insist that the Black man keep his
anger to himself. The Black man cannot easily defend
himself against the white man's double signals
because they are submerged, unarticulated, subtle and
indirect. Rank is most often an invisible power, a
double signal which inadvertently abuses others.
(1995:58)

Skills and Metaskills

The term Metaskill was coined by Amy Mindell (1995)

and refers to the attitude with which skills or

interventions are applied:

Explicit or not, the attitudes we have toward people
cannot be disguised or hidden; they create a strong
atmosphere. Our attitudes permeate the way we talk,
greet our clients, move, sit in our chairs, and the
way we use our techniques (…) in other words, the
"way" in which a therapist works reveals, either
implicitly or explicitly, her underlying beliefs
about life, about social and political issues, about
personal development and its relationship to the
world, and the nature of therapy. (1995:31-32)

In my view, the idea of metaskills mirrors something

that is also talked about in other fields. Whether I

understand and believe in what somebody says, for

instance, is only in a small part due to the content of

what they say. Mostly it depends on their body gestures,

their tone of voice etc. These factors are linked to the

person behind what they are saying and their attitudes

towards it and to life in general. Coming back to

Metaskills, the question is not so much whether someone

has a certain skill, but about who that person is in relation to that skill and how they use it.

Process Work is very much interested in becoming aware of what metaskills a person has, how they use them and how that affects the situation they are working on.

Chapter VII

ANALYSIS II: A PROCESS WORK VIEW ABOUT INTERVENING WHEN PHYSICAL VIOLENCE ESCALATES AMONG TEENAGERS AND THE FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

In this chapter I will apply the principles of Process Work, as I understand them, to the subject of my research. First, I will approach the overall subject of my thesis. What can be said, in general, from a Process-oriented viewpoint, about intervening when physical violence escalates among teenagers in an open group setting? I start this chapter by focusing on the goals of both teenagers and youth workers, providing a first general analysis with relevant questions regarding Process-oriented interventions. Then, I analyze the findings of my interviews through commenting on interventions mentioned in Analysis I. Next, I come back to the questions that emerged in the first, general analysis, and answer them with reference to interventions mentioned. The last section will be dedicated to attitudes behind intervention strategies, which Process Work refers to as "metaskills". What follows is an index, to help the reader get an overview of this chapter's structure.

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    Fighting as an Attempt to get Center Time From the
        Mainstream Culture
    Moral Judgment and the Excitement of Fighting
    Winning a Fight: Recapturing Self-Love
    Taking an Action for Life

A Process-oriented View of the Youth Workers' Goals

A Process-oriented Approach to Intervening when Physical Violence Escalates among Teenagers in Open Group Settings

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Answers to Relevant Questions for a Process-oriented View of how to Intervene when Physical Violence Escalates among Teenagers in Open Group Settings

    How can awareness be brought to the role of the aggressor?
    How can the role of the defender, i.e. the part that does
    not want to fight, be encouraged to express itself?
    How to Support the Part whose Feelings are Hurt?
    How to Create a Win/Win Situation instead of a Win/Lose
    Situation for the fighters?

> How to Support the Seeds of Change, the Rule Breaker is
> Carrying, to Express themselves Fully?
> How to Include Bystanders in an Intervention and Help them
> Identify with their Power to Affect the Situation?

Metaskills and Intervening in Physical Violence

A Process-oriented View of the Teenagers' Goals

Process Work understands seemingly pathological behavior or symptoms to indicate the direction of transformation into a new life style more inclusive of all parts of the individual, couple or group. So, a Process-oriented understanding of the goals of fighting teenagers is based on the search for the process in the background. Why fight? What is fighting good for, and for what are teenagers striving when starting a fight?

Fighting as Self-Empowerment

The main goal of the teenagers starting a fight is to "finish" their opponent. All three teenagers interviewed use the word "finish". By "finishing" their opponent they mean stopping him from doing whatever he is doing to them.

In other words they start a fight in order to stop a destructive or abusive pattern from happening to them. None of the teenagers I have interviewed identifies as the aggressor who starts a fight. All of them are identified

as defending themselves against somebody. It looks as if
physical violence is a process where both sides are trying
to stop something from happening. Nobody ever starts it.
The violence is a reaction to something unfair that is
happening and that needs to be stopped. Standing up
against something unfair or abusive happening to you is a
strong action to take. In fighting, the teenagers stand up
for themselves and stop the abuse.

Fighting as an Attempt to get Center Time from the
Mainstream Culture

 Based on the interview with Jack I believe that, in
the background of fighting, may be a longing for center
time (time in the center of the mainstream's focus) and an
appreciation of the fighter and his cultural style. Jack
uses the picture of a "demonstration" of Albanians (his
cultural background). I remember that during the interview
this had caught my attention, but I was not sure why. In
the course of analyzing the interview I came to the
conclusion that this "demonstration", in connection with
talking about physical violence and fighting, refers to
the need to get appreciation and center time. This may be
especially so for marginalized ethnic groups like the
Albanians, who are amongst the most disavowed groups in
Switzerland today. Seen that way, fighting becomes an

attempt to express who you are and where you come from to a broader public.

Moral Judgment and the Excitement of Fighting

Other reasons for starting a fight come up when I ask the teenagers about what they like about fighting. Although none gives excitement as their goal when starting a fight, it becomes obvious in the later course of the interviews that there is something exciting about fighting. I think the reason why it is not explicitly stated as a goal when starting a fight, is because of moral judgments about physical violence. Only using physical violence for self-defense allows it to be chosen, not only with teenagers but also by everybody in central European cultures. This is what the teenagers I interviewed like about fighting:

It frees energies; It releases stress symptoms; It produces unusual body sensations (trembling, tickling, fast heart beat, goose bumps, faster breathing rate); It's an adventure, you never know what is going to happen; You feel your power and can see the effect it has; It frees you generally; You can try out some of the techniques you have seen in the movies.

