

# EX POST PAPER

## RAN YOUNG review panel – Collection practices

### Summary

On 22-23 November 2018, RAN YOUNG came together in Riga (LV) to review [RAN Collection practices](#). In subgroups, the participants reviewed six RAN Collection practices with a clear focus on young people. The owners of these practices attended the meeting and got the opportunity to discuss their work in depth with young participants from all over Europe. The different ‘RAN YOUNG review panels’ have extracted strengths and weaknesses of the practices and provided final advice to the practice owners on how to best work with young people. This meeting focused both on the need to evaluate practices to prevent/counter radicalisation and violent extremism (P/CVE) and the need to include the valuable perspectives of young people in debates on radicalisation.

This paper is written by Y. Gssime of the RAN Centre of Excellence. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission or any other institution.

## Introduction

“Young people should generally be involved in a more sustainable and strategic way in the planning and implementation of P/CVE interventions, based on the expertise and experience they can bring to the process and the project. ... Particularly when addressing audiences below the age of 25, young people might understand the way their peers think and feel much better than others. Young people are also more in tune with emerging technologies and more able to innovate in this sense than most policy-makers and other P/CVE stakeholders”<sup>(1)</sup>. Within RAN, the message to talk with young people instead of about them is often repeated. To respond to this call, RAN YOUNG was set up in 2017. The youth platform of RAN on the one hand gave young people the opportunity to become involved in the debate on P/CVE and, on the other, provided practitioners within the RAN network with a youth perspective.

*“I think there is great value in inter-generational connection and learning” – participant*

During this meeting, RAN YOUNG concretely contributed to the rest of the network by reviewing RAN Collection practices. Many replied to the call to apply for a RAN YOUNG review. A lot of practitioners urged the need to both include young voices – a new and valuable perspective – in their practices and evaluate their work. Six practices with a clear focus on young people were selected to be reviewed. The practice owners attended the meeting.

A summary of the different RAN YOUNG reviews and advice is added at the end of the paper. Please note that all practice owners highly valued the advice, however they do not all intend to process all of the recommendations, due to practical limitations or their professional opinions.

The paper is written for first-line practitioners in P/CVE and focuses on the outcomes of the RAN YOUNG reviews and on the method of a RAN YOUNG review panel. Both the outcomes and the method might be relevant for practitioners who wish to improve their work by including a young perspective.

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## Evaluation of the method – A RAN YOUNG review panel

Twenty-four RAN YOUNG participants in the age group of 18–25, from 14 European countries, attended the meeting and reviewed one of the six RAN Collection practices. The participants were divided into six subgroups in order to focus on one practice and thoroughly review it: the RAN YOUNG review panels. The

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<sup>(1)</sup> Ritzmann, A. Involving young people in counter and alternative narratives – Why involve peers?, Ex Post Paper. Madrid, Spain: Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran\\_cn\\_involving\\_young\\_people\\_counter\\_alternative\\_narrative\\_campaigns\\_25042018\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran_cn_involving_young_people_counter_alternative_narrative_campaigns_25042018_en.pdf)

groups were composed based on a mix in gender, country of residence, and professional/educational background in order to provide the practices with a review based on a diverse group of young people. The review was structured in order to give the young people guidance on how to review a practice and how to get the most out of it. Whereas most work was done during the meeting, some preparation before the meeting was part of the job! Below, the different review components are explained and evaluated. All components of the review were intended to support the young people in obtaining a better understanding of the practice and its methods, and in addition they stimulated the young people to get into the right mindset to produce a meaningful review.

## Analyses of documents

The participants were informed one month before the meeting about the practice they were going to review. They received a description of the practice, the website, questions from the practice owners who formed the focus of the review, and additional documents. Once participants arrived in Riga, they already had prior knowledge about the practice and they had prepared questions for the practice owner. **This saved time to really go in depth.** Besides, participants already had the opportunity to contact their group members and discuss questions with each other. Most groups did this. An analysis of documents as a preparation is recommended for these reasons.

However, keep in mind that some participants prepare themselves better than others and, because of that, the starting point of the review is not equal for everybody. Also, young people nowadays are often just as busy as grown-ups. **They might never get around to preparation.** Therefore, the middle ground would be to ask for a brief preparation. Provide participants with attractive and short materials (like videos or summaries in bullet points) to prepare themselves.

## Presentation of the practice

The practice owners were asked to present their practices at the beginning of the plenary session to **ensure a proper understanding** among the review panels of the aims and methods of the practices. In this way, the presentations functioned as a check of the analyses of documents or as the starting point of the review: "Did I understand correctly what the practice strived for and which activities are being implemented?" Also, there was the opportunity to ask questions. Besides, practice owners could inspire and learn from each other and other review panels could provide input.

