

National Research University
Higher School of Economics

As a manuscript

Oxana Mikhaylova

The Perspectives of Ego-network Analysis for Investigating Dissemination
of Moral Panic (the Case of Obesity)

Thesis Summary for the purpose of obtaining PhD in Sociology

Academic Supervisor:
Associate Professor, PhD in Sociology
Andrey Bykov

Moscow, 2022

Problem statement

Moral panic (MP) is one of the collective social processes that arise as a result of anxieties experienced at the group level¹. During MP, people feel strong concern about the behavior of a particular subject or group of subjects (“folk devils”) because they believe in a contemporary legend—a narrative that these actors exist and that their behavior does not correspond to current moral standards². Therefore, these moral deviants are seen as a serious threat to the society status quo. A well-known example of this kind of panic is the satanic MP. During this panic, a contemporary legend circulates that a secret network of Satanists operates throughout the world, performing cruel rituals, raping women and children, kidnapping people, and committing other deviant and delinquent acts. The peak of this panic in America came in the 1980s³.

The concept of MP appeared at the same time in the sociological and criminological literature⁴, and over the years, representatives of various scientific fields, including sociology, communication studies, and psychology, began to use it. The concept was also employed in non-scientific contexts and particularly in the media. Because the MP concept gained popularity in several disciplines simultaneously, researchers started to ask questions about the state of the scientific field as well as the advisability of revising the MP concept or even abandoning it due to the peculiarities of its origin⁵. In particular, one of the problematic issues

¹ Garland D. On the concept of moral panic. *Crime, Media, Culture*. 2008. Vol. 4. No. 1. P. 9–30.

² Victor J. S. Moral panics and the social construction of deviant behavior: A theory and application to the case of ritual child abuse. *Sociological Perspectives*. 1998. Vol. 41. No. 3. P. 541–565.

³ Victor J. S. Moral panics and the social construction of deviant behavior: A theory and application to the case of ritual child abuse. *Sociological Perspectives*. 1998. Vol. 41. No. 3. P. 541–565.

⁴ McLaughlin E. See also Young, 1971: Marshall McLuhan, moral panics and moral indignation. *Theoretical Criminology*. 2014. Vol. 18. No. 4. P. 422–431.

⁵ McRobbie A., Thornton S. L. Rethinking 'moral panic' for multi-mediated social worlds. *British Journal of Sociology*. 1995. Vol. 46. No. 4. P. 559–574. Hunt A. 'Moral panic' and moral language in the media. *British Journal of Sociology*. 1997. Vol. 48. No. 4. P. 629–648. Garland D. On the concept of moral panic. *Crime, Media, Culture*. 2008. Vol. 4. No. 1. P. 9–30. Altheide D. L. Moral panic: From sociological concept to public discourse. *Crime, Media, Culture*. 2009. Vol. 5. No. 1. P. 79–99. Miller T. Tracking moral panic as a concept. In: C. Krinsky (Ed.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Moral Panics*. London: Routledge, 2016; p. 37–54.

they noted is the lack of attention paid to the role of audiences in the dissemination of MP⁶. As a result, despite the fact that MP can be transmitted not only through the media but also through interindividual interactions (e.g., gossip, news sharing), social researchers are primarily interested in the effect of media on audiences. Such a strategy for studying MP propagation can provide incorrect information about the phenomenon's mechanics, which, in turn, complicates the determination of trends in its development. Accordingly, it is necessary to develop alternative methods for studying the diffusion of MP, particularly at the interindividual level.

In this dissertation, I propose a theoretical and methodological approach to solve this difficulty in modern MP research, and I consider the possibilities of using ego-network analysis to measure the spread of MP at the interindividual level. Ego-network analysis is a technique for collecting and analyzing an individual's personal social connections that is employed in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. It has already been used to analyze the diffusion of various social phenomena, such as ideologies, discourses, and attitudes⁷, but its potential for investigating the spread of MP has not yet been examined.

I propose an approach for measuring MP diffusion at the interindividual level and test it using the example of obesity. Some researchers consider obesity to be a socially constructed problem⁸. The media, the state, the scientific community, and specialists involved in public health are thought to be involved in its formation at the macro level⁹. At the micro level, this contemporary legend is reproduced by individuals who build their lives in accordance with the

⁶ David M. et al. The idea of moral panic—Ten dimensions of dispute. *Crime, Media, Culture*. 2011. Vol. 7. No. 3. P. 215–228.

⁷ Bernhard S. Analyzing meaning-making in network ties—A qualitative approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2018. Vol. 17. No. 1. P. 1–11.

⁸ Monaghan L. F., Hollands R., Prtichard G. Obesity epidemic entrepreneurs: Types, practices and interests. *Body & Society*. 2010. Vol. 16. No. 2. P. 37–71.

⁹ Monaghan L. F., Hollands R., Prtichard G. Obesity epidemic entrepreneurs: Types, practices and interests. *Body & Society*. 2010. Vol. 16. No. 2. P. 37–71.

idea that the phenomenon of obesity exists¹⁰, including those who suppose that anorexia is not a disease, but a lifestyle (i.e., they identify with pro-ana culture)¹¹. Biographical interviews were conducted with such individuals, and ego-network and diary data were collected.

This dissertation aims to develop a methodology for studying the spread of MP at the interindividual level. Such a methodology would increase the validity of data on audience perceptions of MP and help expand knowledge of the mechanisms of its diffusion. Additionally, this thesis reveals a new area for application of ego-network analysis. The spread of MP at the interindividual level takes place in the context of a complex system of sources of cultural discourse, such as the media, documents on social policy, and scientific and religious literature. In this regard, the use of ego-network analysis for MP research requires additional efforts to 1) separate the effects of the aforementioned sources of the contemporary legend transmission from the influence of interindividual interaction and 2) capture their cumulative effects on individual belief in the legend. This dissertation acknowledges the difficulty of this issue, but deeper reflection is left for further research.

Literature review

The MP theory is one of the approaches to explaining the emergence and reproduction of deviant behavior. Two representatives of this approach, D. Young and S. Cohen, authored this concept and the accompanying theoretical framework¹². Attributing responsibility for the

¹⁰ Within the framework of the obesity MP, information is circulating that overweight people, being guilty of being overweight due to an “unhealthy” lifestyle, create a serious burden for the country's healthcare system, become a burden to their relatives and friends, and form inaccurate guidelines for children and young people by normalizing the presence of excess weight. In this regard, according to the MP, such people need to be treated and encouraged in various ways to ensure that they achieve a “normal” weight lest society continue to bear the costs associated with their care. Murray S. Pathologizing “fatness”: Medical authority and popular culture. *Sociology of Sport Journal*. 2008. Vol. 25. No 1. P. 7–21.

¹¹ Fox N., Ward K., O'Rourke A. Pro-anorexia, weight-loss drugs and the internet: An ‘anti-recovery’ explanatory model of anorexia. *Sociology of Health & Illness*. 2005. Vol. 27. No. 7. P. 944–971.

¹² Young J. The role of the police as amplifiers of deviancy, negotiators of reality and translators of fantasy. *Images of Deviance*. 1971. Vol. 37. P. 27–61. Cohen S. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the*

societal ills to the folk devils, those considered members of a deviant group, during an MP helps to relieve accumulated collective fears and anxieties about the future of society. Deviance, in turn, is a major subject of interest in sociological research. This topic was investigated by such representatives of the classical sociological tradition as E. Durkheim, A. Shutz, G. Simmel, G. Tarde, T. Parsons, R. Merton, P. Sorokin, and many others¹³. The present dissertation's theoretical foundation is rooted in the constructivist approach to the analysis of deviance¹⁴.

