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ABSTRACT BOOK

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Theme – TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN DRUG USE

Title – Drug use among teenagers across Europe. Trends over time and space - geography versus globalisation: which are the key variables, underlying this complex and dynamic process?

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Abstract

Based on the ESPAD - European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs – data about drug use among the sixteen years old students, in more than 30 European countries, from the 2003 survey, are submitted to cluster. Based on data about prevalences and frequencies of “cannabis use” a classification of countries according the different patterns identified, is provided. This analyse is compared with the results from that obtained with the 1995 and the 1999 ESPAD survey. Countries maintaining and/or changing drug use patterns, are identified.

Another cluster analysis based on the 2003 prevalences of cocaine, crack, ecstasy, amphetamines, LSD and magic mushrooms use, shows in more detail the dynamic of the spread in “other drugs but cannabis” use across Europe, when compared with that obtained in earlier studies.

The identification of similar patterns of drug use, over time, among countries with different legal status of drug use, puts in question the role of macro social variables moderating the teenagers patterns of drug use across Europe. The role of other variables like the pressure to the normalization of the teenager recreational lifestyle, but also the economic situation, the political and social change, and the level of social support over that period of time, are also discussed. In a ecosocial epidemiology perspective, some reflections are done concerning the best research design to be able to capture the complexity and the dynamic of the process of drug use spread among young populations through Europe.

Key words: ESPAD, drug use patterns, trends over time and space, macrosocial variables, ecosocial approach.

Normalisation vs. marginalisation

Mechanisms of controlling and regulating cannabis use
The comparison of students in Estonia and Italy

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The prevalence of drug use among younger generation has been growing during the last decade in Europe. Experimenting with cannabis increased in most countries between 1995 and 1999. Several authors have argued that recreational drug use had become widespread among “average youth” and had become normalised. Subcultural theories are believed to be too outdated to analyse recreational drug use in the 1990s.

This paper focuses on the questions if cannabis users constitute subcultures or is it mainstream youth cultural practice; and how the position of cannabis users in society influences personal drug use.

Empirical part of the research relays on open ended interviews with cannabis users in Estonia and Italy. The target group are average young people, university students, in both countries. According to preliminary results is possible to argue that in Italy the drug use is normalised among wider group of young people. Cannabis use in Estonia is still more subcultural phenomenon. The main research problem is the personal regulation of cannabis use depending on larger social context. Influence of normalisation/subculturalisation on cannabis users in each country is described using three aspects: the necessity to hide smoking from other people, availability of cannabis and rationalisation of the cannabis use.

METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN DRUG RESEARCH

Testing the Validity of the Cannabis Use Disorder Identification Test (CUDIT)

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Increasing or relatively high prevalence of cannabis use among younger people in most European countries, goes along with an increasing demand for appropriate instruments to assess *problematic* cannabis use. The Cannabis Use Disorder Identification Test (Adamson & Sellmann, 2003), developed by adapting the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT), is such an instrument.

But what *is* problematic cannabis use? How can we make the difference between “problematic” and “normal” use? Does a “normal” use even exist? Is not every way of using an illegal substance “problematic” per se? Where should a certain cut-off be set which makes that one cannabis user is considered as problematic while another one is not? Every instrument we choose relies on a social construct of what is “normal” and what is not. And every cut-off we set is at least to some extent arbitrary.

Concerning cannabis, most experts do agree that driving a motor vehicle under the influence of cannabis is problematic. Others assume that using cannabis before school or work, or in other situations where high concentration is needed, is problematic. Yet another argue that cannabis use is problematic if it serves as a self-medication for psychological troubles like depression, desperation or anxiety. To rely on the concerned person’s own general self-evaluation whether a certain pattern of cannabis use causes problems to her or to him, is one more – out of various – possibilities to assess problematic use.

The objective of our analysis was to find out whether the CUDIT correlates with the widely accepted aspects of problematic use mentioned above (“popular concepts”), if the CUDIT is able to discriminate between “problematic” and “non-problematic” or “less problematic” users, respectively, according to this concepts and where the ideal cut-off has to be set. In a representative Swiss sample of 5025 adolescents and young adults (*Swiss Cannabis Monitoring Study*) 593 were found actual cannabis users, to which the CUDIT was presented. Firstly, the CUDIT’s correlation with the popular concepts of problematic use (i.e. driving under the influence, cannabis use before school or work, self-medication, and general self-evaluation) was tested. Secondly, taking the popular concepts as “golden standards”, Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve analysis was used to test the CUDIT’s discrimination ability and to determine the most appropriate cut-off score for use as an indicator of problematic cannabis use.

Our findings indicate the CUDIT’s accordance with the popular concepts of problematic use and its ability to discriminate between “more problematic” and “less problematic” users. These results might be of interest to other European researchers, because – to our knowledge – there is no study about the validity of the CUDIT in the European context published, yet.

Theme: Normalisation vs. Marginalisation
Title Cannabis users in out-patient treatment and in the population:
who goes to treatment?

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Abstract

There is a high prevalence of cannabis use in Germany today and a rather big number of users. Although treatment demands trough this group have increased over the last 10 years, the number of treated cases is still much lower. A main question in the cannabis debate therefore is, why some users feel they are in need of help and treatment.

