Narkotikus vartojančios jaunimo grupės Sočyje (Rusijoje)

Santrauka
Rusijos moksloje literatūroje narkotikų vartojimas paprastai traktuojamas kaip „socialinė problemą“, kuri gali būti „įspėjsta“, pažabojus narkotikų paskių ir taikant bausmes narkotikų vartotojams bei prekybojams. Šis poziūris grynažiamas narkotikų vartojimo, kaip pasibaigimo nuo atitinkančios socialinės tikrovės, aiškinimu (dažnai susijęs su ekonomine pertvarka ir moraline sumaištimi, ikišius po Sovietų Sąjungos žlugimu).
Tyrimo naudojo 62 gulininio intervju su narkotikų vartotojais ir dėl lauko tyrimų dienoraštį, taip pat tiesiogiai bendrauta laisvalaikiu.
Raktai/žodžiai: ksenofobija, narkotikų vartojimas, jaunimas, subkultūra.

Drug Using Youth Groups in Vorkuta Russia

Abstract
Drug use within the youth cultural environment is widespread and unremarkable; this means that drug users can rarely be considered to constitute distinct "subcultures". In the context of processes of de-industrialisation and marketisation, drugs are a key commodity for sale and exchange. In the tough economic climate of the Russian far north – where geographical location means that hemp and opium based drugs cannot be locally grown, and supply routes are truncated by poor transportation links – they may become a key component of the informal economy. A key finding of this research was that the sale of drugs was one of a range of "hustling" practices – including trade in "acquired" goods and drugs, money-lending and "sorting" disputes – that were widespread among young people, whether or not they used drugs themselves.

Keywords: xenophobia, drug use, youth, subculture

Introduction
• Although drug use is often portrayed as located in a secluded, semi-criminal, separate world, in practice drug users cannot be considered a "subculture" as such. Drug use – at least at the recreational level – is almost never the sole purpose for gathering, and people using drugs together do not define themselves, or their groups of friends, by their drug use. The consequences of this are that research that hopes to reveal something about the cultural practices, norms, values and attitudes of young people to drug use cannot start out by identifying "drug users" as a specific group; those who are accessed via, for example, medical or police institutions are usually a narrow group of problem users or dealers who provide an unrepresentative picture of drug use across the youth population. However, as was found in this study, accessing young people who are drug users but not drug-dependent and who use drugs as part of a wider repertoire of cultural practices can be time-consuming and frustrating. Since young people rarely think their drug use is interesting in and of itself, they are unlikely to want to talk extensively about it (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 2).
• Further evidence of the non-subcultural nature of drug use is the fact that, during this research, it became apparent that drug use and drug dealing were practices that crossed over the two originally distinct case studies in Vorkuta. Thus, over the course of the research, while a number of respondents originally involved in the drug-use case study actually gave up or decreased their drug use (for health and other reasons), a number of respondents from the skinhead case study started using and/or selling drugs (cannabis and amphetamines) extensively. Indeed the two respondents who were samples in these case studies that were actually prosecuted for drug dealing during the course of the research were both from the skinhead case study.

Methods
Two six-week periods of fieldwork were conducted in 2006 and 2007. Access to the groups was gained through existing contacts from earlier research conducted by the research team and snowballing. The following methods of research were employed:
- Ethnographic observation
- Interviews with respondents [recorded]
- Diary-keeping
- Photos including giving cameras to respondents to take photos of the group themselves
- Video recordings
- Researcher reflections on fieldwork
- Walking tours of the city with respondents
A total of 16 interviews and four fieldwork diaries were transcribed and analysed using Nvivo7 software.

Results
• Earlier research carried out in the region by the same team of researchers, had shown that, despite the remoteness of Komi Republic, the rate of life-time reported illicit substance use among young people was higher in Komi Republic (29.2%) than it was in the comparative regions, Samara oblast (16.5%) and Krasnodar krai (15.9%) where, in both areas, cannabis was grown domestically and other drugs were well supplied through established drug trafficking routes (Pilkington, 2007). Since that research (2002-03), the range of drugs available in Vorkuta has significantly expanded; particularly noticeable was the extension of "recreational" drug use from cannabis (grass and resin) to amphetamines including a wide range of "Ecstasy-style" tablets collectively referred to as "tabli" or individually by more specific brand-names (e.g., "Swallows", "Mitsubishi", "Love") or, when in powdered form, "spidy". The use of vint (a methamphetamine that is injected) also appeared as more routine. Polydrug use is common with cannabis, amphetamines and alcohol being used as a "cocktail" especially on weekends or holidays. This is captured in the following quotation from a male respondent (2007):

Interviewer: And what's been the most interesting thing you've tried?
Respondent: I liked the mushrooms.
Interviewer: And when was the first time you tried speed or tablets [amphetamines]?
Respondent: At New Year, three years ago.
Interviewer: Did somebody just have some or did you decide to go and buy them?
Respondent: No, I just went to somebody's I knew and bought them from him.
Interviewer: Were you thinking that you'd like to do something new at New Year or something?
Respondent: Well, maybe, I wanted something new, to celebrate it completely differently.
Interviewer: And how did it turn out?
Respondent: It was brilliant.
Interviewer: Yeah! Go on, go on, ... Respondent: I was celebrating New Year for three whole days. ... I just kept moving from one state to another.
Interviewer: You mean from amphetamines to dope, from dope to amphetamines, then back to dope? Like that?

