



# Moral panic, youth and counter cultures



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**Moral panic, youth and counter cultures**

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# 1 Introduction

## What is the aim of this training?

### Key Objectives

- Coping with the countering elements of youth culture
- Having a positive attitude towards youth culture
- Focusing on the positive elements of youth culture
- Encouraging critical thinking about youth culture
- Helping young people express aspects of youth culture in a constructive manner.

This training supports frontline workers in coping with the countering elements of youth culture. The professionals will gain insights in the functions youth culture and counter cultures have for young people. By highlighting the positive elements of youth culture and related behaviour of young people, frontline workers can make an important connection with young people. By an open dialogue with young people frontline workers can create a space where young people are able to express their thoughts, feelings and fears. Frontline workers can help young people to express the countering elements of youth culture in a constructive manner.

By asking the frontline workers to provide examples of their experiences and challenges in their work environment the training is based on real situations. The professionals are challenged to discuss their views on society and their way of connecting with young people.

### Key Topics

- Youth culture
- Perspective
- Subculture
- Forms of subculture
- Counterculture
- Experience as professional

## How to use this training manual?

### ➤ **Target group:**

The training manual is designed for trainers that develop trainings for professionals working with young people. With this manual you can develop trainings for professionals in youth work or in a formal educational context.

### ➤ **Extra material available:**

In addition to the information in this manual, there is extra material that will be of pedagogical use. In the first place is the training fully available in a PowerPoint presentation.

### ➤ **Flexible use:**

This training includes information, methods and exercises to work. Although the exercises are hands-on, there are many other ways of approaching the training than the ones suggested. The context, the timing and the space can be very different. Therefore, it is up to you as a trainer to browse the manual and use parts separately and/or in a unique combination. In this sense, the training is a receptacle for pick and choose parts. The proposed way of working is exemplary. Feel free to make your own assessment and use, skip and combine parts in a way that is useable, adapted to the setting, time, context, needs, expertise, .

### ➤ **Closing of the session:**

With this manual you can compile a programme for a few hours, half a day or several days of training. In any case, it is important that closure is provided at the end of the training. That is why we provide a closing section for the various topics. This addresses to the need of voices being heard and topics being tackled. There should be an opportunity for follow-up or supervision if required.

### ➤ **No cookbook:**

We don't work with a cookbook that contains 'the' menu for dealing with expressions of youth culture. There are different opinions, and we want to respect that plurality. We do, however, provide pedagogical guidelines that increase the capacity of professionals to act in this kind of situations.

### ➤ **Context matters:**

Making a general training that can be applied in various living and working contexts independent of time and social context is impossible. The translation always needs to be done by the professional receiving the training. The closing and safeguarding part at the end of the proposed training, and a resource pack for professionals are tools to facilitate this translation.

### ➤ **Work in progress:**

There is no quick fix and the proposed approach is not intended to be the only possible. The more you use the training in practice, the more experience you build up and the better the exercises will work. A one-time training on such a topic should be seen as a start for further trainings, programmes or try-outs with young people.

**WE HOPE THIS TRAINING COURSE RESULTS IN PROFESSIONALS BEING ABLE TO CONNECT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORLD AND LIFESTYLE. WE HOPE TO CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND PROFESSIONALS, SO THAT, AT LEAST FOR A MOMENT, PROFESSIONALS CAN LOOK AT LIFE AND THE WORLD WITH THE EYES OF THEIR TARGET GROUP.**



## 2 Background for trainers

### Starting point: the young people's world

Since we all have a warm heart for young people, the starting point and main principle of this training is the choice for the perspective of young people. They bring life into our classes and groups. In many cases they are trendsetters, and they shape the future of their community and the world as a whole. But how are they doing this? What do they have to deal with? What and who gives them support? What meaning does the world have for them? And how do they give meaning to their own life's? If we want to understand what young people's world and lifestyles are like, if we want to understand their behaviour, the way they look, dress and talk, the way they react, the way they try to build their future and the dreams and longings they are chasing, we must put them into the centre and themselves.

The way young people live seem to be fast paced, the trends and the hypes keep changing. The development of technologies, the internet in general and social media specifically accelerated the way young people connect with each other. Not only the local peer group is important in forming their personal views and opinions about issues, but the online world also offers a way to connect with people from all around the world. Young people's use the available technologies to find like-minded peers. Climate change is a perfect example of an international response among young people in forms of protests and demonstrations.

This fact also influences youth culture, which used to be characterised by clearly distinguishable subcultures. The social issues that live among young people are also often fed by information from different sides of the world. Think of the international reaction to #metoo or the worldwide protests following the death of George Floyd in 2020. Young people are emphatically active on social media, so what impact does that have on shaping their opinions and views on society? And how do you relate to this as a teacher, youth worker or other youth professional?

As a trainer, you will discuss these themes with the above-mentioned youth professionals, using practical examples provided by participants in the training. This requires the trainer to ask for information from participants in the preparatory phase, and to actively adapt the training to that. In this Manual, the trainer can find three written versions of the training, which include the preparation and follow-up for the participants.

The trainer can also use the background information. This information is of course incorporated into the training, but in order to reinforce additional information for the participants we refer to the information below. Furthermore, the trainer can make use of the PowerPoint, which was developed to be used during the training.

## What do we mean by ‘youth culture’?

### DEFINITION

Youth culture refers to the societal norms of adolescents and young adults. These include, but are not limited to, their values, goals, behaviours, beliefs, forms of identity expression, and other shared practices. Youth culture refers specifically to those processes and symbolic systems that young people share and that are, to some degree, distinct from those of adults in their community.