As part of the CARED study on clients with primary cannabis related problems in out-patient care (Simon et al. , 2004) items on drug users, patterns of use and background of use have been collected. The same data are available from the national survey on use and misuse of psychoactive substances (Kraus et al., 2005). A comparison of these two groups is used to understand the main factors of influence, which might motivate some of the cannabis users to go for ambulatory care. Duration of use, frequency of use (Kleiber & Soellner, 1998) as well as experiences with other psychoactive substances (von Sydow et al., 2002) are known factors in the development of cannabis addiction.

A number of similarities have been found between cannabis users in the population and primary cannabis users in treatment with respect to drug use, drug affinity and background. The pattern of use is more intensive, risky behaviour more frequent in the treated group, however. It will be analysed, how far these findings become even more clear when only clients in treatment with a validated clinical diagnoses are included in the analyses.

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1. Theme

Trends and patterns in drug use

2. Title of the paper

"Motivations for the combined use of cocaine with other substances"

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5. Abstract

The IVO participated in an international two-year study in the how and why of the use of club drugs. We were responsible for the data collection and analysis of the city of Rotterdam (the ISA in San Francisco conducted the study in San Francisco and Hong Kong). We will present a part of the Rotterdam data, namely data on the use of cocaine.

Research questions:

- What are characteristics of users of cocaine?
- What other drugs and/or alcohol are used in combination with cocaine (on one occasion)?
- In what social settings and with what motivations is cocaine (combined with other substances) used?

The cocaine-using subsample¹ exists of 55 young people (15-35 years old) who live and go out in Rotterdam. A few characteristics: average age is 23 years; most have a Dutch cultural background; one half are students, the others are working; and one half are single, the other have a partner. Regarding substance use in the past 12 months: all drank alcohol, 49 smoked marihuana, 48 used ecstasy, and 24 used speed/amphetamines. Regarding substance use in the past 30 days: all drank alcohol, 43 smoked marihuana, 34 used ecstasy, and 16 used speed/amphetamines.

At this point we are analysing the qualitative data with Zinberg's triangle drug(s) – set – setting. That means that we cannot state significant results and conclusions in this abstract. However, we guarantee that analyses are completed in September and ready for presentation at the ESSD Conference. We will bring copies of the paper to the conference.

¹ The total sample exists of 84 young people living in and going out in Rotterdam. They were recruited in clubs, through flyers (in stores etc.), advertisements on the Internet and snowball sampling. One part of in the interview was quantitative (f.e. demographics and drug use), the larger part was qualitative (f.e. motivations).

Long-term trends in ecstasy and cocaine use among Amsterdam youth

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In thirteen years of the annual Antenna Amsterdam monitor we have documented changes in nightlife and recreational substance use among the youth and young adults of Amsterdam. We have observed growth, stabilisation and decline in the licit and illicit drug markets. New substances were introduced and old ones were revived.

Antenna combines qualitative data from a panel study with quantitative survey data and indicators from secondary sources. The survey focuses each year on either secondary school pupils, cannabis coffeeshop customers, pubgoers or clubbers. Together, the survey statistics reflect trends in substance use among trend-setters, trend-followers and mainstream youth. Although the rates of use vary, the relative popularity of certain substances seems to follow a similar pattern within these groups.

We will give an overview of substance use among Amsterdam youth in the past years, with a special focus on ecstasy and cocaine. The figures presented will show that the ecstasy culture has been over its peak for some time now. The comeback of cocaine is a reality in nightlife and it has overtaken ecstasy in many networks.

White nights in Amsterdam. The comeback of cocaine in the post-rave era.

The use of cocaine in the Dutch club- & partyscene has been on the increase for several years. Regional (Antenna 1993-2005) and National (Trendwatch 2003-2005) studies, monitoring drug use among adolescents, show figures that support this. Both studies are focused on trendsetters and early adopters who participate in different urban tastecultures (club-, partyscene, gay etc.).

Cocaine has been the dominant drug among addicted (street) users for years, where it is usually consumed in the form of crack cocaine. Why is it that cocaine, despite of its negative connotations, still experiences a revival in recreational drugscenes? Several, cohesive indicators play a part here. Roughly four dimensions can be distinguished, from more specific to more general. Specific factors relate to the 'mediagenic' character and image-culture of cocaine, unique (subjectively experienced) properties of cocaine, quality and availability. Then there are general factors that relate to trendsetters, like the strong need for distinction among the eccentric, hip and creative (sub)cultures. Thirdly, there are developments in nightlife, such as multicultural influences and associated musical styles. Finally there is a general process of normalization of drug use.

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Theme: Trends and patterns in drug use (or Methodological perspectives)

1. Title: Monitoring emerging drug trends: some considerations of validity and reliability
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4. Abstract:

Monitoring emerging drug trends: some considerations of validity and reliability

In 2002 the Bergen Clinics Foundation established Føre Var, a citywide 'earlier warning' system geared towards the identification, monitoring and reporting of drug and alcohol tendencies/trends at six-monthly intervals. The primary goal for the system is the dissemination of earlier, more reliable information on new and emerging trends.

