

Moral Panics

Sociology

Cohen's sequence, and how to tell a panic from a genuine problem.

Cohen studied mods and rockers; the sequence has been applied widely since.

1

A group is identified

An incident is attached to a category of people, not to individuals.

2

Simplified for reporting

The group becomes a folk devil with a recognisable style and threat.

3

Coverage amplifies

Reporting outpaces incidents; the coverage itself becomes the evidence.

4

Experts and officials respond

Condemnation from authorities confirms the threat is real.

5

Control tightens

New powers or laws follow, often outlasting the alarm that produced them.

Educational reference. Calling something a panic is a claim about proportion, and needs evidence about the actual rate.