An emphasis on clothes, popular music, sports, vocabulary, and dating typically sets youth apart from other age groups, giving them what many believe is a distinct culture of their own. Within youth culture, there are many clear and constantly changing youth subcultures. These subcultures may be divided based on race or ethnicity, economic status, public appearance, or a variety of other factors as music, clothing and behaviour in general. Youth cultures can be a way for young people to develop an identity.

Youth culture is a relatively recent historical phenomenon and although the term and the phenomenon have been known to the general public for a quarter of a century, it is not easy to explain. Research shows that the subject is complex. Youth subcultures, like pop music, are continuously subject to shifts and evolutions.

Youth culture, and (youth) subculture are often used as synonyms. It is often applied as a container term (Janssen & De Hart, 1991). It is therefore a catch-all term for the living environment of young people and even of children. Examples are skating, gaming, hanging out, graffiti, partying, bedroom culture, but also car tuning and many more. More specifically, the term 'youth subculture' refers to very specific youth cultural expressions of distinct groups of young people who are often guided by a common interest. Many times, this is a common music style. But it can also be ideologies, sports and technical skills, knowledge or style interests. In most cases, these areas of interest form the core of youth culture.

Within the general youth culture, a part of the young people distinguishes itself from this general youth culture by being part of a subculture or a counterculture. Furthermore, there has not been one single youth culture for a long time, but a whole range of youth cultures or subcultures have emerged over the years. Each has a specific style of clothing, language, posture, music and other customs (Verhagen, Van Wel, ter Bogt, & Hibbel, 2000). Since the 1960s, more and more youth subcultures have developed within the tension of adult culture, mainstream youth culture and underground subcultures. The latter provided a constant evolution that led to the renewal or purification of youth subcultures. But we can no longer speak of youth culture as primarily a series of youth subcultures, as it had its peak in the 1980s and burst into a kaleidoscope of youth cultural expressions in the 1990s (Polhemus, 1996).

“What is ‘youth culture’? Is it still a useful and relevant concept, or has it passed its sell-by date?” (Buckingham, s.d., p. 1) It is important to reflect on this question while working with young people and their expressions of ‘so-called’ youth culture.

Research on youth culture has greatly been influenced by the pioneering work of the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The Centre's analysis of youth culture was part of its wider political project, which was centrally informed by Marxist and post-Marxist theory. Youth culture was seen as a site of struggle, in which the dominant adult classes are challenged and contested. The Birmingham School's narrow preoccupation with social class, left no place for gender, 'race' and sexuality in its approach. It also over-politicised youth culture, by focusing merely on resistance to adult authority.

Next to this it is criticized for adopting a romantic notion of authenticity. Looking at the phenomenon of youth culture as something that emerged 'from the streets' and therefor creates spontaneous rebellion against the established social order. 'Post-subcultural' studies have drawn attention to the plurality, fragmentation, and proliferation of youth culture. Youth culture was shifted to style and taste rather than social position.

Another reason for rethinking relates to the changing category of 'youth' itself, as a social construct. Since years we are witnessing an extension of youth. It has become a period of blurring boundaries between youth and adulthood. If youth is still considered as the psychologist Erik Erikson argued, as a kind of 'moratorium', then it is obvious that it lasts much longer and ends much later than it used to do. For this reason, the question can be stated whether it still makes sense to think of 'youth culture' as something that is specific to young people. In this manual we think the construct of youth culture is still 'useable' in facing and coping with young people's way of live. Research on the concept of youth culture is always a form of representation. Perhaps we should be careful to speak on behalf of young people, who we sometimes claim to represent. (Buckingham, s.d.)



## Short history of youth culture

For quite a long time, youth culture was quite clearly structured. It starts with, for that time, very demure and civilised dances in the Second World War. Quite soon followed by the pernicious jazz and an unseen phenomenon called rock 'n' roll. Rock 'n' roll, for example, was a subculture in which young people began to distinguish themselves more and more clearly from their parents' culture through their clothing, music and behaviour.

Teds and mods appeared on the British street scene. Their Dutch counterparts are known as 'nozems'. The first skinheads followed in their footsteps. Afterwards, hippie culture offered an almost complete alternative to the prevailing adult culture of the 'golden sixties'. The disco period, on the other hand, was characterised by a large commercial component and an openness to the gay scene. The same movement can be seen in glam rock: smooth rock music with an androgynous edge. In the mid-seventies, punk's reaction to the 'middle-class hippies' created a punk culture that was both a subculture and clearly a counterculture. Their mohawk hairstyles initially made the link to the sixties through their multicolour, but quickly changed to a raw black that made a prickly statement to a youth that saw no future. The Sex Pistols sang "There is no future in England's dreaming" in 1977 on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the British Queen. In doing so, they expressed the feelings of a lost generation. After surviving disco, hard rock took a more progressive direction and heavy metal countered punk by playing louder, faster and rawer than ever before. With their freaky long hair and leather jackets as a uniform, they took hold as a youth subculture. In the 1980s, New Romanticism and electro pop took a prominent position in youth culture. They were both indebted to punk and disco. But punk showed its other side again through hardcore punk and straight edge. The latter showed very clearly that a raw sound can go hand in hand with great personal commitment. Straight edge expected its followers not to use drugs, not to smoke, not to eat meat and preferably not to have sex outside a steady relationship.