Winning a Fight: Recapturing Self-Love

It becomes clear that it must be an ecstatic feeling to win a fight. I believe that the feeling of ecstasy is also linked with the feeling of self-love and pride.

Swiss society, like many others, is structured around achievements. There is no reason to be proud of yourself, or to like yourself, unless you have achieved something, i.e. unless you win. Winning is everywhere. In sports, the only thing that matters is winning, just as in the economy and in warfare. If a kid wins a fight he is freed to be proud of himself and therefore to love and appreciate himself. Especially in life situations where a kid is rejected, for whatever reason, by society, it is understandable that he will grab every opportunity that frees him from this also internalized rejection.

Taking an Action for Life

Another part of physical fighting seems to be unwinding by "letting it all out". It frees energy that is stuck and releases stress symptoms.

Therefore I think that fighting is an action for life. It implies doing something about your life situation and feeling that you are doing so in your body.

A Process-oriented View of the Youth Workers' Goals

The youth workers do not seem as homogenous as the teenagers in their goals, which vary slightly. In the background, though, all of them want to prevent the teenagers getting hurt or injured.

Jeanette and Rick describe very similar goals. Jeannette's is, "that no one gets injured or at least not seriously, and that they try to resolve the conflict without the use of physical violence". Rick says, "The first goal is that the physical violence itself stops. And the second goal is that we finally can look at the background of the violence, i.e. why did it come to that point."

It is interesting to see that Jeanette and Rick's goals mirror the teenagers'. They want to stop a destructive pattern from happening. On the other hand, they want the teenagers to adopt another method. When violence itself is seen as signaling the necessary direction or impulse to e.g. recapture self-love, the goal of stopping it can turn out to be counter productive. This is especially so if the violent behavior or the impulse behind it gets pathologized, not allowing the creative process in the background to further unfold.

William brings up another viewpoint, "My goal is to bring awareness to what's happening". He does not base his work on an attempt to stop the physical violence in the first place, although his bringing awareness usually stops the violence as well. Based on what I wrote above, this sounds less dangerous. He is not pathologizing what is happening and so allows creative processes in the background to further unfold.

A Process-oriented Approach to Intervening when Physical Violence Escalates among Teenagers in Open Group Settings

A Process-oriented goal to intervening in physically violent situations is based on supporting the transformation trying to emerge; helping the underlying pattern in a seemingly destructive act to surface and be expressed. The overall question of the analysis of the interviews is whether the intervention is, or can be congruent with supporting the transformation trying to happen.

From a Process-oriented viewpoint every fight also serves a creative purpose in the background. Two fighters might be at an edge to get to know each other better and become friends, as is the case in the confrontation that Ali describes. The process that is trying to emerge in the

background when they begin a fight is friendship. If someone from the outside comes in to settle the fight, he interrupts their relationship process. If the interveners can't provide them with a better way to have their relationship process continue, they get into trouble. No one likes to be interrupted when having out a relationship problem. This, in fact, holds true for all the interventions. But if the interveners are placed physically in between the two fighting parties they are in great danger of getting hurt at that point.

Another, very similar process, that can be in the background of fights, especially among minority groups, is the fight against a mutual enemy force. Sanyika Shakur, a former L.A. gang member, describes this process in his Autobiography (1993). Behind his involvement with gang fighting was the fight for social justice for African Americans in the United States.

If such a process is around, the interveners trying to interrupt the fighters, might help them cross an edge to relationship and stand together against this intervener as enemy force. This can put the interveners in great danger.

Polarized Roles in the Field of Fights among Teenagers

Within a field, polarities are expressed through opposing roles. If there is a night, there must also be a day. When researching physical violence among teenagers, a Process Work analysis, will identify the most important polarized roles in the field. The role pairs which follow are not all those which could be found, but those most relevant in the context of my research. Questions that will emerge from considering them will be answered at the end of this chapter under "Answers to Relevant Questions for a Process Work Viewpoint on how to Intervene when Physical Violence Escalates among Teenagers in Open Group Settings."

Aggressor – Defender The aggressor wants to fight, the defender does not want to fight. I already mentioned my experience that no one wants to identify with the role of "the aggressor". In the dualistic morality of the Judeo-Christian tradition, he who identifies as the aggressor will always be seen as evil and therefore morally wrong.

This makes the aggressor as a role so dangerous, because it is a secondary process in society, an aspect of experience that nobody identifies with. The defender never

wants to fight. He wants to be left in peace. Since

escalation still takes place, it can be assumed that the

role of the aggressor is present, but unconsciously. The

aggressor does not have the moral right to hurt someone.

The defender can kill someone and still be a good person.

Who would want to identify with the aggressor in this

situation? Because the aggressor is split off morally he

becomes the unconscious power that rules the situation. In

other words, although no one identifies with being an

aggressor, both fighters often enact the role.

Two questions concerning interventions grow out of

this viewpoint: How can awareness be brought to the role

of the aggressor? How can the role of the defender, i.e.

the part that does not want to fight, be encouraged to

express itself?

Offender – Victim These roles are very close to

those of the Aggressor and the Defender, but they refer to

the feelings of the attacker and the attacked. Again, the

same moral constellation holds true. The offender is often

cut off from society while the victim is supported and

protected by society.

On the feeling level, there is somebody who hurts and

somebody who gets hurt. In some cultures, taking revenge

is accepted and exactly how far to go with it is culturally defined. With the partial justification of revenge, society creates a framework for identifying with the offender, without him being seen as morally bad or wrong. I see the historical development of this framework in central European cultures as a reflection of an inability to process feelings of hurt and pain. Because processing feelings of being hurt and victimhood is so hard, people quickly jump over the lesser edge to become revengeful, thus being an offender with the justification of revenge.