In addition to its authors, the most significant contributions to the development of the epistemological perspectives of MP theory were made by such foreign researchers as N. Ben-Yehuda, E. Good, C. Critcher, C. Hall, D. Best, S. Hier, A. Hunt, K. Thompson, D. Garland, P. Waddington, A. McRobbie, S. Thornton, and P. Jenkins¹⁵. In the Russian-linguaged literature, I. Yasaveev, P. Meilakhs, and A. Efanov were especially closely involved in the

Mods and Rockers. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972. – p. 224.

¹³ Durkheim E., 2005. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, 2nd ed, Routledge Classics. Florence Taylor and Francis Ann Arbor, Michigan. Schuetz, A. The stranger: An essay in social psychology', *American Journal of Sociology*. 1944. Vol. 49. No. 6. P. 499–507. Simmel, G., *Leggewie, C., Exkurs über den Fremden, na.* 1908. Tarde, G. de 1886, *La criminalité comparée*, F. Alcan, Paris. Parsons T. *The Social System*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951. Merton, R.K. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Enlarged edition, Free Press, London, 1968. Sorokin P. A. Suicide as a social phenomenon. *Sotsiologicheskkiye issledovaniya* [Sociological Research]. 2003. No. 2. P. 104–114.

¹⁴ Goffman E. *Stigma: Notes on the management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963. – p. 147. Lemert E. M. C. *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967. – p. 277. Lofland J. et al. *Deviance and Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969. – p. 330. Schur E. M. *Labeling Deviant Behavior: Its Sociological Implications*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973. – p. 187. Becker, H. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. London: Free Press, 1963. – p. 179. Dotter D. L. *Creating Deviance: An Interactionist Approach*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004. – p. 345. Adler P. A., Adler P. The deviance society. *Deviant Behavior*. 2006. Vol. 27. No. 2. P. 129–148.

¹⁵ Goode E., Ben-Yehuda N. *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. – p. 299. Critcher C. Moral panic analysis: past, present and future. *Sociology Compass*. 2008. Vol. 2. No. 4. P. 1127–1144. Hall S. *Theorizing Crime & Deviance: A New Perspective*. London, UK: Sage Publications, 2013. – p. 294. Best J. *How Claims Spread: Cross-National Diffusion of Social Problems*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 2001. Hier S.P. *Moral Panic and the Politics of Anxiety*. London; New York: Routledge, 2011. Hunt A. *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Thompson K. *Moral Panics*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005. Garland D. On the concept of moral panic. *Crime, Media, Culture*. 2008 Vol. 4. no. 1. P. 9–30. Waddington P. A. J. Mugging as a moral panic: A question of proportion. *The British Journal of Sociology*. 1986. Vol. 37. No. 2. P. 245–249. McRobbie A., Thornton S. L. Rethinking 'moral panic' for multi-mediated social worlds. *British Journal of Sociology*. 1995. Vol. 46. No. 4. P. 559–574. Jenkins P. Failure to launch: Why do some social issues fail to detonate moral panics? *British Journal of Criminology*. 2009 Vol. 49. No. 1. P. 35–47.

development of MP theory¹⁶.

The study of MP dynamics is one object of study in this scientific field. Predominantly, the diffusion of MP is investigated in socio-historical research and media analysis¹⁷. The analysis of the susceptibility of the public (audience) to the content of a contemporary legend, which is studied with the help of focus groups, experiments, surveys, and ethnography, is directly related to measuring the dynamics of the spread of MP¹⁸. While these strategies solve the problem of measuring the audience of an MP identified in MP studies (as mentioned above) and allow researchers to assess people's perception of a contemporary legend, they have two significant drawbacks: 1) they do not enable researchers to directly study the process by which an individual begins to believe in a MP, and 2) they do not consider the influence of the personal networks and their various characteristics on an individual's perception of a contemporary legend¹⁹. This dissertation aims to develop a theoretical and methodological approach that establishes the prerequisites for overcoming these shortcomings.

In non-Russian languaged empirical studies, the MP theoretical framework has been used in connection with a wide range of issues, both subjects historically central to the field (e.g., children and youth) and new subjects (e.g., animals, technological risks, health)²⁰.

¹⁶ Yasaveev I. G. Designing social problems by means of mass communication: diss. ... doctor. sociological sciences: 22.00.04. Kazan., 2006. – p. 316. Meilakhs P.A. Social reflection of the drug situation in St. Petersburg: diss. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.04. St. Petersburg., 2006. – p. 195. Efanov A. A. Moral panic as a factor in social change: diss. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.04. Orenburg ., 2016. – p. 179.

¹⁷ Critcher C., Pearce J. A missing dimension: The social psychology of moral. In: C. Krinsky (Ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Moral Panics*. London: Routledge, 2016; p. 371–386.

¹⁸ Johnen M., Jungblut M., Ziegele M. The digital outcry: What incites participation behavior in an online firestorm? *New Media & Society*. 2018. Vol. 20. No. 9. P. 3140–3160. Pearce J. M., Charman E. A social psychological approach to understanding moral panic. *Crime, Media, Culture*. 2011. Vol. 7. No. 3. P. 293–311. Schildkraut J., Elsass H. J., Stafford M. C. Could it happen here? Moral panic, school shootings, and fear of crime among college students. *Crime, Law and Social Change*. 2015. Vol. 63. No. 1–2. P. 91–110. Flores-Yeffal N. Y., Vidales G., Plemons A. The Latino cyber-moral panic process in the United. *Information, Communication & Society*. 2011. Vol. 14. No. 4. P. 568–589.

¹⁹ See also Mikhaylova O. R. The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.)

²⁰ Cohen S. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011. – p. 282.

Russian scientists have mainly studied the MP phenomenon in connection with HIV/AIDS²¹, delinquent behavior²², and children and youth²³. I consider the application of ego-network analysis for studying the interindividual distribution of MP using the example of obesity. P. Campos and colleagues were the first to consider this phenomenon an MP²⁴. L. Monaghan, E. Saguy, S. Murray, E. Rich, and N. Boero made the greatest contributions to the development of this perspective²⁵. Russian-speaking researchers who had the greatest impact on the sociology of the body, which can be considered close to the critical weight studies in the English-speaking research tradition, include A. Podoroga, D. Mikhel, I. Kon, V. Krutkin, I. Sokhan, A. Temkina, A. Vanke, E. Golman, E. Omelchenko, S. Bardina, D. Kurakin, A. Kondakov, P. Romanov, E. Yarskaya-Smirnova, N. Nartova, Y. Krupets, and E. Orekh²⁶.

²¹ Yasaveev I. G. Designing social problems by means of mass communication: diss. ... doctor. sociological sciences: 22.00.04. Kazan., 2006. – p. 316.

²² Makarov A. S. Construction of the social problem of teenage delinquency in the printed editions of the Republic of Tatarstan: diss. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.04. Nizhny Novgorod., 2007. – p. 186. Meilakhs P. A. Social reflection of the drug situation in St. Petersburg. diss. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.04. St. Petersburg., 2006. – p. 195.

²³ Omelchenko E. L. Identities and cultural practices of Russian youth on the verge of the 20th–21st centuries: dis. ... doctor. sociological sciences: 22.00.06. Moscow., 2005. – p. 366. Gorodetskaya P. I. Social interpretation of the construction of the protection of the rights of orphans in the transforming Russian society: dis. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.04. Saratov, 2008. – p. 128. Gromov D. V. “Moral panic” as a mechanism for the development of a number of youth communities in the Soviet Union and Russia. *Historical Psychology and Sociology of History*. 2012. Vol. 5. No. 1. P. 164–178.

²⁴ Campos P. et al. The epidemiology of overweight and obesity: Public health crisis or moral panic? *International Journal of Epidemiology*. 2006. Vol. 35. No. 1. P. 55–60.