Alongside these subcultures, gothics also emerged: a dark atmosphere coupled with a romantic outlook on life. Unlike the New Romantics, with whom they have much in common, gothics survived the twentieth century. They were both indebted to punk and disco. But punk showed its other side again through hardcore punk and straight edge. The latter showed very clearly that a raw sound can go hand in hand with great personal commitment. Straight edge expected its followers not to use drugs, not to smoke, not to eat meat and preferably not to have sex outside a steady relationship.

Alongside these subcultures, gothics also emerged: a dark atmosphere coupled with a romantic outlook on life. Unlike the New Romantics, with whom they have much in common, gothics survived the twentieth century. The image and content of youth subcultures became more diverse and diffuse in the eighties. At the end of the twentieth century, the 'fin du siècle' hit with full force and we had one revival after another, with the various youth subcultures of the last 50 years passing in review. Various youth subcultures, which until then had been incompatible, engaged into an outer marriage. Grunge, for example, united punk and hippie culture. Hip-hop brought MCs, deejays and graffiti to the spotlight. In the mid-eighties, the dance scene made its appearance. Techno and house took over.

The first raves took place. Because the infrastructure for these gatherings was inadequate, raves were held, not only in abandoned factory buildings, but even in deserted mines. The dance scene developed into a whole series of different genres of dance music. But the metal scene also experienced the same development. Once we get into the nineties and the internet makes its entrance, all youth subcultures and all styles are being influenced by each other. The once unambiguous packaging no longer stands for the content of the past, and time and again boundaries are pushed. The heyday of youth subcultures is over. Polhemus speaks of the 'Gathering of the tribes' (Polhemus, 1994). The title of his publication, 'Style Surfing', makes a lot clear. Young people of that time translate it as follows: all rules are broken.

Everything is mixed up. Confusion is deliberately sown: old and new are mixed up, the contrasts between the proletariat and the elite are abolished, the distinction between natural and artificial disappears, wrong and right are mixed up and gender rules are dropped. Eclecticism reigns supreme. Nothing is simple anymore, modernity is dead. Everyone is online and lives in a global village. The ever-increasing accessibility of information has played an unmistakable role in this evolution, as has the growing influence of the music and leisure industry and the media, now including the new media. And when everything is possible, everyone becomes responsible for their own identity (Polhemus, 1996). The idea of bricolage, in which young people make combinations of existing youth cultural artefacts on an individual basis, has been flourishing since the 1990s into the 21st century (Ladda, 2007).



## Characteristics of youth culture

By characteristics of youth culture, we mean the typical way in which youth cultures manifest themselves.

### **Diversity and fast change**

There is no single youth culture, but a great diversity which is partly related to the social or cultural group to which the young person belongs. The diversity of youth culture is often described by the term youth subculture. Youth subcultures and their attributes, such as music and clothing, change rapidly.

### **Group conformism**

Being part of a group, or in other words: group conformism is very important to young people. Remarkably enough, this conformism has the function of distinguishing oneself. Young people feel the urge to distinguish themselves from the previous generation and distinguish themselves from other groups in society. There are two types of influences or forms of social control that promote conformism. Internal control is mainly related to the code of conduct that prevails within the peer group. For example, anyone wearing 'wrong' clothes, or behaving in a different way is excluded from the group. Besides this there is the external control that has to do with the major movements of landmarks such as pop groups and idols.

### **Social development**

Youth cultures are usually the result of developments in society, or the youth cultures react to these developments. Often youth cultures oppose certain social developments or are simply an extension of them. For example: Anti-globalists who campaign against the technologisation and commercialisation of society but use technical and communication devices.

### **Extreme**

Young people feel the need to test their limits and those of others. This exploration of the boundaries usually leads to extreme behaviour. This is expressed in the use of language or choice of clothing. They start to use coarse language or dress provocative or very sexy. This tendency towards extremity is a way of searching for their own identity and learning to deal with the uncertainty in their lives.

## **Paradoxical**

Youth culture often has something intrinsically contradictory about it. It is often innovative and conservative at the same time: transgressive and ritualising. Think of punks dressing up in semi-military outfits, with soldier's boots and camouflage trousers. At the same time, they protest everything that has to do with authority and militarism.

## **Idealistic and passionate**

Youth cultures have little to do with reality or everyday life. This may mean that they identify with certain ideals or, on the contrary, that they reject them. This rejection has to do with the individualisation society. For instance, groups of young people stand for eco-conscious, but at the same time they behave in a way that is incompatible with those ideals. This characteristic also includes the worship of idols or heroes. Usually, subcultures have their own idols and heroes.

## **Creativity and lucidity**

Youth cultures often play a role in preserving and giving meaning or alternative meanings to traditions that are centuries old. They also come up with new forms of art. (e.g., music, theatre...). Young people have a great capacity for imagination. They are very creative.

## **Mysticism and the search for meaning**

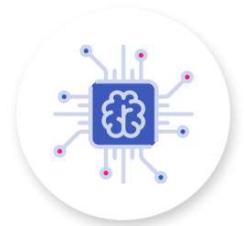
Youth culture in all its forms is a journey in search of giving meaning to one's live. In a world full of uncertainty, this explains the interest within many subcultures in religion, alternative ways of life and 'alternative facts' in any form, everything that can only be understood by the insiders or enlightened.

## **Experiment**

Young people growing up are curious about everything life has to offer. They want to taste everything. They want to discover what is on offer. The fact that their bodies are changing and that hormones are raging through their bodies also plays a role. Sexual feelings and the behaviours that go with them are totally new and they want to experience it. It is a great journey of discovery. Young people discover which substances and habits suit them. Smoking, alcohol and drugs are also new areas that young people are confronted with.