The main question concerning interventions based on this hypothesis is: How to support the part whose feelings are hurt?

Winner – Loser Again the dynamics of these roles is culturally determined. As I said earlier, Swiss culture is defined through the framework of a "winner takes all" game. Either you achieve something i.e. you win, or there is no reason to be proud of yourself and your life. This is not a moral definition but an economic definition. Losers are morally protected but the economic reality, the strongest force in defining moral concepts, does not appreciate losers.

Especially for teenagers living in situations that make it almost impossible for them to achieve something tangible on the social level, fighting provides an opportunity to win. I think most of us can understand this dynamic. Winning feels great! Losing is split off. The only possible reaction to losing, if you do not want to stay in the role of the loser, is to fight back.

Concerning interventions with physical violence the question is: How to create a win/win situation in relationship instead of a win/lose situation for the fighters?

Authority – Rule breaker The authority defines and enforces rules in order to protect everybody from chaos. Sustainable authorities define their rules according to the moral standards of the dominant culture. In a youth work setting like Midnight Basketball or a youth club, most of the rules are created in order to protect defenders, victims and losers. Moral justice, then, is on the side of the authority.

The rule breaker is not interested in the existing rules. He behaves according to other rules than the ones defined. At the same time he wants to be part of the game too, otherwise he would not show up. The rule breaker is a

role that constantly challenges the status quo and is interested in either another set of rules or a more fluid approach to rules, closer to chaos. Often the rule breaker carries important information for the whole field that he is part of. He contains the seed of change, so to speak.

When intervening in violent situations involving rule breakers, the important question is: How to support the seeds of change, the rule breaker is carrying, to express themselves fully?

Participant – Observer / Performer – Audience When fights occur in open group settings there are normally onlookers as well as fighters. At first sight it seems obvious who is observing and who is fighting because observation in usually defined as a passive act. Process Work does not support this definition. Based on findings in modern physics, Process Work believes that the observer plays an active role in influencing what she is observing. The most radical thought in this direction is that the fighters are the bystanders' puppets. They carry out something for the field around them.

This becomes apparent in the interviews with Jack, where he complains about his friends using him; Ali talking about fighting as a spectator sport and Rick

describing a situation where bystanders set up a fight
between two rivals.

Therefore it is crucial, from a Process-oriented
viewpoint, to include the bystanders when intervening. The
question is: How to include bystanders in your
intervention and help them identify with their power to
affect the situation?

Process Work and the Findings of the Interviews

What follows is a Process-oriented analysis of all
the intervention categories defined in chapter V,
"Analysis I: Interventions mentioned in the Interviews."

Stopping the Physical Violence by Using Power and Rank to Overpower the People Directly Involved in the Incident

All these interventions have the common idea that an
authority steps in and takes charge of the situation. The
idea builds on the hierarchical ranking; somebody is
stronger than someone else and uses this higher rank for
the benefit of everybody. The danger is unconsciousness on
the part of the intervening authority of their rank. Being
in the higher rank position is a delicate thing. If the

interveners pull rank with an attitude that considers the people they intervene between under them, there is the danger of mindlessly confusing and abusing them (Mindell, 1995). To prevent that from happening, it is very important that the interveners be conscious of their rank. If the teenagers feel overpowered by somebody who considers them to be inferior, there will be a backlash in one way or another, escalating the situation.

In order to use rank consciously and for the benefit of everybody, the interveners needs to be accepted as leaders. The teenagers have to give them rank, so to speak. If they rely on their structural rank as interveners or youth workers only, without being given rank by the teenagers, they will not be successful. The most common way to receive rank is to "walk a hundred miles in the shoes of the other". The teenagers need to feel that the interveners like them and know what their lives are about. They need to know that the youth workers are conscious of some rank differences. When a Swiss youth worker, as a representative of the dominant culture, deals with a teenager from an Arab country, they have to prove some understanding about the experience of racism and the pain of it. If that does not happen, their use of rank and power will escalate the situation. They unconsciously

repeat the abuse of the dominant culture over the marginalized one.

Another difficulty with this approach is that it potentially cuts off the important process that is trying to emerge. This often happens, for example, calling the police. With other interventions it depends very much on the attitude of the interveners. When they pathologize the behavior of the teenagers, consciously or unconsciously, they may cut off the process that is trying to happen, telling the teenagers that they are wrong in what they are feeling.

Physical Interventions The interveners represent and physically occupy the role of the one that stops the interaction because it is causing pain and damage. The interveners protect the teenagers from getting hurt or damaged.

From a Process-oriented viewpoint the idea behind intervening physically is that one intervenes in the same channel as the fighters. One becomes physical as well. The advantage of this approach is that there is indeed a possibility for the interveners to be noticed faster, if they intervene on the same level. The disadvantage is that physical violence escalates in the movement channel. There

is not much awareness around once escalation happens.
There is a lot happening in the movement channel but
little awareness of it. The interveners can easily get
hurt without the fighters even intending to hurt them.
That is why force and strength have been mentioned so
often in connection with intervening physically in the
interviews. If the interveners are stronger than both of
the fighters there is a greater chance that a physical
intervention to separate the fighters can succeed.

If this intervention fails, it becomes embarrassing, at
least for Ali, reporting his teachers failing with such an
intervention. Weakness is a disavowed experience in this
system of physical escalation and physical intervention.
It relies on the interveners being the strongest
individuals. If they fail, they become losers. It can be
embarrassing for teenagers to see their leader's weakness
and failure.

The popular intervention of holding back assumes that
the parties do not have access to a part within themselves
that wants to stop the fight. So, the interveners do it
for them, by holding them back. Holding back is a role
that can be occupied by a youth worker or a bystander. It
is a role that often comes up in the interviews with
teenagers and youth workers.