## An interview with the practice owner

During the meeting, the review panels got the opportunity to interview the practice owners about their work. The aim of this interview was for the review panel to get a deep understanding of the practice by asking questions they came up with themselves. Before the meeting, the different members of the review panels exchanged questions with each other to get to a final list of interview questions. This saved a lot of time during the meeting and avoided any duplication in questions. Besides, this was the first component of the interview in which **the review panels themselves could take the lead**, which was useful for their

understanding, but also for the practice owners as the panels came up with questions the practice owners had never thought about themselves.

## The practice owner interviewed the review panel

This was a great opportunity for the practice owners to exchange with young people from all over Europe. During this interview, the focus of the questions was on those parts of work they really wanted to have RAN YOUNG advice on. For example, one practice owner focused on the possibility to transfer the practice to different national contexts. Another practice owner needed advice on how to best communicate its work online. **Practice owners indicated that the interviews were the best part of the meeting**, due to an open exchange, the possibility to ask focused questions, and the form: face-to-face contact.

## SWOT analyses

In order to provide the review panels with guidance on how to review a practice in a structured manner, the SWOT analysis was part of the review. **Participants reviewed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the practices.** “A SWOT Analysis can be carried out for a specific project, organisation or even a whole sector. This analysis leads to a richer understanding of what the project or organisation can offer, the key weaknesses that need to be worked upon in order to succeed, and where to bring in external partners for assistance. ... The SWOT Analysis provides a good framework for reviewing current strategies and directions, or even to test an idea while exploring solutions”<sup>(2)</sup>.

## An interview with the target audience of the practice (if possible)

The six practices that received a review during the meeting all have a clear focus on young people. Although the RAN YOUNG panels existed of young people too (18–25 years old) and were often very close to the target audience, they were not all completely similar to the target audience of the practices. For instance, the target audience could consist of high school students or groups of young people who were considered hard to reach. Because **involving the target audience in the practice is extremely important to ensure efficiency**<sup>(3)</sup>, we asked the review panels to try to interview someone from the target audience of their practice before the meeting. Does this person feel the practice is addressed to him/her? Why does this person think the practice works or not? Only two groups succeeded in conducting an interview. We think the amount of preparation for this meeting was a big time investment for the young people involved. We noticed most of them prepared very well in terms of the analysis of documents, the preparation of interview questions, and getting familiar with the context and content of the practice. However, the interview with a young person from the exact

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<sup>(2)</sup> Nesta, DIY Development Impact & You, diytoolkit.org. <https://diytoolkit.org/media/DIY-Toolkit-Full-Download-A4-Size.pdf>

<sup>(3)</sup> Ritzmann, A. Involving young people in counter and alternative narratives – Why involve peers?, Ex Post Paper. Madrid, Spain: Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran\\_cn\\_involving\\_young\\_people\\_counter\\_alternative\\_narrative\\_campaigns\\_25042018\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran_cn_involving_young_people_counter_alternative_narrative_campaigns_25042018_en.pdf)

target audience of the practice turned out to be more difficult to organise. We do think this is an important part of the review, in some cases more than in others, however there is a limit to what is feasible for the young people to focus on in their preparation.

## Presentations of the advice

The RAN YOUNG review panels used all the information maintained from the components above to compose the final advice for the practice owner on how to best work with young people. At the end of the meeting, all panels presented their advice at the closing plenary session. **Working on the presentation was a good way for the panels to structure all the information and sharpen their advice.** Besides, the (content of the) presentations were shared with the practice owners afterwards, in order for them to use in improving/evaluating their practices. Another advantage of this last review component was the fact that **practice owners could also benefit from the advice given to the other practices.** It was especially useful for the practice owners who dealt with the same kind of issues/questions as others in the room. After the presentations, there was time to ask questions.