## Globally oriented

The internet has made our living environment smaller and broader at the same time. If something happens on the other side of the world, we know about it within minutes. As the world has become smaller, influences and forms of expression move globally. Cultures from different parts of the world are accessible and mix with each other. (Malschaert & Traas, 2002)



## Functions of youth culture

By functions we mean the meaning and the consequences of a youth culture for on the one hand the development of the individual adolescent and on the other hand the development of the society and groups within it. Therefore, it is good to make a distinction between the individual and the societal functions of youth culture.

### INDIVIDUAL FUNCTIONS:

#### Detachment

Youth culture helps adolescents to break away from the parental environment and develop their own identity. The physical and psychological changes and the detachment from the parental environment and the accompanying search for one's own identity, values and standards generally bring with them a great deal of uncertainty and even fear. Everything, or much of what was taken for granted, is questioned. Through this search, the young person stands on his or her own two feet and separates himself or herself from his or her ancestors.

#### Experiment

A youth culture gives young people a safe, familiar environment in which they can explore their own limits. They can benchmark themselves to their peers. This is of great importance to young people because it strengthens their self-esteem. They experience that friends are more understanding than parents. Consequently, they are more influenced by their peers. Youth culture gives young people the opportunity to experiment with feelings and behaviour. Think of sexuality, religion, social skills, but also violence, drugs and alcohol.

## **Dealing with problems**

Youth culture gives young people the opportunity to learn to deal with problems. Many young people often suffer from feelings of loneliness, depression, suicide fantasies and a negative self-image. This can lead to all kinds of serious problems, from eating disorders to extreme aggression. All kinds of forms of youth culture offer the opportunity to express these negative feelings. These feelings are expressed through certain lyrics of songs, clothing, but also violent behaviour. ...

## **Partnership**

Youth culture provides a context for the search for contact with peers and the search for a partner independent of the parental environment and in line with one's own preferences.

## **SOCIAL FUNCTIONS:**

### **Social innovation**

Youth culture can initiate, support, or give shape to certain renewal movements within society.

### **Ritualisation and meaningfulness**

Youth culture can contribute to the preservation of customs and rituals through its love of ritual and meaningfulness.

### **Experiment**

Young people are looking for who they are. This includes experimenting with different styles of living. Youth culture can play a role in the renewal and breakthroughs of art because of its predilection for experimentation and non-conformism. Many literary movements and art movements have their origins in forms of youth culture. Examples of this are rap, street art, ...

### **Globalisation**

Everything that happens on earth is accessible to us all within minutes. Young people are easily influenced. Therefore, hypes and stories are often quickly on the other side of the world. Youth culture, through its globalising nature, has a role to play in spreading ideas and ways of behaving around the world. Due to the internet and the fact of being globally connected a phenomenon appeared called 'cancel culture'. It originally referred to the popular practice of withdrawing support for public figures and companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive. Cancel culture is generally discussed as being performed on social media in the form of group shaming (Malschaert & Traas, 2002)

## Youth culture & identity

### **Youth culture: a playground for identity development**

Adolescence is the period of life between childhood and adulthood. According to psychologist Erik Erikson, adolescents go through a psychosocial crisis of identity versus role confusion. This involves exploring who they are as individuals. This is a period of confusion and experimentation regarding identity. During this psychological moratorium young people put on hold commitment to an identity while exploring the options. In this stage of live adolescent's search for a sense of self and personal identity, through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs, and goals. Youth culture plays a role in this process of identity development. (Erikson, 1980) Since decades icons in pop culture have become an important source of identity formation for young people. Young people see them as examples of how they want to be and be seen. (Hermes, Naber, & Dieleman, 2019)

### **Authenticity: the experience of belonging to a group**

As a child one belongs to a family or a group that provides them a certain identity. When the child enters the stage of adolescence, the essential need for an identity becomes apparent. They feel compelled to shape their individuality and preferably to do so in an original and unique way. For adolescents, building an identity is a real challenge. Acquiring an identity in the Western world has become increasingly difficult. Many things are no longer self-evident and the options in many domains of life have significantly expanded. This calls upon young people to make more and more difficult choices than before.

Young people want to distinguish themselves from others, both from other young people and from adults. Initially, they see themselves as individuals and do not want to belong to a group without a struggle. They question not only their own identity but also the authenticity of others. The emphasis of their search lies precisely on the desire for authenticity. The young person wants to be real. He doesn't want to be just anybody. He wants to be an individual who clearly represents a set of values that others can easily identify. The expression of his individuality is very important and aims at making an impression on others. By the way he expresses his identity, sometimes in an extreme form, the young person wants to leave a clear impression of what he is on those who perceive him. The young person wants to leave an impression on whoever crosses his path. And youth culture can contribute to this. In the end, in their search for their own identity, young people appear to end up in a group of like-minded people.

The role of pop culture in the creation of identity can be seen in clothing. In Western society, the functional use of clothes is of secondary importance: what counts is the fashion, the styling and the power of expression that clothes express. Clothing primarily represents what people want to show or make clear to others: for example, that they can afford expensive clothes, are sporty, or belong to a group and therefore can distinguish them from others or other groups (Bennet, 2005) (Crane & Bovone, 2006).