The Føre Var system triangulates and cross-references a wide range of statistical and quantitative data including seizures data, treatment figures, alcohol sales and a school survey, with information from a number of 'leading edge' or sensitive data sources, including internet sites, youth and local media, cultural mapping and key informants.

This paper presents selective empirical findings on key drug trends picked up by the Føre Var model between 2002 and 2006 (Rohypnol, cocaine, anabolic steroids) and results are retrospectively - and critically - reviewed. Reflections on the extent to which Føre Var's main trend findings may be considered valid and reliable will be presented. Considerations include the validity of the sources used, challenges of multi-method triangulation, what drug trends the model may have missed, and the possibility of utilizing external sources to validate and substantiate findings.

Is there are “real” cocaine problem in Switzerland?

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Paper to be presented at the
*17th annual conference of the ESSD,
Lisbon, Portugal, 21-23 September 2006*

After the drop of interest in the “cannabis question” in Switzerland due to a political dead-end recently a public discussion on “cocaine problems” broke out in the country. Several stakeholders in a societal process of the “definition of drug problems” entered the arena by defining the situation and constructing the problem (public health groups, police forces, media, city administrators and several others).

The presentation describes and gives an sociological analysis of this process in a perspective of the “social definition/construction approach of social problems” (Spector/Kitsuse). Available data on the spread of cocaine consumption will be presented (compared to other European countries) and the “claims-making activities” of some problem constructors be reconstructed (based on text analysis of there statements) and analyzed.

As we see for cannabis use whose “career” as a “societal drug problem” had its ups and downs with related (e.g. political) consequences for the users, the understanding of the societal process of the definition of the consumption of a psychoactive substance as a “real” drug problem is of relevancy if one wants to understand society’s drug issues. Finally the role of cocaine as a party and performance drug in different life worlds (party scene, banking) in a “event society” (Erlebnisgesellschaft /Schulze) and “performance society” like Switzerland will be discussed.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The prevalence of cocaine use is still very low in Germany, but rates have been increasing over the past few decades. Patterns of drug consumption and related adverse consequences in individuals who have used cocaine were investigated in order to distinguish different types of cocaine users. **Methods:** Data come from two national representative surveys on substance abuse in the German general population conducted in 1997 and 2000 using self-administered questionnaires. Overall response rates were 65% and 51%, respectively. The two samples were pooled (n=16,159) and latent cluster analysis was conducted using a sub-sample of 272 lifetime cocaine users. **Results:** Three clusters were derived: the majority belonged to the group of mainly unproblematic users (UPG, 80%), the second group comprised non-amphetamine poly-problem drug users (NAPPG, 12%), and a small group was composed of poly-problem drug users (PPG, 8%). Comparisons of sociodemographic characteristics, consumption patterns and age of onset for licit and illicit drug use revealed significant differences between the groups. **Conclusions:** The majority of cocaine users in the general population are experimental or occasional users of licit and illicit drugs. Rather than being a major drug, cocaine is one of many other licit and illicit drugs. Cocaine use as part of predominantly poly-drug use behaviour is strongly associated with substance-related disorders.

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1. Theme:**NORMALISATION VS. MARGINALISATION; CRACK/Cocaine****2. Title of the paper**

Conditions and changeover between social integrated and problematic cocaine use

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5. objectives:

- Investigation of changeovers between controlled/self-regulated and problematic cocaine use and vice versa;
- Identification of protective factors of self regulated, less risky patterns of substance use and risk factors of problematic, dependent cocaine use (lifestyle aspects and subjective construction of different consumption experiences);

methodology

Sampling of social integrated cocaine users that differ in the domain of consequences of cocaine use: social integrated, controlled users (group 1) and problematic users that enter drug treatment (group 2) on the other hand.

The design is a combination of quantitative (group 1: n=99; group 2: n=32) and qualitative parts (group 1: n=22; group 2: n=22) – the qualitative explored users are part of quantitative sample.

The construction of different conditions for patterns of use will take place in the theoretical frame of “set and setting” (Zinberg). Results are discussed in comparison to Decorte’s study on self-regulated consumption patterns of cocaine in the club scene of Antwerpen.

significant results

The examined groups differ in amount of consumption and patterns of use and also in social backgrounds and personal and social resources.

Changeover between controlled and problematic use (or vice versa) is characterised:

- Priority in life is given to everyday life – or more oriented to a drug using environment;
- Users succeed in getting or holding up occupational demand and social integration – or are running into isolation and growing social problems (till law problems);
- Drug use is integrated actively in lifestyle as only one source of pleasure – or it becomes the main source of positive experience and life more drug centred;
- Consumption of cocaine is more hedonistic – or more utilised for stress regulation;
- Establishment of rules for personnel use (time of use, motives, amount of money, way of supply) – or abandonment or failures of such rules.

conclusions

Results to self-regulated use and overcoming of problematic patterns of cocaine use can serve for support of self-management strategies and peer supported informal control mechanisms for consumption.

1. Trends and patterns in drug use
2. Trends in nightlife
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6. abstract

Objectives

Different international studies show a relation between drugs, music and going out. More recently electronic music and young people are linked with party drugs, and recreational drug use. The nightlife scene is often the first place where new trends and patterns in drug use are seen. Research in this scene allows us to formulate prevention and policy recommendations. Since 2003 VAD (Association for Alcohol and other Drug problems) conducts a research on drug use in different nightlife settings. The main objectives are to study (patterns of) drug use and characteristics of drug users in the nightlife scene.