## The RAN YOUNG advice

### 7 lessons from RAN YOUNG on how to best work with young people

1. Do not underestimate the role of **fake news** in the everyday life of young people. Be aware of it and teach young people how to recognise it by training their critical thinking skills.
2. **Credible messengers** are needed to reach young (vulnerable) people. Think about peer education and having diverse staff members to ensure the best possible connection with the target audience.
3. **Don't impose views and ideas on young people.** Let them think for themselves and guide them in this process.
4. **Use emotions** to make material attractive for young people and to get your message across the best way possible. However, keep the narrative realistic. Do not simplify it and don't victimise the characters, but show their resilience.
5. Where possible, **broaden the scope** and include different forms of extremism in the material/work of the practice in order not to contribute to stigmatisation and to give a broad and realistic view of what extremism is.
6. Think about **how to promote content online** and work with a clear step-by-step approach. Is there a clear platform, like YouTube or Facebook? Is this the right platform to reach the target audience? What kind of messages should be posted, how often and is there a call to action? Besides, make sure **the website** is navigable and attractive.
7. When working in a classroom, set **classroom rules** before getting started with a lesson on a sensitive topic such as radicalisation. Clear classroom rules help to ensure a safe space for all students. What also works in creating a safe space (especially in a diverse group), is **focusing on shared values and common understanding** instead of stressing the differences. Students don't have to agree, but should be able to respectfully communicate with each other.



## Summary of the RAN YOUNG advice per practice (4)

### Equal=Equal? – Diversion, Debora Reesink (NL) (5)

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*“I want to thank you guys a lot for this review and for brainstorming together these days. It has been so helpful! It was especially of great value to discuss the safety of our peer educators in different EU contexts.” – Debora Reesink*

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**Description:** The project Equal=Equal? [Gelijk=Gelijk?] provides schools, teachers and other educators with concrete tools to structurally address discrimination and prevent radicalisation. At the same time, the programme uses the power of young role models (from LGBT, Jewish and Muslim communities) who want to take the initiative in countering discrimination. Together, they will provide school classes and the public debate with a powerful statement on how they want to live in the Netherlands. Equal=Equal? is a programme in which Jewish, Muslim and LGBT peer educators introduce discussions on religious, cultural and sexual diversity into schools where these can be difficult subjects.

**Question:** Is this practice transferable to other EU countries? And, is it appropriate/safe to ask from peer educators to expose themselves in classrooms? Finally, is the combination of Jewish/Muslim/LGBT the right one in every country?

**RAN YOUNG advice:** The panel loved the idea of using peer education when dealing with difficult/sensitive topics. Peers understand the language of the kids in the classes, there is mutual respect between them, and it is a personal and relatable approach. Peer education makes this practice very strong as it is all about building personal relations. For this reason, it would work in every country. However, safety first! In some countries, LGBT peers are very vulnerable. This doesn't mean you should not address the issue, but perhaps the approach should be indirect and strong backup is needed: “The best way to get over fear, is to be exposed to it. It'll be worth it in the long-term!”

Although the panel really liked the idea of having three peer educators together in the classroom, the communities the peer educators come from should be more diverse depending on the country/local context. It would be good to include more communities, like the black community, which still suffers from prejudices and racism in many countries.

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(4) More information on the content of these practices can be found in the ex ante paper of this meeting and online: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-best-practices\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices_en)

(5) Diversion. <https://www.diversion.nl/l/english/>

## The young adults programme – Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Eamon Rafter (IE) <sup>(6)</sup>

**Description:** Through facilitated dialogue circles, young people from different backgrounds (Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) are given a space to tell their stories. After applying, they come in with no trust in each other, but are encouraged through the practice and safety of the space to place trust in the process. There is a restorative emphasis and the circles are intended to build relationships rather than to reach agreement. By stressing the human experience and moving beyond the hurts of the past, the goal is to provide the possibility of personal and community transformation. It is not about everyone being “at one with each other” but creating new understandings and possibilities to go forward and move beyond the legacy of conflict. Difficult conversations are needed for this, but are only one element in broader societal changes. This process helps to prevent young people from engaging with extreme violent groups and also allows former combatants to define a better sense of integration and usefulness within communities.

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*“Your input makes a great contribution to the evaluation we are doing right now. Thank you for engaging with the context, I really appreciate your comments and there is lots of stuff I will take back.” – Eamon Rafter*

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**Question:** What do you think of the programme? Will it make a difference to the life of the participants? And, what could be improved? How can we come together despite our differences to make the island of Ireland a better place for everyone? How do we galvanise young people’s energy and expertise in the work of peace and reconciliation on this island in an active way?

**RAN YOUNG advice:** This practice is strong, because it offers activities that make young people temporarily break away from their everyday lives. During the activities, they can connect with each other while not having any views imposed upon them. It is about fostering understanding instead of reaching agreement, which makes this programme powerful. The programme deals with sensitive topics that are not dealt with in school, while they are very important in this life stage of the participants. The programme tries to achieve a diverse range of participants, but this is not easy. A recommendation for that issue is to engage more with social media. YouTube is for example very popular among a young audience. It would be nice to have digital media trailers that can be used to recruit people. Such trailers can also be used to gain funding, as this is another difficulty for the programme. Funding would be needed to have more youngsters participating. Perhaps quantifiable data can help with this: “Participants build 30 % more self-confidence through this programme.” Finally, partnering up with other social sectors and organisations might lead to a bigger network, a more diverse group of participants and funding with both financial and non-financial resources.