### **Unicity vs. belonging to a group**

Young people often find a group to belong to within the context of youth culture. That group can help them give meaning to their young lives and the authenticity they are looking for as an individual. Youth culture thus gives young people the opportunity to develop independence and build up their own identity. Belonging to a group is both an expression of affinity and of dissociation from other groups and the adult world. Identity is primarily about collective identity formation. The them-us feeling plays a role here. On the one hand, the youth subculture forms a coherent entity, and on the other hand, there are the outsiders. They are not part of the youth subculture and consider them to be different, strange or rebellious. Moreover, this ingroup-outgroup principle is reinforced because youth subcultures react according to other groups that are held in low esteem in society. For this very reason, they often develop a strong collective self-image. Identity formation within youth subcultures is mainly non-verbal. The most important means of expression are cultural products. Young people are constantly looking for ways to express their cultural significance. The way in which they express the essence of themselves in their own language, accent, attitude, physical and clothing allows them to draw a line through which they position themselves in relation to those around them. Identity becomes a beacon with a clear message function. The young person makes it clear to the outside world that he is present and that he is unique.

## **Youth culture & commercialism**

The interaction between autonomy and resistance and commercialisation is not a characteristic of youth cultures, but it does play an important role in their development. Youth cultures often arise in opposition to established adult society. But commercialism always manages to get hold of this by offering elements of subcultures as entertainment or lifestyle. Since business wants to target as many people as possible, youth cultures are stripped of many specific characteristics that might be repellent to others.

## **Youth, youth culture and problematic behaviour**

The extreme behaviour in which young people express themselves within youth culture would suggest that there is a link between young people and youth culture on the one hand, and problem behaviour on the other. Janssen (1989) highlighted the subject in the Netherlands quite some time ago. At the time, problem behaviour was certainly still primarily seen as a classic problem of boys in their phase of adolescents. Talking about young people and problematic behaviour or even crime, we often base ourselves on case histories and incidents that are striking because of strongly rebellious adolescent behaviour. As in many cases, it is the excesses that easily confirm our presumptions. But it is indeed true that there is a noticeable increase in misbehaviour during adolescence. The number of offences and behavioural disorders is increasing, and boys are strongly overrepresented in this, only the girls are catching up. Girls, on the other hand, are overrepresented in emotional problems such as depression and anxiety, which increase during adolescence. Despite the increase in both these phenomena, the number of adolescents with serious problems remains limited. Most adolescents pass through adolescence smoothly. So, there are problems, but they cannot be attributed to the development of adolescence or to the influence of youth culture on young people. Other factors such as social vulnerability play a role in this (Westenberg, 2008).

## Youth culture as a counterculture

Within the general youth culture, some young people distinguish themselves from this general youth culture by being part of a subculture or a counterculture. One cannot consider there is no longer a single youth culture, but a whole series of youth cultures or subcultures have emerged over the years. Each has a specific style of clothing, language, posture, music and other customs (Verhagen, Van Wel, ter Bogt, & Hibbel, 2000).

A counterculture is a culture whose values and norms of behaviour differ substantially from those of mainstream society, sometimes diametrically opposed to mainstream cultural mores. A countercultural movement expresses the ethos and aspirations of a specific population during a well-defined era. When oppositional forces reach critical mass, countercultures can trigger dramatic cultural changes (Wikipedia, 2021).

“Any culture whose values and lifestyles are opposed to those of the established mainstream culture.” (Lumenlearning, s.d.)

### **Historical example: Hippies**

Hippie culture was subversive of the dominant culture in the 1960's.

Characteristics:

- Unconventional appearance, music, drugs, communitarian experiments, and sexual liberation were hallmarks of the 1960s counterculture, most of whose members were white, middle-class, young Americans (Lumenlearning, s.d.).
- Waste consumption vs. hippies living with the bare necessities
- Vietnam War vs. hippies emphasized living in peace and cooperation
- Emphasizing the work ethic vs. hippies being ostensibly unemployed. If sobriety and emotional constraint were the dominant norms, hippies were publicly stoned on drugs such as marijuana and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and danced in the streets.
- Sexually repression vs. hippies engaged in a variety of tabooed sexual behaviours
- Hippies were the precursors to what later we called 'counterculture'. (Larkin, 2015)

## Historical example: Punk

In the mid-seventies, punk's reaction to the 'middle-class hippies' created a subculture that can be identified as a counterculture. Their mohawk hairstyles initially made the link to the sixties through their multicolour, but soon turned to a raw black that made a prickly statement to a youth who saw no future. The Sex Pistols sang "There is no future in England's dreaming" in 1977 on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the British queen. In doing so, they expressed the feelings of a lost generation.

The punk subculture includes a diverse and widely known array of ideologies, fashion, and other forms of expression, visual art, dance, literature and film. It is largely characterised by :

- anti-establishment views;
- a form of protesting power structures;
- the promotion of individual freedom;
- DIY ethics;
- and is centred on a loud, aggressive genre of rock music called punk rock.

The punk ethos is primarily made up of beliefs such as:

- non-conformity;
- anti-authoritarianism;
- anti-fascism;
- anti-corporatism;
- a do-it-yourself ethic;
- anti-consumerist;
- anti-corporate greed;
- direct action;
- and not "selling out". (Wikipedia, 2021)



## Youth, youth culture and moral panic

There is a long history of seeing young people as a highly deviant group within society. This phenomenon is going back to historical examples of waves of public outrage against rowdy and unruly youth ever since the 19th century. Better known are the cases of the teddy boys of the 1950s and the mods and rockers of the 1960s. Media coverage often associate young people with crime and deviant behaviour. Stanley Cohen (1973) researched the fights, which took place in English seaside resorts on bank holidays, between two youth subcultures in 1964: the mods and rockers. Cohen argued that when the media reports on deviant behaviour they construct a narrative which features a clear villain: the folk devil. In his study, the folk devils were the violent youth subcultures, "mods and rockers".