Method

In 2003 the research started with a survey. In 2004 we used a qualitative (face-to-face interviews) methodology to interpret the 2003 survey data, followed again by a survey in 2005. We also plan the alteration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the forth going future.

Survey: Each year respondents were recruited in Flanders in three clubs and on 3 events. The data were analysed using SPSS.

Face-to-face interviews: 9 key persons in the nightlife scene (club owner, DJ, bar personnel, ...) were interviewed about their knowledge of and experience in going out and substance use. In addition one focus group with party people was organised. The data are analysed using Maxqda.

Results

In 2003 and 2005 a total of 1368 respondents completed the questionnaire. We analysed the differences in trends and patterns of drug use between the respondents of 2003 and 2005. We also compared the results of the interviews with key figures with the survey results.

Cannabis has earned his place in the party drugs scene. The first most used illegal drug in this research is cannabis. An analysis of the relationship between different aspects of the use of cannabis (frequency, age, patterns of use and purchase) will be presented. Further we will explore the group of daily users.

International studies and different sources in Flanders show an increase in the use of cocaine. However our results indicate that the use of cocaine is not increasing. We will present the relations between different aspects of the use of cocaine more thoroughly, and discuss different patterns of cocaine.

Other results show a relation between music preference and the frequency of use of cannabis and cocaine. What is more, we see the same kind of relation between the frequency of going out and the frequency of use. Furthermore a comparison is made between the respondents of different events: dance events, rock festivals and clubs. These results will also be demonstrated at the conference.

The results of our study (frequency, increase of cocaine,...) will be discussed in the light of other international studies or reports (EMCDDA; IREFREA). The link between dance music and use of party drugs is confirmed in different studies. But why are people who like dance music using illegal drugs more frequently? And are there specific groups within the dance scene that use more illegal drugs or show different patterns of use?

More and more researchers discuss the normalisation of recreational drug use. Theories on deviant behaviour or subcultures are not sufficiently explaining drug use of adolescents. It seems that occasional, recreational use of drugs increasingly belongs to free time and is part of the consumption pattern of youth cultures. Some researchers differentiate in this debate between the use of cannabis and other illegal drugs.

Title: Recreational Cultures as a Tool to Prevent Risk Behaviour

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Abstract:

This study it's an international cooperation program and it will be developed in 8 European cities, besides Portugal. In Portugal we will replicate the study in 9 different cities. Several studies indicated a relation between drug use and clubbing. This study pretends to evaluate the influence of clubbing in the adoption of risk-behaviours (drug use, risk sexuality, violence, driving) in a way to define preventive strategies to use in these contexts. So, we must study the interaction between personal vulnerability, physical context, socio-cultural context and substances.

We will use the document analysis and the interview as the main techniques to get the data. The first step is to apply a questionnaire in the 9 cities involved, getting a sample of 1 350 individuals with ages between the 16 and 30 years. The questionnaire not only allows to get socio-demographic data, but also to characterize the habits of clubbing and the risk-behaviours in this population. Because it's difficult to study occult populations, the methodology of sampling that is to be used is the RDS - Respondent-driven sampling. Also we will use 3 other instruments, that they will allow to characterize the City, the area where the clubs are, and the the clubs it selves.

We pretend to have the final results in 2008 and then to define a cluster of preventive practices addressed to recreational context. We hope to know a little bit more about the recreational youth culture, in order to understand better the cultural messages and to use it as preventive tool.

Theme:

Trends and patterns in drug use.

Title of paper:

Drug addicts: trajectories, socio-psychological profiles, family patterns and mental processes.

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Abstract:

Why do the majority of young people, in contemporary societies, experiment drugs and never become addicts? Why do others experiment those substances, and become frequent consumers of certain drugs? Why do yet others move from experimentation to drug-addiction, leading sometimes to ways of life based on delinquency? With the general purpose of answering these questions we started a research in 2003, in an interdisciplinary sociological and psychological basis and with different research techniques.

The objective was to obtain: 1) a typology of Restelo CAT patients and, therefore, a picture of the development of drug use over the last 20 years; 2) a follow-up study of CAT patients; 3) a comparative analysis of the individual histories, socio-psychological profiles and family patterns of drug addicts and the life-histories of their brothers, sisters (or peers) who were not dependent on drugs. This comparison allowed a clear differentiation of factors in the life courses of individuals who are in the same social and family situations, but display completely different positions concerning drug use.

With a specific theoretical framework and methodological approach, we would like to present and discuss, we arrived at some results that can still be more detailed and debated. As an example, we can just present some insights. Although there are drug addicts in every social group, it became very clear that the time of drug consumption, trajectories, treatments and exits are longer and more difficult in those who have unfavoured social situations. In spite of the majority having their parents still married, deaths and separations in the family life course of

drug addicts are more common than in the general population. Some family patterns were also prevalent: the traditional role division in the family between men and women, delegated parenthood. Drug addiction appeared also as way of constructing a better self-image for interpersonal and group relations, or as a mental painkiller, and it was also clear that there were specific gendered trajectories in teenage dependency.