²⁵ Monaghan L. F., Hollands R., Prichard G. Obesity epidemic entrepreneurs: Types, practices and interests. *Body & Society*. 2010. Vol. 16. No 2. P. 37–71. Saguy A. C., Gruys K., Gong S. Social problem construction and national context: News reporting on “overweight” and “obesity” in the United States and France. *Social Problems*. 2010. Vol. 57. No 4. P. 586–610. Murray S. Pathologizing “fatness”: Medical authority and popular culture. *Sociology of Sport Journal*. 2008. Vol. 25. No 1. P. 7–21. Rich E. ‘I see her being obese!’: Public pedagogy, reality media and the obesity crisis. *Health (London)*. 2011. Vol. 15. No 1. P. 3–21. Boero N. All the news that’s fat to print: The American “obesity epidemic” and the media. *Qualitative Sociology*. 2007. Vol. 30. No 1. P. 41–60.

²⁶ Podoroga V. A. *Fenomenologiya tela: vvedeniye v filosofskuyu antropologiyu. Materialy lektzionnykh kursov* [The Phenomenology of the Body: An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology. Materials of lecture courses 1992–1994]. Moscow: Ad Marginem, 1995. – p. 339. Mikhel D. V. *Telo v zapadnoy kul'ture* [The Body in Western culture]. Saratov: Scientific book, 2000. – p. 171. Kon I. S. *Muzhskoye telo v istorii kul'tury* [The Male Body in the History of Culture]. Moscow: Slovo/Slovo, 2003. – p. 432. Krutkin V. L. Human corporeality in the ontological dimension. *Obshchestvennyye nauki i sovremennost'* [Social Sciences and Modernity]. 1997. No. 4. P. 143–151. Sokhan I. V. Production of female physicality in modern mass society: the cult of thinness and the tyranny of harmony. *Zhenshchina v rossiyskom obshchestve* [Woman in Russian Society]. 2014. No. 2. P. 68–77. Temkina, A. A. Medicalization of the reproduction and childbirth: A struggle for control. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*. 2014 Vol. 12. No. 3. P. 321–336. Available at: <https://jsps.hse.ru/article/view/3366> (Accessed: 20 April 2022). Vanke A. V. The semantics of masculine

Nevertheless, until now, in studies of obesity as an MP, as well as in research of MPs in general, practically no approaches have allowed investigation of the dynamics of MP diffusion at the interindividual level. In addition, there are difficulties related to considering obesity as an MP in different cultural contexts. This is probably due to the fact that, in different countries, the degree to which obesity is supposed to be an acute social problem varies: the fight against obesity is not always seen as a national priority, and discussion of obesity in a moral context is not in the focus of media present in the country. At the same time, it seems productive to apply this perspective (considering obesity an MP) to consumer behavior at the micro level because the practices of controlling body weight through eating in a certain way, choosing certain products, exercising, and undergoing cosmetic surgical procedures are now common in most countries.

In this regard, in this dissertation, I turn to a group of actors constructing the MP about obesity at the micro level through interpersonal interactions, which representatives of the concept of obesity as an MP did not previously consider to be carriers of this MP²⁷. The approbation of the tools is carried out on online communities of people who treat anorexia as a lifestyle, and not as a disease; therefore, publications related to these pro-ana communities

corporality in the space of social differences: diss. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.01. Moscow., 2013. – p. 227. Golman E. A. Women's corporality: Theoretical approaches and perspectives of sociological research: diss. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.01. Moscow., 2015. – p. 239. *Pro Telo. Molodezhnyy kontekst. Sbornik. statey* [Pro Body. Youth context. Collection of articles]. Ed. E. Omelchenko, N. Nartova. St. Petersburg: Aleteyya, 2013. – p. 282. Bardina S. M. Look, body and social interaction: The problem of distorted perception of one's own body in anorexia. *Sotsiologiya Vlasti* [Sociology of Power]. 2016. Vol. 28. No. 1. P. 35–54. Kurakin, D. Models of the body in contemporary popular and expert discourse: Toward a cultural sociological perspective of analysis. *Russian Sociological Review*. 2011. Vol. 10. No. 1–2. P. 56–74. Available at: <https://philosophy.hse.ru/index.php/sociologica/article/view/332> (Accessed: 20 April 2022). Kondakov A. Afterword. Judith Butler's guide to the universes. In: *Batler Dzh. Zametki k performativnoy teorii sobraniya* [J. Butler. Notes on the Performative Theory of the Assembly]. Moscow: Ad Marginem Press, 2018; p. 219–230. Romanov P. V., Yarskaya-Smirnova E.R. Sociology of the body and social policy. *Zhurnal sotsiologii i sotsial'noy antropologii* [Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology]. 2004. Vol. 7. No. 2. P. 115–137. Orekh E. A. The phenomenon of lookism and its sociological analysis. *Sotsiologicheskii Zhurnal* [Sociological Journal]. 2016. Vol. 22. No. 3. P. 67–81. DOI: 10.19181/socjour.2016.22.3.4585

²⁷ More in Mikhaylova O. Folk devils or moral entrepreneurs? Gap bridging in the social studies of pro-ana communities. *Deviant Behavior*. 2021. Published online: 10 Jun 2021.

are also relevant to this investigation. The most significant English-linguaged papers devoted to pro-ana culture were written by N. Fox, K. Ward, A. Rourke, N. Boero, C. Pascoe, K. Bates, C. Haas, M. Irr, N. Jennings, L. Wagner, M. Teufel, E. Hofer, F. Junne, H. Sauer, S. Zipfel, S., K. Giel and G. Cobb²⁸. In Russian-language literature, of particular interest are articles by T. Shurko, D. Litvina, and P. Ostrouhova, who offer a sociological analysis of the reception of elements of pro-ana culture in Russia²⁹.

Additionally, publications that examine anorexia from a relational perspective are important for my dissertation. In classical psychological research³⁰, as well as in network analysis³¹, it has long been known that personal social networks could be associated with the attitudes and practices related to their body and eating behaviors. Literature that reveals characteristics of the social connections of people with anorexia, as well as those who refer to their views as "pro-ana", includes research on attachment and social support³². These

²⁸ Fox N., Ward K., O'Rourke A. Pro-anorexia, weight-loss drugs and the internet: An 'anti-recovery' explanatory model of anorexia. *Sociology of Health & Illness*. 2005. Vol. 27. No. 7. P. 944–971. Boero N., Pascoe C. J. Pro-anorexia communities and online interaction: Bringing the pro-ana body online. *Body & Society*. 2012. Vol. 18. No 2. P. 27–57. Bates C. F. "I am a waste of breath, of space, of time": Metaphors of self in a pro-anorexia group. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2015. Vol. 25. No 2. P. 189–204. Haas S. M. et al. Communicating thin: A grounded model of online negative enabling support groups in the pro-anorexia movement. *New Media & Society*. 2011. Vol. 13. No 1. P. 40–57. Teufel M. et al. A comparative analysis of anorexia nervosa groups on Facebook. *Eating and Weight Disorders*. 2013. Vol. 18. No 4. P. 413–420. Cobb G. "This is not pro-ana": Denial and disguise in pro-anorexia online spaces. *Fat Studies*. 2017. Vol. 6. No. 2. P. 189–205.

²⁹ Shurko T. A. Focusing on women body: Physicians, sociologists and female Internet communities about "Eating Disorders." *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*. 2010. Vol. 7. No. 3. P. 381–404. Available at: <https://jsps.hse.ru/article/view/3591> (Accessed: 20 April 2022). Litvina, D. A. and Ostrouhova, P. V. The discursive regulation of female corporeality in social networks: The thin line between skinniness and anorexia in conventional and pro-anorexic discourses. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*. 2015. Vol. 13. No. 1. P. 33–48. Available at: <https://jsps.hse.ru/article/view/3346> (Accessed: 20 April 2022).

³⁰ For example, in psychodynamic psychological research, see: Caparrotta L., Ghaffari K. A historical overview of the psychodynamic contributions to the understanding of eating disorders. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*. 2006. Vol. 20. No. 3. P. 175–196.

³¹ Fletcher A., Bonell C., Sorhaindo A. You are what your friends eat: Systematic review of social network analyses of young people's eating behaviours and bodyweight. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*. 2011. Vol. 65. No. 6. P. 548–555.

