

Elena OMELČENKO  
Hilary PILKINGTON  
Irina KOSTERINA

## Narkotikus vartojančios jaunimo grupės Sočyje (Rusijoje)

### Santrauka

Rusijos mokslinėje literatūroje narkotikų vartojimas paprastai traktuojamas kaip „socialinė problema“, kuri gali būti „išspręsta“, pažabojus narkotikų pasiūlą ir taikant bausmes narkotikų vartotojams bei prekyautojams. Šis požiūris grindžiamas narkotikų vartojimo, kaip pabėgimo nuo atšiaurios socialinės tikrovės, aiškinimu (dažnai susijęs su ekonomine pertvarka ir moraline sumaištimi, kilusia po Sovietų Sąjungos žlugimo).

Šio atvejo tyrimas Sočyje – mieste, kuriame jaunimas turi palyginti geras ekonomines ir kultūrinės galimybes – sugriauna pagrindinį argumentą, grindžiantį minėtus aiškinimus. Tyrimas pateikia priešingus argumentus: narkotikai – ypač „pramoginiai“ – tampa vis įprastesne („normalia“) jaunimo kultūros dalimi.

Tyrimo naudoti 26 giluminiai interviu su narkotikų vartotojais ir du lauko tyrimų dienoraščiai, taip pat tiesiogiai bendrauta laisvalaikio.

**Raktažodžiai:** ksenofobija, narkotikų vartojimas, jaunimas, subkultūra.

Hilary PILKINGTON  
University of Warwick

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Elvira SHARIFULLINA  
Elena OMEL'CHENKO  
Scientific Research Centre Region

## 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 (Bourdois, 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?

Respondent: You forgot the alcohol. ...

Interviewer: Alcohol?

Respondent: Yeah, basically, everything at once.

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 on?

**Respondent:** Well, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And those who sell on, do they make good money?

**Respondent:** Pretty good. Well, if you buy wholesale for 350 [pauses, sighs], then you are likely to come out with 400 [roubles] profit.

**Interviewer:** That's if you sell on the whole box, yeah? I see, and where do they get the boxes?

**Respondent:** Well they work directly with the gangsters.

**Interviewer:** And does everything to do with grass have to go through the gangsters?

**Respondent:** Who else? If I import [some cannabis], who the hell else am I going to sell the bulk of it to? ... It's easier and simpler to go to the gangsters. Otherwise you might get cheated or something.

### 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 simply nicks 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 sale 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".

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Elena OMEĻCHENKO  
Scientific Research Centre Region, Pushkinskaya 4a, 118, Ul'ianovsk, Russia.  
E-mail: omelchenkoe@mail.ru

Hilary PILKINGTON  
University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL, United Kingdom.  
E-mail: H.Pilkington@warwick.ac.uk

Elvira SHARIFULLINA  
Scientific Research Centre Region, Pushkinskaya 4a, 118, Ul'ianovsk, Russia.  
E-mail: ellain@yandex.ru

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Elena OMEĻČENKO  
Hilary PILKINGTON  
Elvira ŠARIFULINA

## Narkotikus vartojančios jaunimo grupės Vorkutoje (Rusijoje)

### Santrauka

Narkotikų vartojimas tarp jaunimo yra labai paplitęs, tačiau retai kada pastebima, kad jaunuoliai laikosi kitokios nei įprasta gyvenmenos. Šiaurės Rusijoje dėl sunkios ekonominės situacijos narkotikai gali tapti pagrindine šešėlinės ekonomikos dalimi. Tai lemia Šiaurės Rusijos geografinę padėtį, netinkama auginti kanapes ir kitus narkotikus. Prekės pirkėjų tiesiogiai nepasiekia dėl sunkių pervežimo sąlygų, dėl to klesti perpardavinėtojai. Pagrindinė šio tyrimo išvada tokia: narkotikų prekyba yra viena iš sukčiavimo veiklų, įskaitant prekybą neteisėtai įgytais daiktais ir vaistais, pinigų skolinimą ir kitas veiklas, kurios plačiai paplitusios tarp jaunų žmonių, nepriklausomai nuo to, ar jie patys vartoja narkotikus.

Tyrimas vyko 6 savaites 2006 ir 2007 m. Taikytas stebėjimo metodas, naudoti 16 giluminių interviu, 4 tyrėjų dienoraščiai, vaizdo įrašai.

**Raktažodžiai:** ksenofobija, narkotikų vartojimas, jaunimas, subkultūra.

Alexander L. SALAGAEV  
Alexander S. MAKAROV  
Rustem R. SAFIN  
Center for Analytic Studies & Development, Kazan

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## 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 & Shesler, 1994 and others). The first ethnographic study was started in 1989 by Alexander Salagaev 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 Salagaev, 2001; Salagaev & Shashkin, 2001 and 2002; Shashkin & Salagaev, 2002 and 2003). Several ethnographies were done later in Lyubertsy, a Moscow region (Ovchinskiy, 1990), Ulyanovsk (Omelchenko, 1996; Pilkington & 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).