These youth subcultures were a menace to society. A closer look on this phenomenon learns that very often these groups tend to be young people particularly young people from poorer backgrounds. The implication, in the term "moral panic", is that the reaction is out of proportion. The reaction might create the phenomenon itself. Moral panics exhibit an increased level of hostility towards young people, who are collectively designated as an enemy of the society. Their behaviour is seen as threatening to the values and interests of that society (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009).

## Youth and social vulnerability

We cannot explain young people's behaviour based on these general generational characteristics. In addition to demographic and cultural characteristics, there are also the social and economic characteristics that can provide part of the explanation for the way young people behave. Several young people exhibit socially problematic behaviour. Behaviour that can bring them or keep them in a vicious circle of exclusion.

According to the theory of 'social vulnerability' developed by Nicole Vettenburg (1989), their behaviour can be seen as a response to their socially vulnerable position. She states that a person is socially vulnerable when, in his or her contacts with social institutions, he or she repeatedly and primarily must deal with the controlling and sanctioning aspects of those institutions and is less able to enjoy their positive offerings. The social vulnerability of these young people is therefore an interactive and cumulative process. A young person who is socially vulnerable becomes increasingly so. At the next contact with a social institution, the young person is even more vulnerable than before.

The structural position of these young people lies at the basis of this social vulnerability. They belong to the lower socio-economic class. A characteristic of this group of young people is the lack of authority to assimilate and valorise their own culture in the broader socially recognised culture. This is expressed, among other things, in their own attitudes and youth cultural expressions.

As a result, they cannot defend their interests, society pays less attention to their specific needs and requirements, and they are less able to defend themselves against the negative stereotypes that exist about them. In the absence of this authority, they develop their own solution strategies. It is in this context of inequality of power that we can interpret the behaviour of young people.



## 3 Training programs: overview

This is a proposal on how to conduct a training course on 'controversial issues'. We propose to work in **3 phases**: a preparation before the training, one or more training moments and a follow-up after the training.

For each phase we propose **3 possibilities**: a minimal ('small'), a more elaborated ('medium') and a maximal ('large') way.

For all phases together, this results in **a matrix with 9 possibilities** depending on the time you have for the training.

Feel free, make your own assessment to use it as it is proposed or skip things and make your own compilation of elements in this manual. After all, every context, every group of professionals requires a slightly different approach. With this manual you have the possibility to pick and mix sections from the matrix so that it is tailored to every setting and the time allowance.

	<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Follow-up</b>
	Share a case study with the trainer about a challenge in the work situation	With only 15 to 30 minutes to talk to professionals, the trainer can choose from the resource pack to create an appropriate training for a particular group of professionals. The trainer provides insight into youth culture and counterculture.	The participants fill in a questionnaire about their experience of the training.
	See preparation above (small) and answer in addition the questions in the manual.	A medium-sized face-to-face training can be used if you have 2 to 3 hours. After an introduction, you can choose some of the different topics and exercises. The trainer gives insight into youth culture, counterculture and moral panic.	<p>The participants are given background information to take home.</p> <p>The participants are asked to fill in a questionnaire about their experience of the training.</p>
	<p>See preparation above (small) and answer the additional questions from the manual and ...</p> <p>send a video to the trainer with a link to a recent widely shared medium among young people</p>	<p>If you have more time, you can combine the topics and exercises to create a more intensive training programme of one day or more.</p> <p>The trainer provides insight into youth culture, counterculture, moral panic and the online world.</p>	<p>The participants receive background information to take home and are given the opportunity to interact with other participants and ...</p> <p>are asked to complete a questionnaire about their experience of the training.</p>



## 4 Preparation

### Approach

### Small-Medium-Large

**S** The questions below would be put to professionals participating in the training course 'Youth Culture'. The participant is asked to send the preparation to the trainer. This way the trainer gets to incorporate the examples in the trainer.

#### PREPARE AN EXAMPLE OF A CHALLENGING SITUATION WITHIN YOUR WORK

The participants are asked to prepare the following questions:

- What issue is bothering you lately in relation to the way young people in your organization behave, express themselves or their way of thinking?
- Prepare an example of a situation where you felt young people were crossing a line of socially acceptable behaviour.
- How did you handle this situation?
- Send the example and your solution to the trainer.



#### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

The participants are asked to prepare the following questions:

1. What kind of behaviour of young people makes you question your own age?
2. What do you think is different for today's young people comparing to when you were your target groups age?
3. What questions do you have about trends you notice in your work environment?
4. What issues concerning behaviour or attitude do you encounter in interacting with young people?



### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

In addition to the questions above, participants are asked to share with the trainer a short video linked to the topic of youth culture. Think of a TikTok video, an influencer, a new hype.



## 5 Training

### Small-Medium-Large



When you have only 15 to 30 minutes to speak with professionals, the trainer can choose from the resource pack to create a fitting training for this specific group of professionals. The trainer gives some insight into youth culture and counterculture.



A medium size face-to-face training can be used when you have 2 to 3 hours. After an introduction, you can choose some of the different topics and exercises. The trainer gives some insight into youth culture, counterculture, and moral panic.



If you have more time, you can combine the topics and exercises to create a more intensive training program of one day or more. The trainer gives some insight into youth culture, counterculture, moral panic and the online world of young people.

## Small version

**15 TO 30 MIN**

### Introduction: young people & moral panic

#### **Step 1: introduction - 5 min**

The session starts with a round of introductions in which all the participants introduce who they are and what they expect to take away from this training.