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<sup>(6)</sup> Glenree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation. <http://glencree.ie/young-peacebuilders/>



## West London Initiative (WLI) – Najeeb Ahmed (UK)

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*“These are some very smart young people. I am happy to have had the opportunity to work with them.” – Najeeb Ahmed*

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**Description:** The West London Initiative (WLI) emerged primarily as a result of identifying an increasing need amongst statutory agencies and youth organisations in London (UK) concerning Muslim youth engagement, where such youth were developing extremist beliefs based upon erroneous interpretations propagated by extremist ideologues. Such beliefs were further exasperated by a lack of religious knowledge and understanding. WLI has since expanded to include challenging those susceptible to violent extremism in any form, including far right extremism, animal rights, political extremism, etc. WLI explores the factors that lead to violent extremism from a truly grass-roots perspective, including the radicalisation process, and effective means and methods of interventions.

**Question:** Are the vulnerabilities leading to criminality or violent extremism the same in the different EU countries you are living in? What kind of terminology should be used that is recognisable for young people to really get into their headspace? What are challenges or risks in our work according to you?

**RAN YOUNG advice:** One of the strengths of WLI is that they do outreach work and therefore have direct contact with (vulnerable) people. They are credible messengers, as their employees often have similar backgrounds as the target audience and therefore have the social capital needed to work with them efficiently. Social outreach work, creating dialogue and working in the arenas of the target audiences are success factors of WLI that could be implemented in other countries/contexts as well. This does, however, take a lot of time and trust building, and it is good to be aware of the fact that it can be broken by one mistake.

One of the challenges we see is deep fake news. This is audio/video material manipulated in a very realistic way, through a tool called GAN (generative adversarial network) <sup>(7)</sup>. It is important to be one step ahead. WLI could do this by educating both themselves and teachers/young people on this, before it does any harm. It is quite new and therefore people might not be aware of this. However, there are methods to find out whether something is fake or not. Another comment is on the visibility of WLI. It would be good to explain the work on social media and to consider collaborating with government agencies. Though we understand that cooperation can be hard in terms of trust (from the target audience), WLI can really fill a gap the government can't and the government can provide resources for WLI to reach even more people. One condition is that the process needs to be transparent.

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<sup>(7)</sup> Hui, J., GAN — What is generative adversary networks GAN? Medium.com, 19 June 2018.  
[https://medium.com/@jonathan\\_hui/gan-whats-generative-adversarial-networks-and-its-application-f39ed278ef09](https://medium.com/@jonathan_hui/gan-whats-generative-adversarial-networks-and-its-application-f39ed278ef09)

## Echoes of IS – Submarine, Hans Dortmans (NL) <sup>(8)</sup>

**Description:** ‘Echoes of IS’ is a web documentary featuring 12 captivating stories of people affected by Islamic State (IS). People from diverse backgrounds (Dutch citizens, Syrian refugees, parents, children, ex-fighters and their relatives) bare their souls and share their life-changing experiences, often for the first time. These 12 stories serve to counteract the dishonest fictions manufactured by the propaganda machine of IS, which targets a susceptible group of young people (aged 12 to 25). The stories show a multifaceted perspective on ‘scars’ as universal qualities shared by many. The programme is a model for dialogue.

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*“This was a really sharp, well prepared and well performed panel. I am really glad with all the online suggestions. We will for sure discuss this with our designers. Also, the idea of testimonials is something we will definitely follow up.” – Hans Dortmans*

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**Question:** Our guidelines for teachers need to be customised in order for the stories to be successful in schools. How should teachers address the topic and ensure a safe environment? Do the students need background information and which portraits can be best used with students? Another question for the panel: what are the project’s strengths and weaknesses in terms of online distribution of the project?

**RAN YOUNG advice:** These videos are very powerful and emotional and have a lot of potential. People are receptive to the format of storytelling; it is flexible, digital and interactive – perfect for today’s classrooms. Besides, the stories encourage critical thinking among students. For teaching, some improvements can be made. The teacher needs to understand the objective of the method, ensure a safe space and know how to handle conflicts or emotions that might derive from the content of the videos. Every class is different; depending on the class, the choice for stories can be adjusted. There is not much preparation needed for the videos, but before the lesson starts it would be good to set classroom rules together, to ensure everybody is on the same starting point by explaining some concepts. One lesson is not enough for this great material. A set of lessons is recommended.

