

Conservative Protestant rural youth more violent than their urban counterparts

October 30 2015



Credit: HH/Laurens Aaij

Conservative Protestant rural youth are more often involved in violent crimes than their counterparts in urban areas, who also use less violence than average. The relationship between alcohol use and violence is also stronger among rural youth and among conservative Protestant rural youth in particular. These are the conclusions of sociologist Don Weenink in his article entitled 'Taking the Conservative Protestant thesis across the Atlantic' that was published in the *British Journal of Criminology*. Weenink carried out his research with a Veni grant.

Weenink's research is the first large-scale study into [violence](#), alcohol and religious background in Europe, in which rural and [urban areas](#) are compared. Weenink used data from 8000 Dutch [young people](#) in the age

range 15 to 30 years.

Previous research has shown that in the southern, mainly rural, regions of the United States there was a close relationship between conservative Protestantism and violence. In the Netherlands, however, it transpired that conservative Protestant youth living in villages commit violent acts more often than their counterparts in urban areas – urban conservative Protestant youth stated that they use far less violence than average. The relationship between violence and this religion is therefore dependent on the social context. In general, rural youth and young people in urban areas differ little from each other with respect to the use of violence. Weenink: 'Contrary to what many people think, the Dutch countryside is not always that idyllic'.

Also the relationship between alcohol use and violence is dependent on the social environment. This relationship is stronger among young village residents especially those with a conservative Protestant background. Weenink also comments that alcohol consumption is often seen as harmless pleasure by both parents and young people in rural areas, whereas in urban areas they often associate alcohol use with antisocial behaviour.

Take matters into their own hands

Weenink does not rule out the possibility that in the relatively closed conservative Protestant villages in the Dutch Bible belt young people are more inclined to take matters into their own hands than to call the police for help in conflict situations. On the other hand the lower use of violence among conservative Protestant youth in urban areas is possibly correlated with their lower participation in the nightlife scene there.

Don Weenink previously investigated excessive violence committed by young people and the forms and meaning of [youth violence](#). In this study

one of his conclusions was that attackers could end up in an 'emotional tunnel' where the violence escalates if the victim ends up on the ground and if the supporting group of the attackers is larger than that of the victims.

More information: Don Weenink. Delinquent Behavior of Dutch Rural Adolescents, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (2011). [DOI: 10.1007/s10964-011-9650-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-011-9650-x)

Provided by Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)

Citation: Conservative Protestant rural youth more violent than their urban counterparts (2015, October 30) retrieved 23 March 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-10-protestant-rural-youth-violent-urban.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.