There is another aspect to holding back. It allows the teenager being held to physically express energy and let off steam without having to take care of the other person. This obviously feels very good (even for youth workers playing the role of the escalating teenager). The holder provides resistance to be fought against.

<u>Threatening / Counter Violence</u> In this type of intervention the intervener simply threatens consequences or even counter violence if the fight does not stop. It implies identifying with the power of the youth worker role; in this case the role of the person who will take care of people's well being. I wrote earlier in this chapter about the difficulties of pulling structural rank on teenagers. Awareness, and a consensus from the teenagers for one to have this rank, are required to successfully intervene. If this is not present, then a power fight between the youth worker and the teenagers breaks out, as described by Jeannette in her interview. This can be exhausting and potentially escalate the situation. Interveners should be conscious of their rank when choosing the option of the threat of counter violence.

A problem with this intervention style can be that the interveners are protecting their territory, but are

not necessarily protecting the teenagers in the long term. The fight might just relocate, if the intervention happens at this level only.

While enforcing rules, there is also the danger of silencing the rule breaker instead of processing the relationship between the rule maker and the rule breaker. From a Process-oriented viewpoint this conflict is in the background when an authority and a rule breaker conflict with one another, and should be processed when intervening on the level of enforcing rules. Otherwise the seed of change gets lost, and with it all the possible learning trying to happen for both sides.

Involving the police as the last resort in de-escalating physical violence or enforcing rules is a sensitive area for many reasons. I am specifically talking here about emergency police, as it comes up in the interviews. There are other ways of involving police. In Zurich, for example, we have a small section of the police whose job it is specifically to liaise with the youth of the city. Based on a community-policing model they do a lot of preventive work.

Rick and Jeannette, as well as the teenager Wilfried talk of an intervention pattern where the police get

called at a certain point in a conflict. This happens when they find themselves having no more possibilities to de-escalate the situation. In Process-oriented terms, they call the police when they reach the edge of their intervener identities.

When somebody is at an edge, projection happens. Rick projects the intervention that he does not identify with onto the police, with the result that he is frustrated with them. They do not do the kind of intervention that he would have wanted them to. In other words he already had an intervention concept that went beyond what he was doing but did not identify with being able to put it into effect.

The other projection that happens on the police is the one of power. The police are respected because of their power. The interveners do not feel so powerful. They went as far as they could have, but it was not enough. More power! More force! Police power is given by a legal system that allows them to arrest people who misbehave or de-escalate a situation by any repressive means necessary.

I suggest that whoever operates on an intervention concept that includes the police, should try to identify

the edge at which they tend to call the police and work on that edge for several reasons:

First of all, repression is only one way to express power. By using power repressively to de-escalate a fight, the interveners perpetuate the mechanism of "the stronger wins" which is also behind fighting. This might not always be the best intervention, especially when working with kids, for whom any adult person is a potential role model.

Secondly, the police are not only called in by youth workers at the edge of their identities. They may be called by anybody who is at an edge to resolving conflict. This puts enormous pressure on the police. The further one can go with interventions without using the police, the less additional stress is put on them.

The last reason is that calling in the police often complicates the situation because the whole legal system gets involved to a degree that might not have been necessary. This can be very destructive to some kids development and career.

Stopping the Physical Violence by Verbally Communicating with the People Directly Involved in the Incident

The belief system in the background of verbal interventions is on the one hand; that the fighting opponents can access their metacommunicator i.e. they can hear and understand what the interveners are saying. On the other hand, verbal interventions often address not only the metacommunicator but also certain moral principles, like violence not being the right approach to resolving a conflict. In order to get there the person intervening becomes the metacommunicator who is not present with the fighters.

In Process-oriented terms one might ask: In what situations does the absent metacommunicator of the fighter pick up the messages that are sent to it? All these interventions are useless if the message is not picked up. According to Process Work, a message gets picked up if the interveners tune into the "radio-waves" of the communication that is happening, so to speak. In other words, the interveners will not be heard if they talk with a quiet voice to people who are screaming. It becomes apparent, that hearing is very much reduced in the state of fighting. Wilfried talks quite clearly about that. A message will only be picked up when it comes across with

an energy that matches the energy of the fight that is happening in one way or another.

Proposing Alternatives By proposing alternatives, the interveners do not state that the fighters are wrong in their impulse or behavior. They simply add to the one-sidedness of the momentary situation.

"Not now (…) you can get them next time" is an interesting statement. Ali mentions this intervention in his interview. The outcome of it was that the conflicting parties became friends afterwards. Time is a crucial factor in physical violence. A "time out" often has a de-escalating effect. "Not now but later" is a sort of time out. It does not pathologize the urge to fight, does not try to resolve the conflict; it simply postpones it a little (you're right in your feelings but let's not do it right now). A time out allows the fighter, to access other parts of their experience such as: fear, remorse or friendship.

Asking What is Going on? There are two components to this intervention. The first is the belief that the conflict is based on content that can, with facilitation, be worked out on a verbal level. By asking, "what is this

about?" the intervener offers the fighting parties the possibility to communicate about their experience.

The second component is the needs that are addressed. Rick describes an intervention at Midnight Basketball, where he tells all the kids involved to sit down and then asks them what they want. They reflect on what their needs are, what they came here for, and conclude that they want to play basketball. I guess that having someone ask: "what do you want?" "What are your needs?" is often a background need of teenagers who are fighting.

Calming Down The idea of calming down is that a quieting voice is missing at the moment when physical violence escalates. That might be true in some cases.

In other cases, a quieting voice may aggravate the situation. The ability to remain calm when somebody else is going into an extreme state is a signal of higher rank. Intervening in this way may signal a lack of understanding for the escalation. "It's all right, calm down, this is pointless". That is potentially inflammatory and can become dangerous for interveners.