Online, improvement can be made on the communication side very practically. For example, the website doesn’t work well on a mobile format. Also, the order of stories is not clear now, while the trailer should really be seen first. Material could be promoted on social media to ensure the target audience is reached. Therefore, it is important to keep on updating the channels and to ask followers to share the posts. To bridge the gap between online and offline it is recommended to state questions below the stories already on social media.

It might be a good idea to use this concept also for other forms of radicalisation, for example far right extremism. Another idea is to renew the material by following up on the very interesting characters of the

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<sup>(8)</sup> Echoes of IS. <https://echoesofis.submarinechannel.com/>

first 12 stories: how are they doing now? Finally, using testimonials of teachers/students who worked with the material is recommended: make use of credible voices to expand the project.

## Acceptance-based youthwork – VAJA Bremen, Jens Schaller (DE) <sup>(9)</sup>

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*“The interviews we held were the best part of the meeting. The feedback I got from the group was very useful, I will adopt their ideas for sure and process it in the next workshop.” – Jens Schaller*

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**Description:** The work is focused on right wing-orientated youth groups and youngsters in the age group of 14–20 who are attracted by extremely intolerant behaviour in terms of group-focused enmity, misanthropic attitudes and/or are susceptible to violence in general. The street work approach includes clique work, individual aid and parental involvement as well as project and community work. A fundamental prerequisite for the method is building trustful relationships with the young people concerned. This social work focuses on the problems that the youngsters have, rather than those they cause. The work thus creates trust at the youths’ end, which makes it possible to discuss attitudes openly, reflect on the social workers’ arguments and take their alternatives seriously. As part of the work, the young people are confronted with their negative behaviour, and are shown alternative ways to experience membership, recognition and participation, and be integrated (in peer groups, school, suburb, etc.). The staff members are experienced social education professionals.

**Question:** The last years taught us to be adaptable to new developments in the environment of young people. To do so in the best way possible, we are trying to open up new avenues of access that will give young people the support to orient themselves in their everyday life. We would like to have the panel think this through with us and provide us with feedback.

**RAN YOUNG advice:** One practical idea to support young people is to organise a workshop on fake news. It is important to make young people aware of this issue and to make them look critically at news items and social media. Especially within far right extremist groups, fake news is a big problem. The tool Kahoot! <sup>(10)</sup> makes it attractive for young people to dive into the topic of fake news. You can show pictures and ask the participants: do you think this really happened? Do you think it is biased? Show them one news item multiple times from different sources. This will make them understand how news can be manipulated.

Other recommendations for VAJA are to work with role models (especially behind the scenes), to research the needs of the target audience before organising activities, and to invest in legal advice regarding the GDPR law to avoid being distanced from clients unintentionally.

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<sup>(9)</sup> VAJA. <https://vaja-bremen.de/teams/acceptance-based-youth-work-with-right-wing-youth-groups/>

<sup>(10)</sup> Kahoot! <https://kahoot.com/what-is-kahoot/>

## Extreme Dialogue – ISD/The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Peace Foundation, Harriet Vickers (UK) <sup>(11)</sup>

**Description:** Extreme Dialogue **aims to build resilience** to radicalisation among young people through a series of open-access educational resources and highly engaging short films that explore prejudice and identity, and foster critical thinking and digital literacy skills. Extreme Dialogue encourages safe and constructive discussions around extremism and radicalisation in educational or community settings in Canada, Germany, Hungary and the United Kingdom.

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*“It was so useful to have four different people from four different countries reviewing our work. Essentially, the message to me was: context is everything. Things are applicable to a certain degree, but for example, only translation is not enough.” – Harriet Vickers*

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**Question:** How accessible, flexible and adaptable are our materials? What do you think of the approach and how effective do you think it is? Did you miss any theme that would be useful to include?

**RAN YOUNG advice:** The material of the practice is accessible to anyone, translated in different languages, and therefore (to a certain degree) easily transferable between countries, includes teacher guidelines, and is sustainable, reusable and emotional. The emotional aspect helps to reach the target audience in a more effective way. However, emotions can be a strength and a weakness at the same time. Some material is quite dramatic and therefore not realistic anymore. In addition, oversimplification can make stories difficult to relate to. A recommendation is to show the resilience of the characters, as some videos felt a little powerless. As we are trying to raise a strong generation, it might be a good idea to include how characters find their strength and work on a better version of themselves. Another recommendation is to broaden the scope. It would be nice to take different kinds of ideologies into account in order to make the material relatable to everybody and make the practice even better transferable to other countries.

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<sup>(11)</sup> Extreme Dialogue. <https://extremedialogue.org/>