#### **Step 2: Introduction to the topic of the training - 10 min**

The trainer asks a participant to share the prepared example with the group. Ask to wait with sharing the solution they have chosen in the situation.

Exercise 1:

- Split the group in smaller groups of at least 2 people.
- Give the groups the opportunity to ask 1 question each to gain more context.
- Let all the groups give their initial response in a sentence.

#### **Step 3: Discuss topic youth culture & countering elements - 15 min**

The trainer introduces the term youth culture and counterculture to the participants. Introduction of moral panic.

The trainer presents one or two historical examples of youth culture and countering elements within youth culture. The trainer gives an overview of how society reacted and how the frictions within society were solved.

Exercise 2

- Ask all the participants to take a step back and look at their initial response. Do they think it is possible for them to use the information given as inspiration to counter the frictions they encountered in the previous example?
- Let all the groups create a proposal for dealing with the situation as described by checking their own vision on society and how to discuss this element with young people.
- Give each group the floor to present their solution.

#### **Step 4: Conclusion and feedback**

The trainer asks the participants If the perspective of moral panic, counterculture and youth culture is helpful in their work environment.

## Medium version

**2 TO 3 HOURS**

# Moral panic, youth and counter cultures

### **Step 1: introduction - 10 min**

The session starts with a round of introductions in which all the participants introduce who they are and what they expect to take away from this training.

### **Step 2: unconscious bias exercise - 5-10 min**

The trainer shows the participants a couple of pictures and asks them to choose one of the two possible descriptions (E.g., Freedom Fighter – Terrorist). This exercise is meant to explain that we all have our own unconscious bias and this has an impact on how we experience the world around us.

### **Step 3: introduction to the topic of the training - 20 min**

The trainer asks a participant to share the prepared example with the group. Ask to wait with sharing the solution they have chosen in the situation.

Exercise 1:

- Split the group in smaller groups of at least 2 people.
- Give the groups the opportunity to ask 1 question each to gain more context.
- Let all the groups give their initial response in a sentence.

### **Step 10: Conclusion and feedback**

The trainer asks the participants If the perspective of moral panic, counterculture and youth culture is helpful in their work environment.

## Large version

### Up to 8 or more hours of training

#### Step 1: introduction - 10 min

The session starts with a round of introductions in which all the participants introduce who they are and what they expect to take away from this training.

#### Step 2: unconscious bias exercise - 5-10 min

The trainer shows the participants a couple of pictures and asks them to choose one of the two possible descriptions (E.g., Freedom Fighter – Terrorist). This exercise is meant to explain that we all have our own unconscious bias and this has an impact on how we experience the world around us.

#### Step 3: introduction to the topic of the training - 20 min

The trainer asks a participant to share the prepared example with the group. Ask to wait with sharing the solution they have chosen in the situation.

Exercise 1:

- Split the group in smaller groups of at least 2 people.
- Give the groups the opportunity to ask 1 question each to gain more context.
- Let all the groups give their initial response in a sentence.

#### Step 3: Topic: youth culture - 45 min

The trainer introduces the term Youth Culture (Youth culture refers to the cultural practice of members of this age group by which they express their identities and demonstrate their sense of belonging to a particular group of young people.) and gives an introduction.

The trainer asks for characteristics of youth culture & explains and illustrates 2 topics: group conformism and mysticism and search for meaning.

- Are these characteristics recognized by the participants in their work with young people?
- How do young people implement these characteristics in a positive way?
- In which way do young people implement these characteristics in a threatening way to the inner group or to the outside world?

The trainer asks for functions of youth culture & explains and illustrates 2 topics: dealing with problems and globalisation.

- Are these functions recognized by the participants in their work with groups of young people?
- How do (groups of) young people implement these functions in a positive/constructive way?
- In which way do young people implement these functions in a way that can be or seems threatening to the inner group or to the outside world?

#### **Step 4: Topic: subculture & counterculture - 30 min**

The trainer introduces the term 'subculture' (Members of a subculture share beliefs and common experiences that set them apart from others in the larger culture. Each group exhibits its own unique set of norms, vocabulary, and product insignias).

- Are subcultures still a relevant term to apply to ways young people express themselves?
- If subcultures are a break from the mainstream which offend or unsettle those outside the group, often intentionally, how can you manage this offensive attitude in your group of young people?
- Can you recognise the fact of being part of a subculture as the way to implicit or explicit built a narrative to express a form of group cohesion, to make a distinction between the in- and out-group? In what way is this recognisable?

The trainer introduces the term 'counterculture' (Counterculture is a socio-political term indicating a point of dissent between dominant or mainstream ideologies and alternative value systems, so creating a collective voice that can be considered a significant minority) (A counterculture is a culture whose values and norms of behaviour differ substantially from those of mainstream society, sometimes diametrically opposed to mainstream cultural mores.)

- Is counterculture applicable to the group of young people participants work with?
- Do participants refer to their groups in terms of a counterculture?
- How do (groups of) young people implement the fact of belonging to a counterculture in a positive/constructive way?
- In which way do young people implement the fact of belonging to a counterculture in a way that can be or seems threatening to the inner group or to the outside world?
- How do you define your role as a youth worker or teacher in relation to a group of young people expressing themselves as belonging to a counterculture?

### **Step 5: Topic: moral panic - 30 min**

The trainer introduces the term 'moral panic'. (Moral panics are situations in which the public experiences an unjustified panic about a specific social issue; politicians and other interested parties create moral panics to direct what the public worries about and focuses on.) The term can be illustrated using the original clash between mods and rockers in the 1960's.

The trainer refers to historical examples of youth culture and countering elements within youth culture. The trainer gives an overview of how society reacted and how the frictions within society were solved.

