

YouTubing Video Workshop and We Amongst Ourselves Group

Activities from the European Fair Skills Concept and the CoCoRa Initiative

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Contact

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Type of workshop: workshop on informal peer learning

Duration: at least one seven-hour school day; ideally two days; possibly as a five day workshop in conjunction with the Fair Skills peer training course

Participants: 12 people, ideally three people per camera/PC, depending on available equipment

Core Assumptions

Anyone who believes that right-wing extremism, religious fundamentalism, and other forms of group-focused xenophobia can be eliminated with educational modules for (secondary) schools, is mistaken. Phenomena such as these, which pose serious threats to free societies, are driven by emotions and impulses – and thus deeply rooted in personal experience. It is virtually impossible to counter them with facts or debates, or even ‘oppositional narratives’. Instead, it is necessary to take an approach that examines the personal experiences and emotions behind these phenomena by encouraging participants to tell their stories and actively listen to those of others. Naturally, this approach can only be successful in direct contact with an educator or mentor.

If one keeps this in mind and follows a few methodological principles (processual approach, narrative character, emotional intelligence, applicability to everyday life, confidentiality; cf. Weilnböck 2013), lessons and workshops with and about media, especially in informal educational settings, can certainly be effective in the long term. The YouTubing video workshop is one of several media programmes offered by the ‘Cultures Interactive’ (CI) organisation as part of its civic education programme based on cultural youth work. The workshop can take the form of a biographical and narrative interview (cf. derad-narratives.eu) or as a CI We Amongst Ourselves Group, which focuses on dynamic group narratives and trust-building activities (cf. Weilnböck 2013).

These modules are also important elements in the European Fair Skills concept, which CI is currently testing as a preventive programme against group hatred and violent extremism in Eastern Europe. They are also part of the EU project Community Countering Radicalisation (CoCoRa).

Required Equipment:

- Sufficient number of desktop computers, projectors, and fast-speed Internet
- Hand-held cameras, or smartphones with a camera, video editing programme (e.g. Windows Movie Maker or similar)
- Basic knowledge of digital video editing
- Group room with a circle of chairs

If possible:

- Basic course or experience in unstructured narrative group moderation
- Training in biographical narrative interviewing (courses available at www.quatext.de, for example)

Description and Instructions

The YouTubing video workshop (like all of CIs workshops) is divided into two stages. The first, central stage is a pre-media – i.e. offline – activity. This stage focuses on establishing contact and building relationships between the participants and the facilitators. The young adults learn about the topics and experiences that will be incorporated into a youth culture activity in the second stage.

The first stage may consist of educational methods for the participants to get to know one another, form groups, communicate and resolve conflicts constructively, and exercises on modern, informal civic education – or conversational introductions to the (civil/human rights) history of certain youth culture practices such as rap, graffiti, or breakdance.

If there are sufficient resources, CI's We Amongst Ourselves Group (WAOG) can be implemented (which evolved out of the Time Out conversations that CI developed for problematic and explosive school settings; cf. Weilnböck 2012). The WAOG is based on the principles of group self-awareness (from youth aid and psycho- and social therapy). The goal is to stimulate the social and emotional intelligence of the participants, and especially their ability to enter into a complex group relationship and to actively distance themselves from threatening phenomena. The ability to speak expressively and authoritatively before a group about one's own experiences and to listen respectfully and fairly to others is very important for personal development.

In addition, participants meet in a circle of chairs and discuss their personal everyday experiences or (self-)observations during the ongoing workshop. The WAOG mixed-gender facilitator team is discreet and accommodating; they ensure that the rules of We Amongst Ourselves are upheld: everyone may, but no one must; only one person speaks at a time; all participants work towards a joint discussion; mutual respect; support and protection of individual freedom are a must; absolute confidentiality; anyone can take a break whenever they wish and speak alone with one of the facilitators if needed. Only when absolutely necessary do the facilitators help to establish a topic, uphold the rules for turn-taking, and promote the participation of all present. Furthermore, the facilitators may give short summaries or bring up topics, themes, and procedures from previous meetings in order to support the group's memory or awareness. Or they ask questions for clarification to help bring order to and encourage the group process. Otherwise, the We Amongst Ourselves is the responsibility of the participants. Experience has shown that young adults eagerly make use of this unstructured situation for an open group discussion.

The YouTubing Video Workshop

If there are not enough resources to implement either the WAOG or the interview workshop during the YouTubing video workshop, the workshop should nevertheless proceed according to the same principles in the preparatory stage (processual, narrative, with a focus on emotional intelligence, the everyday lives of youth, and relationships, confidential/personal, committed; cf. Weilnböck 2013). For example, the workshop may begin with a discussion on things the participants like to watch on YouTube (YT) and the YouTube stars they follow: What do you like to watch on YT? Which of the YouTube formats are you familiar with? Would you prefer to talk about beauty tips, cover songs, or prank videos? Decisions made during this discussion are written down on flip charts and ordered in clusters.