1. Theme 3. Normalisation vs marginalisation

2. Title: Normalisation and marginalisation of chronic heroin users in the Netherlands

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4. Abstract:

The Netherlands are generally known for their pragmatic and normalizing approach to chronic heroin use(rs); possession of drug use for own use is rarely if ever enough reason to prosecute a user, and there are diverse low threshold facilities for chronic heroin users. The positive effect of this policy is, among others, shown by the lower number of drug related deaths compared with most other west European countries

In our paper, we have taken a closer look at the quality of life of drug users at the local level. Here we found strong indications that chronic heroin users experience severe problems on the physical, psychological, economic and social area. Moreover, these problems do not seem to differ significantly from that in other European countries. Therefore, the main research question was to which extent a normalizing approach in it self prevents marginalisation of chronic drug users.

This research question was answered by using (mainly) ethnographic data gathered by the Drug Monitoring System in Parkstad Limburg from 1998-2002.

The results show that the lives of Dutch chronic heroin users are characterized to a large extent by marginalisation. Their physical and psychological health is mostly bad, economic resources are scarce and unstable, and social life is not embedded in the wider societal context. In addition, we observed a deterioration of relations *between* drug users, which should be understood as the development of specific skills to survive within the tough world of the drug scene. This phenomenon has been conceptualized as hardening.

All in all, we observed that a normalizing approach, such as in the Netherlands, does not reverse marginalisation. Apparently there is a select category of chronic heroin users that continues to use drugs, live in deteriorating circumstances and show undesirable behavior. Due to the nuisance attributed to this category, the local policy in many communities in the Netherlands is to formulate repressive (police) measures directly aimed at these drug users. On the local level we observed that these repressive measures, like territorial bans or a "keep moving strategy", did not seem to solve the problem. On the contrary, the results showed that this approach only amplified that they are not considered as 'normal citizens'. Moreover, repression also amplified the need for survival techniques and thus hardening.

It seems that a policy of normalisation will only counteract marginalisation if the local approach to chronic drug users is not dominated by the nuisance attributed to them but also strongly by their needs.

1. Theme: Attitudes and opinions (4)

2. Title of paper: The weak, sick and innocent consumer – Constructions of 'the user' by the Swedish Users Union

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5. Abstract

Swedish drug users have to a large extent been absent in the public debate on drug policy. Since the year 2002 there is, however, a Swedish Users Union (SBF) speaking on behalf of their 1200 drug (mainly opiates) using members. This paper aims at analysing what might be called a Swedish users union discourse, and in particular how it constructs "the user". The method used is analysis of texts (press releases, newspaper articles, newsletters, website etc.) produced by the union during its first years of existence. The texts are analysed against the context of the national Swedish drug policy, as it has been described by other researchers, known for its restrictive character. The theoretical frame is found in Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who supply a way to understand how discourses and meaning are created. Central themes regarding descriptions of the user were looked for in the texts and analytical tools such as whether actors are described in terms of being active or passive are used to uncover the constructions of "the user". The analysis shows that there are at least four ways in which the user, or the target group of the union, is described by the users union: as a drug and treatment consumer, as a weak person who is deprived, marginalized, exposed and "on the bottom of society", as a sick person with an illness comparable to for instance diabetes and as an innocent person who has been pushed into or happened to end up in drug use. To a large extent SBF is reacting against a moralizing and controlling drug policy and treatment system in their texts. The main issues brought up in the texts concern substitution treatment and needle exchange, and to some extent SBF can be compared to a patient organisation fighting for better treatment. In their opposition they try to reconstruct established meanings in the dominating drug policy discourse. A possible position for the user would be one that is constituted by free will and fighting for the right to use drugs. This position, which might be common in user organisations in countries with a more liberal approach to drugs, is not present in the texts of SBF. Neither is a position of a user that wants to be controlled by authorities. The stance of the union can be understood as a balancing act to challenge established beliefs and still be taken seriously in a restrictive debate climate.

ESSD 2006, ABSTRACT

Theme: 4. Attitudes and opinions

Title: Reforming the substance abuse treatment area in Denmark

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Since June 2005 I have been working on a PhD project focusing on the ongoing reformation of the public sector in Denmark – the so called “strukturereform”. In June 2004 it was decided by the Liberal and Conservative Danish government and their parliamentary supporters the Danish Peoples Party, to reform and modernize the sector. The sector was claimed to be too old fashioned, ineffective and unresponsive in relation to future demographic changes and present demands of its users. The sector has been reformed before, but this reformation is said to be the most intensive till now because it involves all levels and areas of the sector. The reform should both be seen as an organizational and structural reform, but also as a rethinking of the social system in Denmark.

My paper at the 17th ESSD Conference focuses on changes in attitudes and opinions in the public substance abuse treatment field in relation to the reform. During the past ten years the attitude to persons in substance abuse treatment, and in regard to consumers of the social services in general, has changed from the term “client” to “user” and more individually focused perspective - a tendency which can be observed in all Western European countries. People in substance abuse treatment are thus to be respected as individuals with all their personal flaws, and in return they have to become responsible and self-managing. Techniques from the private sector such as “goals, targets and measurement” have also obtained a footing in substance abuse treatment. This turn has by many social science analysts been termed as a “neo-liberal” or “advanced-liberal” turn in the attitude to users of social services and has had huge impact politically in relation to policies such as the reform.