³² Tiller J. M. et al. Social support in patients with anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. 1997. Vol. 21. No. 1. P. 31–38. Birmachu A. M., Heidelberger L., Klem J. Rumination and perceived social support from significant others interact to predict eating disorder attitudes and behaviors in university students. *Journal of American College Health*. 2021. Vol. 69. No 5. P. 488–494. Cardi V. et al. Social difficulties as risk and maintaining factors in anorexia nervosa: A mixed-method investigation. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. 2018. Vol. 9. No 12. P. 1–10. Okada L. M. et al. Association between exposure to

publications show that people with anorexia may have difficulty communicating and feel socially isolated. They also often report low levels of social support from family and other significant people. Separate from this literature are works equally important for my dissertation concerning conversations about food, bodies, and obesity, known as fatness, body, and food related (FBF) talks, within and outside the family³³. These publications are significant because they demonstrate the relationship between the modality³⁴ of discussions on these mentioned topics with the personal network members and the formation of an individual's attitude toward their own body and the system of views they develop in relation to their own eating behavior. This is crucial because of the human tendency to attribute moral meaning to excess body weight³⁵ and this attribution of the moral meanings to fatness lies at the core of the modern obesity legend propagated in the obesity MP.

Despite the fact that researchers have recently described features of both offline and online contacts of people with anorexia and pro-ana people in particular³⁶, few works have examined the quantitative parameters of their personal networks³⁷ or the nature of interactions with the social networks' members³⁸. Additionally, available publications on the topic are

interpersonal violence and social isolation, and the adoption of unhealthy weight control practices. *Appetite*. 2019. Vol. 142. P. 1–7. Pace U., D'Urso G., Zappulla C. Negative eating attitudes and behaviors among adolescents: The role of parental control and perceived peer support. *Appetite*. 2018. Vol. 121. P. 77–82. Patel K., Tchanturia K., Harrison A. An exploration of social functioning in young people with eating disorders: A qualitative study. *PLoS One*. 2016. Vol. 11. No. 7. P. 1–23.

³³ O'Dougherty M. et al. Dual conversations: Body talk among young women and their social contacts. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2011. Vol. 21. No. 9. P. 1191–1204. Roach E. et al. Family food talk, child eating behavior, and maternal feeding practices. *Appetite*. 2017. Vol. 117. P. 40–50. Shannon A., Mills J. S. Correlates, causes, and consequences of fat talk: A review. *Body Image*. 2015. Vol. 15. P. 158–172.

³⁴ An example of a negative modality is bullying, and an example of a positive modality is praise.

³⁵ Ringel M. M., Ditto P. H. The moralization of obesity. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2019. Vol. 237. P. 1–10.

³⁶ Tubaro P. et al. Sociability and support in online eating disorder communities: Evidence from personal networks. *Network Science*. 2014. Vol. 2. No. 1. P. 1–25. Pallotti F. et al. “You see yourself like in a mirror”: the effects of Internet-mediated personal networks on body image and eating disorders. *Health Communication*. 2018. Vol. 33. No. 9. P. 1166–1176. Wang T. et al. Social interactions in online eating disorder communities: A network perspective. *PLoS One*. 2018. Vol. 13. No. 7. P. 1–17

³⁷ In this dissertation, despite the focus on the qualitative typology of distribution, the quantitative characteristics of moral panickers' personal networks are also described. However, this was not in the main scope of the thesis because the sample size was too small to make meaningful quantitative estimates.

³⁸ Leonidas C., Dos Santos M. A. Social support networks and eating disorders: An integrative review of the literature. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*. 2014. Vol. 10. P. 915–927.

mainly based on data from Western countries, and there are practically no similar publications devoted to other cultural contexts. On the contrary, this dissertation relies on field material collected in the Russian-speaking, post-Soviet space and therefore expands research on the specifics of personal relationships of people with anorexia in non-Western societies.

From a methodological point of view, my dissertation is based on ego-network analysis and the biographical method; ego-network collection and analysis are carried out within the framework of biographical data collection³⁹.

Ego-network analysis is part of a wider tradition of network analysis. In this dissertation, I use qualitative and mixed methods ego-network analysis methods, and therefore the literature related to these methods was of great help in conducting the study⁴⁰. The ego network usually consists of an actor (ego), its alters (other actors), and the connections between them⁴¹. Despite the fact that qualitative and mixed methods research have long been widespread in the social sciences, it is difficult to characterize network analysis in this way. Understanding of the opportunities provided by qualitative network research, as well as mixed methods network research, began at the end of the 20th century⁴². Moreover, there are still disputes in the literature as to whether or not qualitative network analysis is distinct from the mixed one⁴³.

³⁹ Armitage N. The biographical network method. *Sociological Research Online*. 2016. Vol. 21. No. 2. P. 165–179.

⁴⁰ Domínguez S., Hollstein B. *Mixed Methods Social Networks Research: Design and Applications*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. – p. 373.

⁴¹ Crossley N. et al. *Social Network Analysis for Ego-Nets: Social Network Analysis for Actor-Centred Networks*. London: Sage Publications, 2015. – p. 209.

⁴² Bellotti E. *Qualitative Networks: Mixed Methods in Sociological Research*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015.

⁴³ Diaz-Bone R. Gibt es eine qualitative Netzwerkanalyse? *Historical Social Research*. 2008. Vol. 126. No 4. P. 311–343. Bellotti E. Qualitative methods and visualizations in the study of friendship networks. *Sociological Research Online*. 2016. Vol. 21. No 2. P. 198–216.

However, qualitative and mixed network data collection methods are used in various fields including social psychology⁴⁴, political sociology⁴⁵, family sociology⁴⁶, and ethnology⁴⁷. Methodological approaches of qualitative and mixed methods network analysis appeared following criticism of classical network studies for the formalism of statistical calculations, which do not take into account the rich semantic palette involved in the social connections⁴⁸. These approaches originated in relational sociology and the Manchester School of Anthropology⁴⁹.

The most significant contributions to the theoretical and methodological foundations of modern ego-network analysis and network analysis in general were made by M. Granovetter, B. Wellman, S. Borgatti, S. Wasserman, G. Robins, T. Snyders, D. Krackhardt, R. Burt, T. Valente, V. Batagelj, A. Ferligoj and many others⁵⁰. Additionally, M. Small, K.

⁴⁴ Straus F. *Netzwerkanalysen. Gemeindepsychologische Perspektiven für Forschung und Praxis*. Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 2002. – p. 339.

⁴⁵ Broadbent J. Movement in context: Thick networks and Japanese environmental protest. In: M. Diani, D. McAdam (Eds.), *Social Movements and Networks. Relational Approaches to Collective Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; p. 204–229.

⁴⁶ Hollstein B. Netzwerkveränderungen verstehen. Zur Integration von struktur-und akteurstheoretischen Perspektiven. *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*. 2003. Vol. 13. No. 2. P. 153–174.

⁴⁷ Trotter R. Friends, relatives and relevant others: Conducting ethnographic network studies. In: J. J. Schensu, Margaret, D. LeCompte, R. T. Trotter, E. K. Cromley, Singer M. (Eds.), *Mapping Social Networks, Spatial Data, and Hidden Populations. Ethnographers Toolkit*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999; p. 1–50.

⁴⁸ Emirbayer M., Goodwin J. Network analysis, culture, and the problem of agency. *American Journal of Sociology*. 1994. Vol. 99. No. 6. P. 1411–1454. Brint S. Hidden meanings: Cultural content and context in Harrison White's structural sociology. *Sociological Theory*. 1992. Vol. 10. No. 2. P. 194–208. White H. C., Boorman S. A., Breiger R. L. Social structure from multiple networks. I. Blockmodels of roles and positions. *American Journal of Sociology*. 1976. Vol. 81. No. 4. P. 730–780.