Giving Feedback Bringing in your observations can help the fighters become aware of what they are doing. It

provides them with an overview that can differ very greatly from what they are experiencing at the time, especially because it mentions different parts of the system. That can help fighters reflect on their behavior and decide whether it is really the thing they want to do.

People always represent much more than the role that they play in any given context. Personal development is defined to a large extent by a person's ability to access and experience as many parts of themselves as possible.

Stopping the Physical Violence by Intervening in and Interacting with the Larger System in which the Physical Violence is Occurring

The following interventions address the system or field in which the fighting is happening. They are not focused on the fighters only, but include a broader view of the incident. In the framework of violence in an open group setting, it is obvious that the open group itself needs also to be taken into account.

In family therapy, a lot of research has been conducted concerning the system in which a particular problem occurs. Family, or systems approaches believe that working with the system around an identified patient or

symptom is sometimes more useful and effective than trying to work on the symptom itself. The idea is that whoever the troublemaker is, they are acting out something that belongs to the system more than to their personal psychology.

Process Work shares this view. A fight will never happen in a vacuum, no matter whether the fight is taking place in an open group setting or between a couple in an apartment. Every incident happens at a certain point in time and in a certain place. These factors also define the field. Just as an incident is an expression of the personal psychology of the people involved, it is also an expression of the time and the place where it happens, and therefore need collective processing too.

Drawing Attention A fight often attracts the attention of the people or field around it with its energetic intensity. The idea of drawing the attention instead onto the interveners, implies that the extreme states of the fighters can happen only as long as all the attention is on them. As soon as the interveners get the attention of the fighters, or the field around the fight, the fight is likely to stop, at least for some time.

In order to get that attention, the intervention needs to match the energy of the fight. This can be achieved using different channels. The most obvious one is the auditory channel. Screaming out loud cannot be ignored. Singing an Opera cannot be ignored. You can also get the attention through different channels. Visually matching the energy could involve holding up a poster behind the fighters; matching the energy in the movement channel could be to throw a jacket down next to the fighters. Attention can be drawn to the intervener in many different ways.

Diverting Energy Diverting Energy is very close to drawing attention. It could be the next step after having attracted the attention. The idea in the background is that one should channel the energy from the fighters onto something else. This allows the energy that is set free to stay in flux without causing any harm. It is a principle that also appears in the background of other interventions, such as holding back.

This is a category of intervention where much is possible. It really depends on the fantasy of the interveners how they divert the energy of the fighters. It could be anything from saying, "Holy shit, I think I've never seen muscles like that! Look at these muscles!" to

screaming while hitting a garbage can "Help! Help! Help! I need help to kick the shit out of this fuckin' garbage can." Whatever. The point is to keep the energy going but diverting it onto something else other than the fighters hitting each other.

Amplification The concept of amplification when intervening in physical violence differs from the psychological concept of amplification. The point is not to go deeper into the experience of how it feels to fight, but to suggest heating the fight up to an extent too extreme even for the fighters. At that point they become aware of what they are potentially heading towards. Amplification is a paradoxical intervention that works very well, as seen in the interviews with Jeannette and Rick.

Role-related Interventions Bringing in roles that are important to the situation but not yet represented, can be a very effective mode of intervention. There are different levels of doing this.

If the interveners refer to a role, they do not necessarily have to act it out. However, the intervener requires communication skills in order to be heard and listened to when referring to roles. William does that

through copying the communication style of the scene that he is intervening in. From a Process-oriented viewpoint this makes a lot of sense: the interveners need to tune into the "radio-wave" frequency of the scene that is evolving, so to speak. If they do not, they will not be heard because of the fighters' one-sided state. Wilfried describes the state he is getting into when involved in a fight, "You don't hear anything. If someone other… you don't hear it."

An alternative to referring to a role is taking that role and playing it. Jeannette and William provide examples of doing this as an intervention.

Jeannette plays to the gallery with her teenagers which has obviously de-escalated physical violence in some cases. She simply plays the clown; she makes fun of the seriousness of the scene. William describes a situation where he expresses the pain that is not displayed. He takes on the role of the hurt teenager. In doing so he manages to produce a couple of tears.

According to Process Work, whether a role-play intervention has a chance to be effective or not, is a question of congruency. The more congruent, the better the chances that the intervention will succeed. Thinking about

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Jeannette, I can very well imagine her playing the clown; she also mentions herself as being passionately into playing to the gallery. William produces a couple of tears when expressing pain. Somebody who manages to produce tears when expressing pain must have at least a little idea about what it feels like to be hurt. Both Jeannette and William are congruent in their roles; there are no double signals happening. Jack's statement "Let's take two persons, a painter and someone who doesn't know about painting. Who can paint the house better, the painter or the one who doesn't know how to paint?" also refers to the importance of congruency to the interveners.

Whatever role the interveners take on, they need to know that part within themselves which feels the way a person in the role feels. If there are too many double signals going along with playing a role, if there is too little congruency in it, the interveners appear as if they are trying to imitate somebody. This can be very inflammatory and therefore not only destructive for the intervention, but also dangerous for the interveners. This also holds true for copying a communication style.

Bystander-oriented Interventions Bystanders often outnumber the fighters drastically and would easily have the power to stop the fight. Surprisingly though, many

times bystanders do not identify with that power. Most of the time, on the contrary, the bystanders fuel the fight. This might also be a dynamic of the personal projections of the bystanders. Many people live their lives with incomplete struggles and fights. As a result, they unconsciously project their own need for conflict onto people fighting.

Bystander-oriented interventions should aim at helping them out of their trance and involving them in the whole situation.