Many examples of polydrug use were evident from ethnographic observation and from conversations during which, for example, respondents complained that a pill they had taken at the club had not had the desired effect because they had already drunk too much.
• Another key finding was a greater propensity for informants to be involved in the sale and supply of drugs. While this cannot be measured accurately from purely ethnographic research, observation strongly suggested the embedding of drugs within wider informal practices of money-making or "hustling" (dvizhukha). This is described by a male respondent thus:

Respondent: Well, yeah. First, you have a smoke with someone who has some, then you get some via someone else, then you do it directly yourself or sometimes you are phoned. ... When it's a sound lad - like my classmate for example, phoned me himself and asked if I knew anyone who wanted something or whether I wanted something. I took some myself.
Interviewer: Oh, I see. Had he bought more than he could use or something?
Respondent: Who, my classmate? Yeah, he works it as well.
Interviewer: You mean he sells it?
Social relations of drug use: asocial capital?

- A key finding of the research was that the sale of drugs was one component of a much wider range of “hustling” practices – the key ones being trade in “acquired” goods and drugs, money-lending and “sorting” disputes that were widespread among young people. These practices require extensive networks of friends and acquaintances to enable the circulation of resources and the extraction of profit from them, as the following male respondent (2007) describes:

**Respondent:** It’s like if you have some capital – say 500 roubles – you buy [something] from some idiot whose robbed something. He simplyicks a phone let’s say from a girl. And you buy the phone from him for 500 roubles. It’s clearly worth a lot more, naturally. You know how to value it, so you know your target profit. You want to get let’s say, I don’t know about 20%. And you sell it to somebody who needs a phone like that right now. A telephone’s just an example, it could be...

**Interviewer:** And how do you know where to find such a person?

**Respondent:** A good way is through the local network, the Internet. I dunno, you can always think of something. Friends of friends – those kinds of networks. You develop your own small network.

This is an interesting finding, because it is frequently argued in sociological drug research that high levels of social capital (through social connectivity) is a protective factor against drug use as well as the harm accruing from it (see, for example, Lovell, 2002; Latkin, Forman, Knowlton & Sherman, 2003). Moreover, sociological studies of “transition” societies portray post-socialist societies – especially those in heavily de-industrialising cities like Vorkuta – as severely lacking in social capital (Rose, 1995; Halpern, 2005; Kertman, 2006). In contrast to both these bodies of work, this research study found young people in Vorkuta to be socially connected to a high degree. However, their networks do not generate “protective” social capital but, on the contrary, they are used for the mutual extraction of profit. One male respondent (2007) outlines how an acquaintance generates knowledge of an individual’s weaknesses, and how the recognition of someone else’s need for a resource (money, contacts, protection) can be exploited for one’s own profit:

**Respondent:** Serpent, for instance, has a lot of things which Danil [left] because, for example, he needed some cash or something quickly. And Serpent is a right crafty bugger. He gives Danil money, a loan basically, on that basis. He [Danil] leaves something – a television or something – with him. Of course Danil then goes and blows all the money in the slot machines and gives him nothing back. Serpent has plenty of things that Danil has given him.

**Interviewer:** But Danil’s completely skint isn’t he?

**Respondent:** That’s why he’s skint, because he plays the slot machines. If you only knew how much he loses.

The findings of the research have been written up in an article that challenges existing understandings of the role of social capital in drug using circles and published in a leading international drug policy journal (see Pilkington & Sharifullina, 2009).

Conclusions

The safe and use of drugs is not limited to a small section of the youth community with drug addiction problems. On the contrary, illicit substances – especially cannabis and amphetamines – are bought, sold and used by large sections of the youth population, even in remote geographical areas where supply routes do not normally reach. In order to capture the extent and significance of these practices it is important that ethnographic research starts out with the “normal” population rather than focusing on “problem drug users”.

References


Violent Youth Groups in the Tatarstan Republic of Russia

Abstract

The article presents the main findings of research on violent youth groups conducted in the Tatarstan Republic of Russia as part of the international EU FP6 project, Society and Lifestyles (2006-2008). It is argued that youth criminal gangs are gradually losing their “place” in the arena of non-institutional activities and they are being replaced by skinhead groups which have become more and more active during past years.

Keywords: criminal gangs, nationalist groups, skinheads

Introduction

Violent youth groups have long been the subject of social research in the western world, unlike in the former USSR, where issues related to youth violence, especially violent and criminal youth groups, were tabooed. It had been proclaimed that such activities can only be witnessed in Western Capitalist societies but not in Socialist ones; thus organised youth groups were not mentioned in Russian literature on juvenile delinquency before 1980 or were considered “informal groups”. Few studies on gangs that appeared in the late 1980s-early 1990s were mainly focused on legal and criminological aspects of gangs (see, for instance, Prozumentov, 1993; Bulatov & Shleser, 1994 and others).

The first ethnographic study was started in 1989 by Alexander Salagev and a group of sociologists working in the Laboratory of Sociology at Kazan State University. This research is still on-going, and a great amount of ethnographic material on Russian gangs operating in the Volga area was collected during its 15 year-duration (see Salagev, 2001; Salagev & Shashkin, 2001 and 2002; Shashkin & Salagev, 2002 and 2003). Several ethnographies were done later in Lysbert, a Moscow region (Orchinsky, 1990), Ulyanovsk (Omelchenko, 1996; Pilkinson & Omelchenko, 2002), Ulan-Ude (see Badmaev, 2002) and some other cities. Recent studies that include ethnographic data are mostly focused on topics adjacent to gangs, for example, prison culture in Russia (Oleynik, 2001) or organised crime and violent entrepreneurship (Volkov, 2002).