⁴⁹ Mitchell J. C. *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969. – p. 378. Emirbayer M. Manifesto for a relational sociology. *American Journal of Sociology*. 1997. Vol. 103. No. 2. P. 281–317. Crossley N. *Towards relational sociology*. London: Routledge, 2008. – p. 256.

⁵⁰ Granovetter, M. S. The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*. 1973. Vol. 78. No. 6. P. 1360–1380. Wellman B., Carrington P., Hall A. *Networks as Personal Communities*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1985. – p. 82. Borgatti S. P. Identifying sets of key players in a social network. *Computational & Mathematical Organization Theory*. 2006. Vol. 12. No 1. P. 21–34. Wasserman S., Faust K. *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. – p. 825. Robins G. et al. An introduction to exponential random graph (p^*) models for social networks. *Social Networks*. 2007. Vol. 29. No. 2. P. 173–191. Krackhardt D. Cognitive social structures. *Social Networks*. 1987. Vol. 9. No 2. P. 109–134. Burt R. S. Some properties of structural equivalence measures derived from sociometric choice data. *Social Networks*. 1988. Vol. 10. No 1. P. 1–28. Valente T. W. *Social Networks and Health: Models, Methods, and Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. – p. 296. Batagelj V., Ferligoj A., Doreian P. Direct and indirect methods for structural equivalence. *Social Networks*. 1992. Vol. 14. No 1–2. P. 63–90.

Fisher, K. Bidart, B. Hollstein, N. Crossley, M. Everett, D. Edwards, E. Bellotti, C. Leinhardt, C. McCarty, J. Molina, P. Tubaro, and others are foreign researchers who contributed to the institutionalization of qualitative and mixed methods for collecting and analyzing ego-network data⁵¹.

In Russian sociology, the prospects for using network methodology in empirical research were most thoroughly considered in the works of A. Churakov, G. Gradoselskaya, D. Maltseva, and N. Basov⁵². Russian scientists have most often used network methodology in applied research on education and science⁵³, collective behavior in online and offline spaces⁵⁴,

-
- ⁵¹ Small M. L., Cook J. M. Using interviews to understand why: Challenges and strategies in the study of motivated action. *Sociological Methods & Research*. 2021. P. 1–41. Fisher D. Using egocentric networks to understand communication. *IEEE Internet Computing*. 2005. Vol. 9. No 5. P. 20–28. Bidart C., Charbonneau J. How to generate personal networks: Issues and tools for a sociological perspective. *Field Methods*. 2011. Vol. 23. No 3. P. 266–286. Domínguez S., Hollstein B. *Mixed Methods Social Networks Research: Design and Applications*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. – p. 373. Crossley N. et al. *Social Network Analysis for Ego-Nets: Social Network Analysis for Actor-Centred Networks*. London: Sage Publications, 2015. – p. 209. Bellotti E. *Qualitative Networks: Mixing Methods in Social Research*. London: Routledge, 2015. – p. 208. Holland P. W., Leinhardt S. The structural implications of measurement error in sociometry. *The Journal of Mathematical Sociology*. 1973. Vol. 3. No 1. P. 85–111. McCarty C. et al. A comparison of social network mapping and personal network visualization. *Field Methods*. 2007. Vol. 19. No 2. P. 145–162. Tubaro P., Ryan L., D’angelo A. The visual sociogram in qualitative and mixed-methods research. *Sociological Research Online*. 2016. Vol. 21. No 2. P. 180–197.
- ⁵² Churakov A. Analysis of social networks. *Sotsiologicheskiye issledovaniya* [Sociological research]. 2001. Vol. 1. P. 109–121. Gradoselskaya G. V. Analysis of social networks: diss ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.01. Moscow., 2001. – p. 229. Maltseva D. V. Network approach in sociology: The genesis of ideas, current state and possibilities of application: diss. ... cand. sociological sciences: 22.00.01. Moscow., 2014. – p. 177. Basov N., Kholodova D. Networks of context: Three-layer socio-cultural mapping for a Verstehende network analysis. *Social Networks*. 2022. Vol. 69. P. 84–101.
- ⁵³ Guba K. S., Semenov A. V. In the center of attention or in the centers of attention? Analysis of the authority system of the local academic community. *Zhurnal sotsiologii i sotsial'noy antropologii* [Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology]. 2010. Vol. 13. No. 3. P. 133–153. Titkova V. V., Ivanyushina V. A., Aleksandrov D. A. Popularity of schoolchildren and the educational environment of the school. *Voprosy obrazovaniya*. [Educational Issues]. 2013. No. 4. P. 145–167. Dokuka S. V., Valeeva D. R., Yudkevich M. M. Co-evolution of social networks and academic achievements of students. *Voprosy obrazovaniya* [Educational Issues]. 2015. No. 3. P. 44–65. Maltseva D., Batagel' V. Social network analysis as a field of invasions: Bibliographic approach to study SNA development. *Scientometrics*. 2019. Vol. 121. No. 2. P. 1085–1128.
- ⁵⁴ Rykov Y. G., Meylakhs P. A., Sinyavskaya Y. E. Network structure of an AIDS-Denialist online community: identifying core members and the risk group. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 2017. Vol. 61. No. 7. P. 688–706. Moiseev S., Deviatko I. (2018) Virusnyy al'truizm ili sotsial'noye zarazheniye? Sravnitel'nyy analiz tipov uchastiya i mekhanizmov вовлечeniya rossiyskikh i ukrainskikh pol'zovateley sotsial'nykh media v blagotvoritel'nyu kompaniyu Ice Bucket Challenge [Viral altruism or social contagion? Comparative analysis of types of participation and mechanisms of involving Russian and Ukrainian users of social media in the charitable campaign Ice Bucket Challenge]. *Zhurnal sotsiologii i sotsialnoy antropologii* [The Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology], Vol. 21. No. 4. P. 154–181 (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.31119/jssa.2018.21.4.7>

economic behavior⁵⁵, and migration⁵⁶.

In this dissertation, ego-network analysis was combined with the biographical method. The combination of these methodological tools made it possible to blend quantitative and qualitative descriptions of the transformations in the moral panickers personal networks. Using interview data, it was possible to qualitatively typify changes in the personal networks via analysis of subjective descriptions of types of MP diffusion as well as support these findings with quantitative descriptions of personal networks. The prevalence of types and descriptions could be in the future research evaluated in terms of prevalence in quantitative studies such as surveys or through automated document analyses. The origins of the biographical method in the social sciences and sociology are multifaceted; usually, biographical studies in sociology are dated since the writings of W. Thomas and F. Znaneky⁵⁷. This dissertation conducts biographical research focused on the study of personal understanding of one's own life experience, which develops during the process of socialization⁵⁸.

Participants in the project “Age of Social Mobility” (D. Berto, W. Semyonova, V. Zhuravlev, E. Rozhdestvenskaya, and S. Rozhdestvensky) significantly influenced the development of the biographical method in Russian sociology, as did such researchers as E. Foteeva, M. Malysheva, N. Kozlova, E. Trubina, A. Gottlieb, N. Tsvetaeva, I. Golubovich, W. Bezrogov, O. Kosheleva, E. Zdravomyslova, A. Temkina, A. Vardomatsky, E. Yarskaya-

⁵⁵ Radaev V. V. Market as an interweaving of social networks. *Rossiyskiy zhurnal menedzhmenta* [Russian Journal of Management]. 2008. Vol. 6. No. 2. P. 47–54.

⁵⁶ Varshaver E., Rocheva A. “Homeland-rooted” or acquired in the receiving society: How does the composition of migrants’ “co-ethnic” ties affect their patterns of integration? *Journal of International Migration and Integration*. 2020. Vol. 22. No. 1. P. 347–368.

⁵⁷ Fuchs-Heinritz W. Biographical method. In: E. Y. Rozhdestvenskaya, V. V. Semenov (Eds.), *Biograficheskiy metod v sotsiologii: istoriya, metodologiya i praktika* [Biographical Method in Sociology: History, Methodology and Practice]. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1994; p. 11–41.