Workshops that deal with topics like bullying, sexism/homophobia, or racism are especially relevant from an educational point of view – as are all issues regarding personal and gender identity. They require a great deal of attention and should go into more detail. At CI, we do not attempt to moralise or judge – and not even argue – these points. Instead, we use storytelling and a reflection on personal experiences to take a closer look at these issues.

As soon as a topic has been selected or a YT video named, more direct questions can be asked: What do you like about that? What don't you like? What exactly is it about? What do each of you here in the group think? Go ahead and ask each other! It's okay to be curious! You don't need to be ashamed of anything! The line of questioning can then lead to a narrative of experiences – argumentative or opinionated comments should be avoided, which tend to crop up frequently and often conceal personal issues: If you particularly like this, what is popular with your friends or in your neighbourhood? What does it remind you of? What exactly happened back then? The goal of this narrative moderation is to create a good basis for all participants to be able to speak about personal experiences.

Whether or not moderation is necessary for the participants to learn the use of the media depends greatly on the group and the individual situation, as well as the attention span and curiosity of the adolescents. Often, a spontaneous change from discussion to practical instruction on the use of the camera and other equipment is a good method for reactivating the attention of the participants. It is helpful to refer back to previous topics of discussion (which were noted on the flipchart). Participants can then watch the video and discuss both the topic and its visual presentation in the video.

Another welcome change that can help to bring in some more dynamics to the group can be to switch to a practical and technical examination of cinematography and film production. Count how many cuts this short YT video has. Let's take a look at a few of these cuts. Is this a close-up or wide-range shot (i.e.: long shot, medium shot, slow motion, etc. From where was it shot (what is the perspective)? What were the filmmakers thinking?

If it is possible to work with the group over a longer period of time, a group identity can be developed. This could lead to starting a YouTube channel and shooting a short introductory video for it. The video should consist of a recognition factor for the group and have a kind of vision or motto, thereby addressing the personal and collective values of the group. Plus, producing an introductory video can be a lot of fun.

Experiences

Because this activity takes advantage of the personal motivation of the young people and their everyday interests, the adolescents quickly acquire skills that are, somewhat abstractly, called 'media skills'. Often, educators unsuccessfully try to teach these skills using methods that focus on reflective analysis or traditional instruction. A practical, value-based analysis of their favourite YouTube videos and stars allows the adolescents to independently acquire media literacy. The learning process is intensified through a hands-on project using cameras and editing programmes, which results in more sustainable media skills than traditional teaching methods. In particular, this method helps to develop a psychological resilience to group hatred and violent extremism. The personal experiences gained during the media workshop are rarely overridden by propaganda videos at a later point in life.

Further readings and materials

Cultures Interactive e.V. – Verein zur interkulturellen Bildung und Gewaltprävention:
<http://cultures-interactive.de>

European Platform of Deradicalising Narratives: <http://derad-narratives.eu>

Community Countering Radicalisation: <http://cultures-interactive.de/de/european-fair-skills.html> und cocoraproject.eu

Extreme Dialogue – Plattform für Interview-Kurzfilme und pädagogisches Begleitmaterial:
<http://cultures-interactive.de/de/extreme-dialogue.html> und <http://extremedialogue.org>

Verein Wiener Jugendzentren: <http://typo.jugendzentren.at/vjz/>

Weilnböck, Harald 2014: Der Faktor Gruppe – Die ‚Wir unter uns Gruppe‘ als nachhaltiges Verfahren in der Arbeit mit rechtsextrem affinen Jugendlichen, in: Baer, Silke/Möller, Kurt/Wiechmann, Peer: Verantwortlich Handeln: Ansätze der Sozialen Arbeit mit rechtsextrem orientierten und gefährdeten Jugendlichen, Leverkusen, S. 263-276, cultures-interactive.de/de/fachartikel.html

Weilnböck, Harald 2013: Das narrative Prinzip: Good Practice-Interventionen im Kontext des Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), in: Rechtsextremismus in Europa. Länderanalysen, Gegenstrategien und arbeitsmarktorientierte Ausstiegsarbeit (hrsg. von der Friedrich Ebert Stiftung), Berlin, S. 397-428, http://weilnboeck.net/pages_en/essays.html

Weilnböck, Harald 2012: Wirksame ‚Deradikalisierung‘. Zur Methodik von ‚Time-Out-Gespräch‘ und ‚Wir-unter-uns-Gruppe‘ – und der Faktor der Kultur in der Arbeit mit rechtsaffinen Jugendlichen, cultures-interactive.de/de/fachartikel.html