In the process of making the public system more simple, effective and attentive to consumers and “market” demands it has been decided to give municipalities responsibility for substance abuse treatment whereas this responsibility for the past ten years has been almost monopolistically placed in the counties. The idea is that in the future municipalities can freely choose where to buy services for their users in substance abuse treatment; regional centres, establish their own centres, buy from other municipalities or private actors – a clear emphasis on a more liberal and competitive attitude towards substance abuse treatment.

In my project, I investigate if and how these general attitudes and opinions resonate with the substance abuse treatment field during the reform processes. From a praxiological point of view

(Bourdieu 1977, 1996, Lipsky 1980, Herzfeld 1992), I investigate the strategies, beliefs, ways of giving meaning and ethos in relation to the processes of the reform in substance abuse treatment centres in two different counties. I conduct interviews and observations and it has become clear that there are wide gaps between the political goals and the attitudes of the employees within substance abuse treatment on a daily basis. E.g. employees fear that municipalities will give substance abuse treatment a low priority in relation to quality on a more free market, and in the long term that their jobs will decrease as a result of that. Attitudes and opinions towards substance abuse treatment in a reformed social system are thus informed by contradictory visions of how to ensure the best quality service and of personal interests.

In my paper at the ESSD conference, I wish to elaborate on these subjects and discuss the reform and to understand its consequences in the substance abuse area in relation to tendencies in other European countries; E.g. the Norwegian state which has recently reformed the substance abuse area in an other way than the Danish.

Theme:
Attitudes and opinions

Title of paper:
Enhancing cultural competence in dealing with people with drug problems

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Abstract

Many European countries face the dilemma that their drug services are only taken up to a limited extent by clients from minority ethnic groups. Increasingly the need for more and better quality services for people from minority ethnic groups with drug problems is being recognised. Service providers and members of minority ethnic communities acknowledge that cultural competence and specialist knowledge on substance misuse are needed to provide a high quality service to all drug using people. In the UK, *Equality and Diversity* has only recently been recognised as one of the six competences of the National Health System's *Skills and Knowledge Framework*, and a process has started to develop an organisational culture that promotes equality and diversity.

In this context, cultural competence training has been suggested to be an effective way of dealing with diversity and tackling ethnic and social inequalities in the provision of drug services and to achieve cultural and behavioural change amongst provider staff and their organisation. As such, cultural competence training sits perfectly within the philosophy of harm reduction.

A multi-disciplinary educational module has been developed with the aim to enhance cultural competence of professionals working with people from minority ethnic groups who have drug and alcohol problems. The development of the module has been informed by the findings of a local Rapid Need Assessment in a borough in West-London that brought together the views of people from the communities, families, service users and staff in a variety of services. A number of training needs were identified to make staff more confident and culturally competent with the aim to improve the care for drug using clients from different cultures and backgrounds. The module has been delivered over a number of years and is subject to ongoing evaluation in order to establish whether an educational module can be used as an effective tool to enhance cultural competence in drug services.

Although the module has been developed based on the findings of a local needs assessment and is targeted to a multidisciplinary group of staff working with drug users in Greater London, the approach and methods are very likely to be useful for and transferable to other geographical areas within Europe.

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Demonstrate how the findings of the local needs assessment have informed the learning outcomes of the module.
- Explore the usefulness of the concept of Cultural Competence in dealing effectively with diversity and tackling ethnic inequalities
- Present and discuss the findings of the evaluation of this module
- Discuss the transferability of this approach to other geographical areas and fields of work.

ESSD – European Society for Social Drug Research
21-23 September 2006, Lisbon

Abstract

1. Attitudes and opinions

2. Harm reduction in a zero-tolerance society

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5. Every society creates its own deviants through intricate definition processes. It also has to handle these groups by setting up and carrying out specific policies and actions. One of the most rejected and condemned groups of deviants in late modern societies are people who use drugs that have been defined as illegal. These aspects are reflected in both national and international drug policies. An important dividing line can be found between zero-tolerance and harm reduction policies. Sweden is one of the countries that have been most active in promoting a zero-tolerance approach to drugs and also in disputing harm reduction ideologies. The latter is reflected in the lack of measures that are common in many other countries, such as, needle exchange programs, user rooms and information about safe drug use. In this paper an analysis will be presented of how Sweden officially for decades has combated the implementation of needle exchange programs. During the spring 2006 Sweden gave up its defence, but not unconditionally. A new law was passed in the Parliament that allows local authorities to set up needle exchange programs, but only if adequate and sufficient facilities for detoxification and long term treatment is made available. The analysis is based on official documents, but also on material from media and Non Governmental Organisations which to a large extent reflect different opinions on this issue. The results illuminate the clash between utopian attitudes and a reality which constantly call for more pragmatic views which every responsible authority sooner or later has to face up to. The paper will close with a discussion of the consequences this prolonged fight against measures which is not thought to be in line with the zero-tolerance ideology have had for the society in general and the drug users in particular.