Creating Community Frameworks A strong community includes a multitude of different roles. Every person has a tendency to be drawn to certain roles. The more anonymous a community becomes, the less social control is present. If no one reacts to certain roles because no one feels it is their job to do so, there is no pressure for these roles to change. An interesting example occurred in the interview with William, at the point a drunken man attacks him. Nobody ever felt that it was their responsibility to react to him directly. The drunken man himself did not have a chance to reflect on the role he was stuck in. The stronger the community setting, the more responsibility everybody takes.

There are always collective aspects in conflicts that people have amongst each other and, if there is a community around to provide a container for this to happen, conflicts often de-escalate by themselves (as is the case in the example that Jeannette reported in her interview). This also allowed the teenagers to create a framework of taking responsibility that they could partly define themselves. This cleared the taboo of physical violence out of their way.

Observing / Approaching These are silent interventions that can, nevertheless, de-escalate a fight. Approaching and observing means participating in the situation. Someone witnessing what is happening is also a role in the field. The witness then also becomes a protection. William suggests approaching fighting situations with an attitude of not necessarily being better than the people fighting.

Sharp observation skills are also very important a skill to pick up on feedback to your interventions. It is also helpful in picking up and bringing in roles that are not represented, but referred to.

Answers to Relevant Questions for a Process-oriented View of how to Intervene when Physical Violence Escalates among Teenagers in Open Group Settings

Some of the interventions discussed above are helpful in answering the questions that came up at the beginning of this chapter. These questions are important to consider when looking for a Process-oriented approach to intervening. They emerged from analyzing the roles in the field of physical violence in the context of open group settings with teenagers.

How can Awareness be Brought to the Role of the Aggressor?

All of the interventions mentioned can potentially bring awareness to the role of the aggressor. Once a fight is interrupted, it is hard to foresee what will happen next. One possibility is that awareness comes that there was an aggressor role involved. Nevertheless there are interventions where the chances are higher that awareness of the aggressor occur.

Amplification points out the aggressor potential: "This is to become a bloodshed if it really goes on this way".

Feedback brings awareness to what is happening in general. It also becomes obvious that there is the role of the aggressor at work.

Role-related interventions can be very helpful in helping the aggressor become aware, especially expressing the pain or copying the communication style of the aggressor present.

Bystander-oriented interventions help the whole field become aware of the role of the aggressor present.

How Can the Role of the Defender, i.e. the Part that Does not Want to Fight, be Encouraged to Express itself?

This works best with interventions that aim at separating the fighters. The interveners come in and say, "stop". It always helps the role of the defender, who is only waiting for someone to step in to stop or de-escalate the situation e.g. through calming down. Often teenagers cannot stop it themselves because they would lose face if they pulled back. The problem is that bringing in the defender role only does not support the aggressor. This could potentially make escalate the situation.

Interventions that bring in all the sides are less dangerous in this respect. Feedback, Role- and Bystander-oriented interventions will bring in the role of the defender without necessarily marginalizing the aggressor. Proposing alternatives will also bring in the defender's viewpoint without putting the aggressor down.

How to Support the Part whose Feelings are Hurt?

There is a difference between protecting the part that hurts and supporting it. All of the interventions above protect the part that hurts but only a few support it in its feelings.

I tend to believe that there is only one intervention that directly supports the hurting part in his feeling and that is expressing the pain, as described by William. There are other interventions that can do it, such as creating community frameworks. But the problem with hurt and feelings in Central Europe is, that there are few models for how to do it. Few know how to express feelings of hurt. Therefore, I believe that the only intervention that really supports the hurting part in his feelings is to role model it for everybody involved in the fight.

How to Create a Win/Win Situation instead of a Win/Lose Situation for the Fighters?

Win/win happens if all the roles present feel supported. Interventions at risk of not creating win/win situations are: Stepping in between, Holding back, Enforcing rules, Banning the fighters from territory, Closing the locality down, Involving the police, Calming down, Come against me!

All of these interventions tend to pathologize the aggressor's behavior. It is difficult to do them without this pathologizing happening.

With the other interventions I do not see this risk at first sight. It can still happen, of course, depending on the interveners. Also some of the above interventions can be made without necessarily pathologizing the aggressor.

It is my belief, that the interveners' attitudes are crucial. What are their own reactions to the scene when they are intervening? Do they really want to create a win/win situation, or are they one-sided? Do they like the teenagers involved, or not? Do they put them down for their behavior or not?

How to Support the Seeds of Change, the Rule Breaker is Carrying, to Express themselves Fully?

The seeds of change cannot grow if the rule breaker is pathologized for his behavior. Interventions which risk pathologizing the rule breakers' behavior are: Physical interventions and Threatening / Counter violence. It is difficult to apply these interventions without pathologizing rule breakers for what they do.

With all the other interventions pathologizing is very much a question of attitude. All interventions will pathologize rule breakers, if the intervener does so internally.

William's bringing in the role of the mother can be interpreted as supporting the seed of change (represented by the mother figure). In this case, as often happens when violence escalates amongst teenagers, the edge was to de-escalation. The "mother" provides a model for doing this.

How to Include Bystanders in an Intervention and Help them Identify with their Power to Affect the Situation?

All of the interventions found in the interviews can mobilize the bystanders to get involved in the scene and therewith identify with their power. Still, there are interventions that have this as a goal and are designed to address bystanders and get them involved.

All the bystander-oriented interventions do that. They include the bystanders and invite them participate in the fight. Other interventions that include bystanders and might get them involved are: Feedback, Bringing in roles that are not represented and Playing to the gallery.

Interventions outside the fight can open up the picture so that bystanders be also put on the spot. Interventions with this potential are: Copying the communication style, Amplification, Channeling the energy onto an object or a behavior, Drawing attention and Proposing alternatives.

Metaskills and Intervening in Physical Violence

One of the strengths of Process Work, in my opinion, is the notion of metaskills. It helps understand why

certain interventions work with one person and do not work with another.