⁵⁸ In the same source. P. 16. The most famous representatives: Schuetze F. Biographieforschung und narratives Interview. *Neue Praxis*. 1983. Vol. 13. No. 3. P. 283–293. Rosenthal G. Reconstruction of life stories: Principles of selection in generating stories for narrative biographical interviews. *The Narrative Study of Lives*. 1993. Vol. 1. No. 1. P. 59–91.

Smirnova, V. Holofast, W. Nurkova, I. Razumova, and S. Chuikin⁵⁹. Additionally, researchers including the following contributed to the development of the method: B. Doctorov, E. Omelchenko, N. Nartova, O. Zaporozhets, D. Rogozin, A. Strelnikova, A. Vanke, E. Polukhina, and O. Zeveleva.⁶⁰ Several Russian researchers previously combined the biographical method with network analysis; however, the combination of these methodological approaches took place at the data analysis stage⁶¹. In my dissertation, on the contrary, these approaches are integrated not only at the data analysis stage but also during data collection.

Object and subject of dissertation

The object of the dissertation are theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the spread of MP.

The subject of the dissertation are the perspectives of ego-network analysis to study of the

⁵⁹ P. 15. Rozhdestvenskaya E. Y. *Biograficheskiy metod v sotsiologii: Istoriya, metodologiya i praktika* [Biographical Method in Sociology]. Moscow: ID HSE, 2012. – p. 381.

⁶⁰ Doctorov B. Z. *Sovremennaya rossiyskaya sotsiologiya: Istoriko-biograficheskiye poiski* [Modern Russian Sociology: Historical and Biographical Searches]. In 3 vols. Moscow: Direct-Media, 2014. – p. 1344. Pilkington H., Omel'chenko E. *Russia's Skinheads: Exploring and Rethinking Subcultural Lives*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010. – p. 285. Omelchenko E., Nartova N., Krupets Y. Escaping youth: Construction of age by two cohorts of chronologically young Russian women. *Young*. 2018. Vol. 26. No 1. P. 34–50. Zaporozhets O. N. "Mobile methods": the study of life in motion. *Sotsiologiya: metodologiya, metody, matematicheskoye modelirovaniye* (Sotsiologiya: 4M) [Sociology: methodology, methods, mathematical modeling (Sociology: 4M)]. 2017. No. 44. P. 37–72. Rogozin D. M., Kolosov A. V. (Co)experience of the proximity of death. *Monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniya: ekonomicheskoye i sotsial'nyye peremen* [Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes]. 2016. No. 6. P. 194–194. Strelnikova A. Spatial projections of social mobility: Moving as dominant events of biographical narrative. *INTERaktsiya. INTERv'yu. INTERpretatsiya* [Interaction. Interview. Interpretation]. 2015. Vol. 7. No. 10. P. 39–46. Tartakovskaya I., Vanke A. Worker's career as a biographical choice. *Sotsiologicheskoye obozreniye* [Sociological Review]. 2016. Vol. 15. No. 3. P. 9–48. Polukhina E., Goryainova A. Housing trajectories of Moscow families in the 20th century as an object of secondary analysis of biographical interviews. *INTERaktsiya. INTERv'yu. INTERpretatsiya* [Interaction. Interview. Interpretation]. 2015. Vol. 7. No. 10. P. 47–59. Zeveleva O. Biographical method and critical discourse analysis: Combination perspectives. *Sotsiologiya: metodologiya, metody, matematicheskoye modelirovaniye (Sotsiologiya: 4M)* [Sociology: Methodology, Methods, Mathematical Modeling (Sociology: 4M)]. 2014. No. 39. P. 7–39

⁶¹ Maltseva D. V. et al. Network analysis of biographical interviews: Opportunities and limitations. *Teleskop: zhurnal sotsiologicheskikh i marketingovykh issledovaniy* [Telescope: A Journal of Sociological and Marketing Research]. 2017. Vol. 121. No. 1. P. 29–36.

spread of MP at the interindividual level (using the example of obesity).

Dissertation goal and objectives

Goal: The dissertation goal is to identify the perspectives of using ego-network analysis to study the spread of MP at the interindividual level (using the example of obesity).

Objectives

1. Systematize contemporary theoretical and empirical studies of MP.
2. Conceptualize and operationalize an approach to measuring MP at the interindividual level.
3. Systematize approaches to the study of online pro-ana communities in the social, humanities, and medical sciences and substantiate the definition of members of such communities as moral panickers who spread MP about obesity.
4. Develop a methodological toolkit for studying the diffusion of the obesity MP at the interindividual level.
5. Test the developed toolkit for measuring the obesity MP at the interindividual level and offer recommendations for the further use and development of this approach.

Results of research objective 1 are presented in two articles:

Mikhaylova O. Kto ispol'zuet ponyatie moral'noy paniki? Bibliometricheskiy analiz nauchnykh publikatsiy [Who uses the moral panic concept? A bibliometric analysis of moral panic scientific literature]. *The Russian Sociological Review*. 2020. Vol. 19. No. 3. P. 351–375. (In Russ.)

Mikhaylova O. R. The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social*

Changes. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.)

Results of research objective 2 are presented in two articles:

Mikhaylova O. R. The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.)

Mikhaylova O. Folk devils or moral entrepreneurs? Gap bridging in the social studies of pro-ana communities. *Deviant Behavior*. 2022. Vol. 43. No. 8. P. 912-925.

Results of research objective 3 are presented in the following article:

Mikhaylova O. Folk devils or moral entrepreneurs? Gap bridging in the social studies of pro-ana communities. *Deviant Behavior*. 2022. Vol. 43. No. 8. P. 912-925.

Results of solving tasks 4–5 are presented in three articles:

Mikhaylova O. R. The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.)

Mikhaylova O. Folk devils or moral entrepreneurs? Gap bridging in the social studies of pro-ana communities. *Deviant Behavior*. 2022. Vol. 43. No. 8. P. 912-925.

Mikhaylova O. Measuring moral panic propagation on the interpersonal level: Case of pro-ana women bloggers. *INTERaction. INTERview. INTERpretation*. 2022. Vol. 14. No. 1. P. 33–57.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the dissertation

This dissertation's theoretical foundations lie in the constructivist approach to the study of deviance. In preparing the dissertation, a bibliometric method was used to systematize the MP literature, and meta-theoretical analysis was employed to analyze approaches to the study of pro-ana communities.

An empirical study was conducted as part of the dissertation; namely, biographical data of moral panickers was collected and analyzed. The biographical method was used in the framework of a qualitative interview; in addition to ego-network analysis, this enabled testing of the developed methodological toolkit.

Justification of the methods and empirical data selection

The obesity MP was chosen partly because of the availability of self-initiated diary entries (study participants kept diaries of their own free will, not at the request of the researcher)⁶². These were triangulated with data from biographical interviews.

To measure the relationship between personal social connections and belief in the contemporary legend of obesity, 50 biographical interviews were conducted using ego-network analysis in August–September 2020⁶³. These data were supplemented with information from the study participants' public online diaries from the VKontakte social network. A purposive approach was used to recruit informants⁶⁴, which made it possible to achieve variation among participants in terms of age, place of residence and duration of

⁶² Jones R. K. The unsolicited diary as a qualitative research tool for advanced research capacity in the field of health and illness. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2000. Vol. 10. No. 4. P. 555–567.

⁶³ In more detail, my approach to the combination of biographical interviews and ego-network data to measure the spread of the contemporary legend about obesity in the course of the MP is described in the following article: Mikhaylova O. R. The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.)

⁶⁴ Gentles S. J. et al. Sampling in qualitative research: Insights from an overview of the methods literature. *The Qualitative Report*. 2015. Vol. 20. No. 11. P. 1772–1789.

keeping a diary.