**Cocaine Users in a Sample of the General Population in Germany: Patterns of Use,
Abuse and Dependence**

17th Annual Conference of the European Society for Social Drug Research

(Lisbon, 21-23 September 2006)

Theme: Methodological Perspectives in Drug Research

Title: "Evaluating, Monitoring and Acting in the area of Risk Reduction and Harm Minimisation in Portugal"

Authors: Paula Vale Andrade, Head of the Harm Reduction Unit of the Treatment, Harm Reduction and Reinsertion Department of the Institute for Drugs and Drug Addiction & Maria Vasconcelos Moreira, Director of the Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction of the Institute on Drugs and Drug Addiction.

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Summary:

Both the 1999 National Strategy against Drugs and the National Action Plan – Horizon 2001-2004 – stated the need for intervention in the area of Risk Reduction and Harm Minimisation with specific populations of illicit drug users who are not being effectively reached by the traditional services, heroin and cocaine problematic users being the main target group to be addressed. Specific interventions were also called for, both concerning specific public health issues and in the context of recent drug use trends, namely the dissemination of synthetic drugs (ecstasy, amongst others) with young people. This required a major effort in terms of the development and enlargement of a proximity intervention model, making use of the available resources in the area of drug abuse and calling for the active participation of the civil society.

This paper presents an analysis of the methodology, process and results of the internal and external evaluation of the 1999-2004 National Strategy, particularly in the area of Risk Reduction and Harm Minimisation, as well as the data collection instruments and adopted methodology for monitoring and evaluating responses in this specific area, which were developed inline with the guidelines of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

Theme

New approaches in data collection and analysis.

Title of the paper

Taking account of context in comparative analysis of drugs policies.

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Abstract

The paper discusses methodological issues that arise when attempting to account for context in comparative studies. The specific focus is on comparative analysis of drugs policies in Europe but the paper draws on experiences from cross-national research in other areas to identify key issues which need to be addressed when designing a study in this area. Context influences research at all stages of the process from question-setting, to research design, choice of methods, through to publication, dissemination and impact.

The focus in the paper is on case-study analysis which aims to explain similarities and differences using historical and qualitative methods. A hall mark of qualitative approaches is their attention to complexity – the heterogeneity and particularity of individual cases. Case-oriented methods aim to be sensitive to time, place, agency and process. In aiming to illustrate complexity and diversity, context itself becomes a key object of study.

An early issue is that of choice of which countries to compare. An implicit or explicit aim may be the desire to learn lessons from each country and to consider the potential for policy transfer. The appropriateness of a policy for a different context has to be considered.

Context is constantly an issue in qualitative research so that issues of language, setting, culture etc must always be part of the picture. Here however the focus is on the question of what in particular needs to be attended to in cross-national studies? It is argued that the distinctive features of context in cross-national studies are those which derive from the nature of nation states themselves. These are features of the political and institutional structures, the legal and administrative arrangements, and bureaucratic systems, especially with regard to care and control.

In these historical and qualitative studies, however, it is difficult to sustain attention to complexity across a large number of cases. The paper concludes by arguing for a synthetic broadly comparative approach which is both holistic and analytic, using Boolean algebra to develop truth tables.

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The 17th annual conference of the **European Society for Social Drug Research (ESSD)**
Lisbon, Portugal, 21-23 September

PAPER SUBMISSION

Theme: Trends and patterns in drug use

Title: Behind the consumption, the profile of the consumer of illicit drugs in the general population surveys.

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Abstract

Subject: The construction of the “consumer” of psychoactive substances, namely the construction obtained through the design of the research questionnaires, tend to close the social existence of the subjects into the universe of the “drugs”. Doing so, men are forgetting the multiple dimensions that constitute the lives of most of the consumers that doesn't correspond to the profile of the “addicted”, completely banished. In a great majority of the cases, the consumptions are, or they were, accomplished by individuals that are integrated in a regular normative frame, in which nothing would foreseen an atypical behaviour This normative orientation can be noticed through several dimensions (professional, cultural, affective....) In other words, the consumer's social framing can be complete and the consumption not to act nor as a manifest rupture with the social order, nor as an obvious will in that sense. Our proposal is to test this hypothesis considering some of the domains where it would have less probabilities of been verified: social networks and friendship relations, the practices of leisure's and the occupation of free times and the representations of the substances and of the substances risks.

Data: The analysis is supported on the results of the First general population survey on psychoactive substances, conducted in Portugal, in 2001, with a sample of 15.000 individuals.

Discussion: Starting from this approach, we would like to propose the discussion of some aspects of the methodology and of the content orientations of the general population questionnaires, namely those accomplished in Europe, distinguishing an epidemical reason and a sociological reason and considering their viability conditions in this type of inquiry and their respective pertinence domains.