Historical examples: hippies, punks

### **Step 6: Exercise: moral panic - 30 min**

- Why does society react with moral panic when young people don't confirm the common values?
- Give today's examples of cases of moral panic in relation to the kind of groups you work with.
- What kind of reaction does these cases trigger in adults?
- What kind of reaction does these cases trigger in you?
- What is your role as a youth worker or teacher in relation to these matters?
- How do you cope with these kinds of moral panic concerning young people's behaviour?

### **Step 7: Topic: Youth & social media and technologies - meme culture - 30 min**

The trainer gives some examples of humour used by young people on the internet (i.e., meme's).

- Have you got the feeling that you can appreciate the humour of the young people you work with?

Humour is often used as a coping strategy for teenagers (as well as adults).

- Do you, as a youth worker or teacher, have some concern about misinformation being spread through memes? What are you concerned about? How do you cope with this, as a youth worker or teacher?

Humour helps young people to process scary or hurtful information.

Memes often try to make a point using very few words and mostly images.

- What are the advantages and possible dangers with that format?
- Do you ever see memes that use stereotypes or hurtful beliefs about an individual or groups to make a point?
- Have you ever seen someone post or use a meme that you felt crossed a line? How did you know it had gone too far?

Young people get their news from memes.

- Is it O.K. for young people to laugh at serious news?

### **Step 8: Young people & Communication - 30 min**

The way young people communicate is a manner to distinguish them as a group or a subculture from other young people and to separate them from adults and the main culture, school culture, ...

One of the ways young people got to express their power over adults is the way they communicate: hyperbolic language, offensive, related to sexuality, ... Young people's language is often: emotional, clear, informal, bold, trendy, they make use of exaggerations and abbreviations.

- "You'd really hate an adult to understand you. That's the only thing you've got over them - the fact that you can mystify and worry them." - Isn't there a great deal of truth in this quote?
- Is it necessary to let speak young people their own language, without understanding them fully?

### **Step 9: Organisation online - 30 min**

One of the characteristics of youth culture is its globalising character. Youth culture, due to its globalising nature, plays a role in spreading ideas and ways of behaviour throughout the world.

Social media is for instance revolutionizing the way how youth-led activism gains momentum. Young adults, once in the shadow of their parents, possess a powerful voice, constantly active through mobile technology. The power of that voice was evident around the world, when millions of young people—many under the age of twenty-five—protested across many countries to demand urgent action on climate change in one of the largest youth-led strikes to date. Many teens today are already heavily networked with their peers and community, allowing them to disseminate information quickly and easily. They have been using social media to circulate news posts, share petitions, fundraise, donate, offer political commentary, document and share acts of injustice and mobilize their peers to take action. For instance, K-pop fans co-opted the #WhiteLivesMatter in June 2020 on Twitter and Instagram to stand in solidarity with the racial equality protests persisting across the United States.

- In which way technological revolution is seen as a threat to young people?
- In which way the internet makes your work as a youth worker or teacher more complicated?
- How is mobile technology experienced and used by your target group?
- What's the moral panic about mobile technology about?
- Which opportunities do you recognise in your target group using mobile technology in gathering with other youngsters and to communicate globally?
- Historically there were many important movements like the Civil Rights Movement. Youth were hugely important in that movement and that was well before social media. Can you agree on this: "This is not so much about social media but it's definitely about the youth"?

### **Step 10: Conclusion and feedback**

The trainer asks the participants If the perspective of moral panic, counterculture and youth culture is helpful in their work environment.



## 6 Follow-up

### Small-Medium-Large



Questionnaire



Questionnaire and background information



Questionnaire, background information, and interaction with participants

## 7 This training in the ORPHEUS project

### **ORPHEUS – Offline and online Radicalisation Prevention Holding back Extremism and Upholding Security**

In European cities the threat of violent extremism of all types, such as jihadi, extreme right and hate crimes, is a significant and rising social concern. The Interreg ORPHEUS project will develop alternatives to offline and online prevention of violent extremism. We propose an approach that is not problem oriented but wellbeing oriented. ORPHEUS will develop new integrated and aligned services by extending the prevention service together with private and social institutions, and with young people and their educators as central actors.

#### **1. We enhance the integral prevention model to address violent extremism.**

We create a new prevention framework: the ORPHEUS Prevention Pyramid. We combine efforts from general prevention to direct intervention. We target the interplay of different risk and protective factors.

#### **2. We develop safe spaces for and with young people.**

In our safe spaces approach, we stimulate and organise open dialogue, connect young people in balanced bonding with family, friends and institutions and support the public expression of their grievances.

#### **3. We build resilience, critical thinking skills and increase confidence of educators.**

We enhance key analytical skills within young people. We involve young people and educators as part of the solution. We empower educators to facilitate difficult conversations on sensitive topics.

#### **4. We integrate online work on different levels of prevention.**

We develop online alter-narratives to raise critical awareness. We also develop broader internet safety techniques to keep young people safe online.

#### **5. We provide guidance and policy recommendations for adoption of an integrated prevention method in the 2Seas area.**

Eight European partners, consisting of professionals, researchers and policy makers, participate: Stad Mechelen (BE) – Greta Grand Littoral (FR) – Portsmouth City Council (UK) – Ceapire (BE) - University of Portsmouth (UK) – University College Roosevelt (NL) – Artevelde University of Applied Sciences Gent (BE) – Contourdetwern (NL).



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Social  
innovation

# Interreg 2 Seas project ORPHEUS

## Social innovation