Metaskills or the way in which interveners apply interventions consists of their behavior and attitude. They can be conscious or unconscious about this. Behavior and attitude cannot be separated completely, as the attitude of the interveners also manifests in their behavior, regardless of whether they are conscious or unconscious about it.

In the case of Jeannette, playing to the gallery with her teenagers, her attitude towards them is that she likes them and enjoys playing with them. The teenagers can perceive that. There are no double signals in Jeannette's behavior to indicate incongruence. If her attitude towards the teenagers were disrespectful and full of anger at how they behave, this attitude would be apparent in her double signal. For instance, she might be talking with a sarcastic voice when suggesting calling the ambulance. The teenagers would pick this up and the intervention would not work.

What are the important metaskills when intervening in physical violence? I have mentioned the attitude of liking those involved. All my interviewees stated either

explicitly or implicitly that they liked the teenagers they work with. I think that is one of the major reasons why they are all often successful, although using different kinds of interventions.

William mentions two more metaskills important when intervening: Approaching the situation with an attitude of not necessarily being better than the ones fighting and the belief that there is a meaning to what is happening.

It is a Process-oriented tenet that a pathologizing attitude will hardly ever help a situation. The result of being judged for having done something wrong, is that the people do not feel supported and therefore do not open up to shifting their behavior to a different level and are not open to change. Either the person judged will rebel against the moralizing that is unconscious of rank (see below) or the part that "misbehaves" gets split off and becomes a secondary process. The interview with Jack illustrates this process. The moments where he really gets into trouble are exactly the moments when there was pressure on him not to fight.

For interveners, it is crucial to know, that a pathologizing tone of voice or other non-verbal signals may inflame a situation. In contrast (to judging or

pathologizing) stands the belief that there is a deeper

meaning to what is happening, that it is something

important instead of something useless.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSIONS

There is good reason for wanting to stop violence from happening, and my research has shown that there are many interventions capable of doing so, also after violence has escalated. These interventions vary, and yet they are all the same. They work on two levels: One is on an outer level of the situation at hand; the other is on an inner level, of the personal style of the intervener. On both of these levels, it is possible to define certain principles that should determine whether an intervention is doomed to failure or has a chance of success.

Helpful Outer Principles when Intervening

On the outer level, different intervention strategies have different implications for the situation. It is possible to predict to some extent, which intervention is going to have which effect. At the same time, it is possible to define some outer principles that are helpful for most of the interventions, no matter how different.

It became apparent in my research that the following elements seem to be important regardless of which

intervention is applied, when intervening at the point of
no return.

<u>Matching the Energy of the Fight</u>

All my interviewees agree that matching the energy of
the fight at hand is helpful when intervening. It often
needs a powerful presence in order to be effective and
there are many different ways to achieve this.

The teenagers make it clear that fighting is an
altered state of consciousness where their perception
works differently than it usually does. If the interveners
do not match the energy of the fight, in one way or
another, it is less likely that the fighters will pay
attention to them. Most of the interventions that came up
in the interviews match the energy of the fights. Some are
based solely on matching the energy of the fight (see
below) and the others need energy matching as a component
in order to work. A loud voice is often enough to be heard
by the fighters.

Overpowering the fighters directly is frequently
assumed to be the only way to match the energy of a fight.
Although it is an attempt to match the energy, and may
work in some circumstances, it can just as well escalate

the situation and put the interveners in danger of being
injured.

Other interventions that are conceived to match the
energy of the fight but less dangerous for the interveners
and less likely to escalate the situation are: Drawing
attention by making noise or shocking the fighters,
diverting the energy away from the fight onto something
else and copying the communication style of the fighters.

Awareness of the Overall Situation

There is also a consensus about the importance of the
overall situation when intervening in open group settings.
It is not only the fighters who create a problem. There
are different ways to work with this overall situation.
One is to include the bystanders with an intervention that
addresses them about the physical violence. Other
possibilities of including the overall situation are:
Playing or refering to a role that is not represented and
Playing to the gallery. Creating community frameworks
ahead of time is a long-term strategy that is very
interesting to consider when being confronted with
situations where physical violence often escalates.

Helpful Inner Principles when Intervening

On the level of the personal style of the interveners there is almost no difference between all of these interventions. My research shows that any intervention is liable to be ineffective if it is not carried through congruently.

If people intervene without being congruent about what they are doing, their double signals will be picked up and reacted to by the teenagers. Congruency is linked to the personal psychology and the metaskills of the intervener. The need for congruency implies the need for interveners to work on their own psychology.

Metaskills of the Intervener

An intervention that is applied with the overall attitude of believing in, and liking the teenagers and the situation at hand in one way or another, is more likely to be successful, than an intervention that comes out of an attitude of wanting to "stop some sick idiots from beating the shit out of each other."

Interventions implying that what the fighters are doing is wrong are problematic, because the interveners

assign themselves a higher rank as being something better than the fighters and intervene from that position. This rank signal either escalates the situation if the teenagers react to its arrogance, or makes the teenagers feel guilty about themselves in the case where the intervention succeeds in de-escalating the situation. Guilt is hardly ever helpful in the longer term, because the part that is "wrong" gets internally split off from the "right" part of the person. Split off parts become secondary processes with little awareness, which makes them uncontrollable and dangerous.

<u>Creative Processes in the Background of Fighting</u>

Believing in the situation and in the fighting teenagers requires a deeper understanding of fighting. In order to not pathologize fighting, questions of the purpose, or meaning of the fighting, become relevant. Process Work is a very helpful paradigm for researching this question precisely, because it is based on the belief that seemingly pathological behavior strives towards the expression of a meaningful process for the individuals and the larger system involved.