In addition to the standard content of a biographical interview, the actual narrative of a person's life from birth to the present, I asked questions to assess participants' degree of belief in the contemporary legend of obesity⁶⁵. That is, I posed questions to clarify what meanings participants put in being overweight⁶⁶ and how they related to people of similar parameters. Participants were also asked about pro-ana culture and how they thought their positions on these topics were formed. To collect information about informants' personal networks, the concentric circles method was used⁶⁷. In addition, I asked participants about belief in the contemporary legend of obesity among members of their personal networks before and after they acquired pro-ana views. That is, FBF talk networks—networks of informants' interactions with the members of their personal networks on topics related to food, body and fatness—were collected⁶⁸.

Before the start of the study, all participants provided informed consent, and a debriefing session was held at the end of each interview. Transcripts of the interviews were given to the informants in order to supplement the network data collected during the interviews, if necessary. Additionally, transcripts were given to participants so that they could provide feedback and as an expression of gratitude for their participation in the study. Thematic qualitative analysis was used to assess narrative data obtained from interviews and

⁶⁵ Ringel M. M., Ditto P. H. The moralization of obesity. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2019. Vol. 237. No. P. 1–10.

⁶⁶ Here and below, I mean “excess body weight” from a medical perspective.

⁶⁷ Tubaro P., Casilli A. A., Mounier L. Eliciting personal network data in web surveys through participant-generated sociograms. *Field Methods*. 2014. Vol. 26. No 2. P. 107–125. Van Waes S., Van den Bossche P. Around and around: The concentric circles method as powerful tool to collect mixed method network data. In: Van Waes, Van den Bossche (Eds.) *Mixed Methods Approaches to Social Network Analysis*. London: Routledge, 2020; p. 159–174.

⁶⁸ O'Dougherty M. et al. Dual conversations: Body talk among young women and their social contacts. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2011. Vol. 21. No. 9. P. 1191–1204. Roach E. et al. Family food talk, child eating behavior, and maternal feeding practices. *Appetite*. 2017. Vol. 117. P. 40–50. Shannon A., Mills J. S. Correlates, causes, and consequences of fat talk: A review. *Body Image*. 2015. Vol. 15. P. 158–172.

diaries⁶⁹. A mixed network analysis was applied to analyze network data: by classifying participant networks, types of legend propagation were identified (qualitative)⁷⁰. Additionally, for each ego network, basic parameters such as size, structure, and composition were described (quantitative)⁷¹. Quantitative propagation models such as SAOM, ERGM, and graph 2 vec⁷² were not evaluated in this dissertation; however, this could be done in future studies. Further study could also be conducted on the relationship between network structure and the degree of belief in the legend of obesity using machine learning methods⁷³.

Study limitations⁷⁴

It is necessary to be careful when describing the potential of the methodology used—interviews coupled with analysis of network metrics—to provide comprehensive information about the spread of MP and to refrain from drawing conclusions about causality. Instead, subjective perceptions of the MP diffusion process, which I gained access to during biographical interviews and analysis of personal documents, can be discussed. Additionally, it is recommended that multiple sources of ego data be combined whenever possible in order to

⁶⁹ Braun V., Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 2006. Vol. 3. No. 2. P. 77–101.

⁷⁰The types of propagation of the obesity legend are homophilia, social influence, and co-evolution. Read more in the following article: Mikhaylova O. R. The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.)

⁷¹More details about the results of the empirical study can be found in the following article: Mikhaylova O. Measuring moral panic propagation on the interpersonal level: Case of pro-ana women bloggers. *INTERaction. INTERview. INTERpretation*. 2022. Vol. 14. No. 1. P. 33–57.

⁷²Block P., Stadtfeld C., Snijders T. A. B. Forms of dependence: Comparing SAOMs and ERGMs from basic principles. *Sociological Methods & Research*. 2019. Vol. 48. No. 1. P. 202–239. Narayanan A. et al. graph2vec: Learning distributed representations of graphs. arXiv preprint arXiv:1707.05005. 2017

⁷³Evans J. A., Aceves P. Machine translation: Mining text for social theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2016. Vol. 42. P. 21–50.

⁷⁴Limitations are described in more detail in the following articles: Mikhaylova O. R. The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.) Mikhaylova O. Folk devils or moral entrepreneurs? Gap bridging in the social studies of pro-ana communities. *Deviant Behavior*. 2021. Published online: 10 Jun 2021. Mikhaylova O. Measuring moral panic propagation on the interpersonal level: Case of pro-ana women bloggers. *INTERaction. INTERview. INTERpretation*. 2022. Vol. 14. No. 1. P. 33–57.

increase the reliability of the reconstruction, as was done in this study. It is clear that, in the ideal case, for an objective restoration of the process of involvement in the MP, longitudinal behavioral data is required. However, collecting such information is difficult, and therefore the proposed approach to analyzing subjective understanding of transformations in personal views is perhaps the only currently possible way to study the spread of MP through interindividual interaction.

One of the most significant open questions regards the ability of the proposed approach to distinguish between the effect of media influence and that of interindividual communication on the formation of a person's attitude toward the contemporary legend in the MP diffusion process. However, during socialization in modern society, individuals are immersed in a whole set of different media sources; therefore, it is unlikely that differentiating and isolating these effects is possible. Moreover, it is quite possible that such a differentiation would be artificial because MP diffusion is multi-source by nature and distinguishing between effects could lead to an oversimplification of the propagation process.

Another limitation of this dissertation is its application of the approach to only one MP (concerning obesity). It is possible that other types of MP spread differently; for example, people may have different levels of susceptibility to the content of the legends that circulate during MPs⁷⁵. In particular, these differences may be related to personality traits, which presents a further subject for potential psychological research.

In addition, dissertation limitations may be related to cultural context. Diffusion of the obesity MP was analyzed among Russian-speaking pro-ana women; the institutional environment of the post-Soviet space differs from others, and therefore additional research is required to determine the presence of any culturally determined features of this phenomenon.

⁷⁵ Critcher C., Pearce J. A missing dimension: The social psychology of moral panic. In: C. Krinsky (Ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Moral Panics*. London: Routledge, 2016; p. 371–386.

Such institutional specificity, for example, may be explained by the fact that, in different cultural contexts, there are typical figures with whom individuals tend to discuss bodies, nutrition, and related topics.

It should also be noted that analysis was carried out on a sample of people who self-identified as women, and many network studies have shown that personal connections vary by gender⁷⁶. Similar limitations apply to other characteristics of the sample, such as age, race, ethnicity, membership in a marginalized group, socioeconomic status, and psychological well-being. It is known that people can form social relations in different ways in connection with these features⁷⁷, and therefore it is possible that diffusion of the obesity MP among people with different combinations of the mentioned characteristics will have its own unique features.

Finally, the limitations of the dissertation may include the online platform as a source for gathering participant diaries for analysis⁷⁸ as well as the use of the interview method for extracting information about personal connections and life experiences⁷⁹.

⁷⁶ Benenson J. F. Gender differences in social networks. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. 1990. Vol. 10. No. 4. P. 472–495. Igarashi T., Takai J., Yoshida T. Gender differences in social network development via mobile phone text messages: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. 2005. Vol. 22. No. 5. P. 691–713.

⁷⁷ Parks M. R. *Personal Relationships and Personal Networks*. London: Routledge, 2007. – p. 316.

⁷⁸ O'Brien M. R., Clark D. Unsolicited written narratives as a methodological genre in terminal illness: Challenges and limitations. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2012. Vol. 22. No. 2. P. 274–284.

⁷⁹ Doba K. et al. Organization of the narrative components in autobiographical speech of anorexic adolescents: A statistical and non-linear dynamical analysis. *New Ideas in Psychology*. 2008. Vol. 26. No. 2. P. 295–308. Bidart C., Charbonneau J. How to generate personal networks: Issues and tools for a sociological perspective. *Field Methods*. 2011. Vol. 23. No. 3. P. 266–286.