From a Process Work viewpoint, fighting among teenagers serves meaningful purposes: the teenagers are

standing up for themselves and are fighting for
appreciation of their culture, fighting frees energies,
releases stress symptoms, connects the fighters to their
physical perceptions, helps them identify with their
strength and power, and helps them feel good about
themselves. Furthermore, fighting is an adventure, a trip
into the unknown and a relationship process.

Knowing about all these meaningful processes in the
background of fighting, makes it easier to understand why
pathologizing the fighters is not the most helpful
approach to dealing with them. From a Process Work
viewpoint, the first question concerning intervention when
physical violence escalates is: How to stop the fight
without pathologizing the teenagers participating in it?
Further questions may be: How to support the part that
does not want to fight? How to bring awareness to the
aggressor? How to support the part whose feelings are
hurt? How to create a win/win situation for the
relationship of the fighters? How to support the seeds of
change, the rule breaker is carrying, to express itself?
How to include the bystanders?

Although I suggest some answers to these questions in
Analysis II, I do not think that these are the only
possibilities. Only future research and practical

application will tell how helpful my suggestions have

been. I hope that my thesis will inspire the reader to

further explore the mysteries of interacting with physical

violence and find her or his own answers to some of the

questions emerging from it.

APPENDICES

TRANSLATED QUOTES: ORIGINAL GERMAN TEXTS

Page 13: Vorbereiten! Bereite Dich auf mögliche Bedrohungssituationen seelisch vor: Spiele Situationen für Dich allein und im Gespräch mit anderen durch. Werde Dir grundsätzlich darüber klar, zu welchem persönlichen Risiko Du bereit bist. Es ist besser, die Polizei zu alarmieren, als sich nicht für oder gegen das Eingreifen entscheiden zu können, und gar nichts zu tun.

Page 17: Zeige, dass Du bereit bist, gemäss Deinen Möglichkeiten einzugreifen. Ein einziger Schritt, ein kurzes Absprechen, jede Aktion verändert die Situation und kann andere dazu anregen, ihrerseits einzugreifen.

Page 22: Eine Frau wird nach dem Einkauf von einem Mann verfolgt. Es ist dunkel, und sie spürt den Mann immer näher kommen. Sie hat keine Möglichkeit, jemanden zu Hilfe zu rufen. Als der Verfolger kurz hinter ihr ist, dreht sie sich um und sagt: "Wie gut, dass Sie kommen. Können Sie mir bitte beim Tragen dieser schweren Taschen helfen? Ich kann sie fast nicht mehr schleppen." Der Mann war so überrascht von dieser Initiative, dass er spontan zugriff und der Frau half.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUTH WORKERS

1. What is your goal when you intervene in a scene of physical violence?

2. What kind of interventions do you use when intervening in physical violent scenes among teenagers?

3. What are the limitations/drawbacks of these interventions?

4. Report a case of a successful intervention in relation to your goal.

5. Report a case of a failed intervention in relation to your goal.

6. Have you ever avoided intervening in a situation of physical violence, and if yes, what held you back?

7. Are there interventions that you would do if you were free to do anything, and if so, what would they look like and what holds you back from doing them?

9. What kind of support/information would you need to feel more free to intervene in situations of physical violence?

10. How does the degree of personal relationship you have with the teenagers involved in a fight influence the mode of your intervention?

11. How do you intervene if you are being physically attacked or threatened yourself?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEENAGERS

1. Tell me about a fight that you were recently involved with

2. How do you feel about it?

3. How did it feel in your body?

4. How do you think your opponent feels?

5. What is your goal if you start a fight?

6. Were you ever involved in a fight while a youth worker was present, and if yes
    - What did the youth worker do?
    - What was the effect of his actions?
    - How did you feel about that?
    - What kind of an influence does it have if you know/have a personal relationship with the intervening youth worker - or not?

7. Did it happen that bystanders intervened in a fight you were involved with, and if yes
    - What did the bystanders do and what was the effect of their actions?
    - How did you feel about that?
    - What kind of an influence does it have if you know/have a personal relationship with the intervening bystanders - or not?

8. If you were a social worker having to lead "Midnight Basketball" and, in the middle of doing so, a fight between two teenagers broke out – what would you do?

9. If you saw a fight somewhere, what would you do to stop it?

10. What do you like about fighting?

11. What don't you like about fighting?

Consent Letter

I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. In addition, if you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study, without penalty, at any time.

I am interested in learning more about your experiences around interventions in physical violence between teenagers in open group settings. You will be asked to answer a set of open-ended questions on the subject. This interview will be audio taped. All information will be kept anonymous and confidential. When the research is completed, all audio tapes will be destroyed. In other words, your name will not appear anywhere in the study.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping me to understand more about the effect, applicability and structure of interventions in physical violence between teenagers in open group settings. The risk you take in participating in this study is that you may feel now, or in the future, that your opinions have been misinterpreted. This risk will be, I hope, minmized by the anonymity of the research project.

Please feel free to ask questions about the research before you decide to participate. I will be happy to explain anything to you in greater detail.

If, at any time during the study, you feel that you have not been treated according to the description in this form, you may contact my faculty advisor at Antioch University: Else Schlenker, phone: 0049 7129 3275, e-mail: 100571.2224@compuserve.com.

If you do choose to participate, please sign two copies of this form. Keep one copy for yourself and return one to the researcher. Thank you.

My address is: Lukas Hohler, Müllerstrasse 43, 8004 Zürich, e-mail: lhohler@nsonline.ch, Tel: 0878 805 248.

I have read and understand the above information. All of my questions have been answered regarding the research being conducted by Lukas Hohler. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I choose to participate in this research study.

_____   _____   _____
(print name of participant)   (signature of participant)   (date)

_____   _____   _____
(print name of researcher)   (signature of researcher)   (date)

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