Main results of the study

Fields of moral panic research and contexts of this term usage

In this paper, the bibliometric approach was used for the investigation of the research field organized around the concept of moral panic. To examine the current condition of the moral panic field, we analyzed the papers published in the WoS from 1972–2019. As a result of our study, the thematic areas, and the most influential actors in the field were revealed and described. Today, the moral panic field is dominated by sociologists. Among the leaders in terms of citations are authors from financially developed countries. This shows that there is an economic inequality in the production of papers. The most cited are publications devoted to online studies. The results of this research demonstrate that there is no noticeable erosion among the empirical contexts, where the concept is used because children and youth are still the most popular object of moral panic studies. They are the classical objects for moral panic papers. At the same time, it could be argued that this field is still in the process of development because the theoretical and empirical papers that prevail are connected with the integration of the moral panic theory with other theories and concepts. We suppose this approach to the conceptual analysis developed in this paper could be useful for the revision of other fields developed around controversial concepts in sociology.

New theoretical perspective in moral panic research: pro-ana people as moral panickers

In moral panic studies, pro-ana communities are usually considered folk devils. Namely, pro-ana culture is investigated as an object of ‘moral crusades’ led by scientists, physicians, activists, politicians, mass media, parents and many other social actors concerned about the epidemics of restrictive eating disorders. In this paper, I put aside this strand of moral panic research and discuss the role of pro-ana communities as facilitators of moral panic to bridge the macro-micro divide in scientific investigations of the pro-ana phenomenon. I propose to

examine pro-ana people as entrepreneurs of the moral panic over obesity. This means that pro-ana communities can be analyzed as creating and spreading contemporary legends on obesity in their communication processes. Furthermore, I discuss and exemplify the roles of pro-ana people as amplifiers, supporters and enforcers of this panic. In addition, while reconnecting micro and macro levels in the explanation of the pro-ana phenomenon, I contribute to the development of moral panic theory, as the application of the concept of ‘moral panic’ to pro-ana communities facilitates niche formation in biomedical social research.

The perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level

Moral panic is a collective reaction that stems from a belief in the existence of people whose behavior contradicts social expectations and therefore threatens societal safety. This concept, while being proposed by Stanley Cohen at the end of the 20th century, has not yet gained a stable position in the social sciences lexicon due to the difficulties of its operationalization and subsequent evaluation. The paper discusses the perspectives of ego-network analysis for moral panic studies. The author relies on the definition of this concept through belief in a contemporary legend and uses a socio-psychological approach to its analysis. Basing on the example of moral panic about obesity, the author studies the methodological decisions that should be made when collecting and analyzing data using ego-networks in the framework of biographical interviews. In conclusion, the author discusses advantages of the approach proposed in the paper and names methodological and theoretical issues, that need to be addressed for this methodology to be applied in empirical research.

Measuring Moral Panic Propagation on the Interpersonal Level: Case of Pro-ana Women Bloggers

Despite the large number of papers devoted to the analysis of moral panic, research is lacking on methods to measure moral panic propagation on the interpersonal level. This article addresses that gap, suggesting a methodological approach that could be applied to studies of moral panic propagation by interpersonal interactions. Based on the pairing of ego-network analysis and biographical interviews, this method measures the influence of personal social contacts on an individual's participation in a moral panic. To demonstrate the capabilities of this methodology, I examine the obesity moral panic propagation. I conceptualize pro-ana women as moral panickers who diffuse moral panic on obesity and analyze 50 biographical interviews with Russian-speaking pro-ana women bloggers along with their public online diaries. The study findings are discussed in relation to obesity moral panic research. The potential and limitations of the approach are shown in the moral panic propagation analysis.

Statements to be defended

1. Since the conceptualization of MP by S. Cohen and D. Young, systematization of theoretical and empirical studies has shown that measuring the spread of MP is one of the most difficult tasks for researchers of this phenomenon. It has been demonstrated that modern analytical tools for studying the spread of MP a) do not allow researchers to directly analyze the inclusion of a person in this phenomenon and b) do not consider the influence of the personal networks and their various characteristics on a person's perception of the contemporary legend circulating during an MP.
2. Conceptual and operational analysis of ways to measure MP at the interindividual level showed that analyzing the MP audience as a network in which people are nodes and

interactions (e.g., conversations, joint actions) related to the circulation of the contemporary legend are the connections between them is a productive theoretical and methodological approach to measuring MP diffusion among audience members (at the micro level). Accordingly, each person from the audience is an ego, and their environment are alters. Alters, like egos, have a certain degree of faith in the contemporary legend spreading within the MP, and therefore both egos and alters can affect the degree of faith each holds in the legend. Such a conceptualization of MP spread demonstrates that personal social connections allow them to form and consolidate their perception of an MP and their role in it, as well as to modify this role.

3. The systematization of approaches to the study of pro-ana online communities in the social science, humanities, and medical science fields demonstrated that considering members of pro-ana communities not only as “folk devils” of the obesity MP but also as moral entrepreneurs highlights the mobility of the roles of MP actors. On a theoretical level, it also demonstrates how the MP macro-discourse on obesity and the various micro-practices and discourses of the people involved in it relate to one another. Namely, it is shown that the interaction of pro-ana people with the members of their personal networks mediates their internalization of the moralization of obesity, carried out at the macro level during the spread of the MP.

4. The developed methodological toolkit for studying the diffusion of the obesity MP at the interindividual level is based on ego-network analysis and the biographical method. To collect data, biographical interviews were used, an element of which was the concentric circles technique (hierarchical mapping), which, along with narratives, made it possible to capture transformations in the individual personal networks as his / her belief in the contemporary

legend about obesity changes. Such a toolkit significantly extends the capacities of the MP propagation measurement on the interpersonal level.

5. The proposed theoretical and methodological approach was successfully tested in an empirical study. The results obtained, first and foremost, made it possible to describe the contemporary legend on obesity that is propagated by the obesity moral panickers. Namely, the meanings associated with being thin and the attitudes towards people medically considered “fat”. Secondly, the suggested approach helped to typologize the changes that occurred in the personal networks of pro-ana women that happened in interindividual communications. The types allocated include: “social influence”, “homophily”, “pure coevolution”, “coevolution closer to social influence”, “coevolution closer to homophily”. Overall, findings provided with the use of the developed theoretical and methodological approach, assist in getting the more profound and rich theoretical knowledge on the mechanisms of the MP diffusion.

Scientific novelty of the dissertation (contribution to the development of the subject field)

1. A systematic review of modern theoretical and empirical studies of MP is presented.
2. An approach to measuring MP at the interindividual level is conceptualized and operationalized.
3. Approaches to the study of pro-ana online communities in the social sciences, humanities, and medical sciences were systematized, and the definition of this type of communities as moral entrepreneurs that disseminate the MP about obesity was proposed.
4. A theoretical-methodological tool for studying the diffusion of the obesity MP at the interindividual level was developed and tested, and recommendations for its use are proposed.

Published articles submitted for PhD defense:

1. Mikhaylova O. Measuring moral panic propagation on the interpersonal level: Case of pro-ana women bloggers. *INTERaction. INTERview. INTERpretation*. 2022. Vol. 14. No. 1. P. 33–57.
2. Mikhaylova O. Folk devils or moral entrepreneurs? Gap bridging in the social studies of pro-ana communities. *Deviant Behavior*. 2022. Vol. 43. No. 8. P. 912-925.
3. Mikhaylova O. R. The Perspectives of ego-network analysis in the moral panic propagation studies on the interpersonal level. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. 2021. No. 2. P. 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.2.1818>. (In Russ.)
4. Mikhaylova O. Kto ispol'zuet ponyatie moral'noy paniki? Bibliometricheskiy analiz nauchnykh publikatsiy [Who uses the moral panic concept? A bibliometric analysis of moral panic scientific literature]. *The Russian Sociological Review*. 2020. Vol. 19. No. 3. P. 351–375 (In Russ.)