Abstract:

1. Theme: METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN DRUG RESEARCH

2. Title of the paper: Difficulties in conducting a European prison survey

3. Authors: Dr Heike Zurhold, sociologist, criminologist, drug researcher

Dr Uwe Verthein, psychologist, drug researcher

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5. Abstract:

Within the field of drug research, the European Union plays an important role not only for an exchange of knowledge but also as money source for research projects. When managing to meet the criteria for a European grant the real problems start. The main methodological challenges of European studies are: How to deal with language and cultural differences and how to develop instruments that are appropriate to survey the situation in different European countries. The European prison survey, conducted in 2004, was one attempt to collect data among all European Union member states. Its main purpose was to investigate a) the prevalence of female drug users in European prisons and b) the availability of drug services in prison. This was done via questionnaires directed to the Ministries of Justice. Although the almost 100% response rate was a success, the data analyses reveals first of all the enormous lack of information to this topic. In addition, that information available are difficult to interpret and need to be treated with caution, as for instance, the reported drug use in prison differs significantly from results of independent studies. The lesson learnt by European surveys is, that they face a number of limitations as regards the validity of information. As far as a monitoring system is lacking in the prison system, these limitations will remain and it probably makes more sense to focus on in-depth analyses of single prisons.

For the questionnaire see: http://www.zis-hamburg.de/forschung_femdrugusers.de.html

Theme: Methodological perspectives in drug research

Title: Research with youth-at-the-margins: testing a youth-centred methodology

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Abstract

Objectives

- Process-related objective: test the possibilities and restrictions of a methodology aimed at the participation of vulnerable youth. The presentation will focus on this objective.
- Content-related objective: develop guidelines for a demand-driven drug(prevention) policy.

Methodology

The methodology consists of four phases building on each other, involving youth *in* and *after* each research phase, and using qualitative, group techniques:

- (1) Development of one central study question in an age-appropriate language using open focus groups (N = 6)
- (2) Generation and prioritisation of central elements of drug(prevention) policy using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (N = 14)
- (3) Adding qualitative depth and problem-solving ideas using focus groups (N = 14)
- (4) Asking for feedback by returning to field.

In May 2006, phase one to three of the research were conducted.

Targeted sampling: Young people aged 12 to 21 with an emotional and / or behavioural disorder (EBD) living in residential institutions. Within this sample, cannabis is the most frequently used illicit drug.

Significant results

The sample impacts upon the implementation of the study. The sample is characterised by externalising behaviour, obliging the researcher to find a balance between research and pedagogy. With this sample, (de)formed by previous research (for diagnostic purposes), gaining trust is hard, e.g. using a recorder and writing is disturbing.

Using *open* focus groups during phase one was not optimal because its limited structure distracted the sample. Furthermore, older participants over-influenced the group process, in particular because participants differed in age up to six years.

After phase one, the sampling and research procedure was adapted: a distinction was made between two age groups; the number of participants was limited to six in each group and the duration of the groups was limited to one hour. During phase three, focus groups were more structured, using a clear topic list and more detailed research questions.

Group techniques, in particular when organised on young people's territory, can successfully correct the researcher-research population power imbalance. The phase two NGT, unlike focus groups, further limits researcher impact and limits the power of dominant group members. Moreover, the NGT proved particularly successful with the participants with limited *verbal* capacities. However, unlike focus groups, the NGT as such doesn't add sufficient qualitative depth.

Conclusions

Systematically involving vulnerable youth with EBD, as participants works, through the use of a *combination* of group techniques and by *adapting* research techniques to the possibilities of the research sample.

1. Theme (from the list on the previous page)

METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN DRUG RESEARCH

2. Title of the paper

Epidemiological indicators of drug use: time for a rethink? Reflections from a non-positivist perspective.

3. Author(s): name(s), qualification(s), job title(s)

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5. Abstract (not more than 400 words), including objectives, methodology, significant results and conclusions

The EU Action Plan on Drugs (2000-04) calls for Member States to provide reliable and comparable information on five key epidemiological indicators, namely:

- prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population (population surveys);
- prevalence and patterns of problem drug use (statistical prevalence/incidence estimates and surveys among drug users);
- drug-related infectious diseases (prevalence and incidence rates of HIV, hepatitis B and C in injecting drug users);
- drug-related deaths and mortality of drug users (general population mortality special registers statistics, and mortality cohort studies among drug users);
- demand for drug treatment (statistics from drug treatment centres on clients starting treatment).

The methodological basis for these Key Indicators (KIs) have been developed over time through various expert groups convened by the EMCDDA, and technical guidelines have been issued to ensure best practice and comparability across the EU states. But what do these epidemiological indicators really tell us about the drug situation?

Many of these indicators have theoretical and methodological limitations; for example, in terms of their scope, sampling, validity, and reliability, as well as in their capacity to capture problematic and local levels of drug use. Yet, much of the drugs research funding in EU member states is directed towards these research programmes and many of our drugs and related social policies are based on their findings.

Using existing data from a range of drugs research studies conducted in Ireland and other EU countries, this paper provides a critical analysis of Key Indicator methodology, outlining the methodological limitations of the KIs, and challenging the positivist theoretical assumptions on which the KIs are based. In conclusion, the paper discusses the type of research methodologies which would more appropriately capture the complexity of drug use and facilitate the development of more adequate drugs policy responses.

The 17th annual conference of ESSD on 21-23 September 2006

Theme:

5, Methodological perspectives in drug research

Title of the paper:

Methodological challenges in qualitative drug research. The multisituated role of the participant observer

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Abstract:

This paper presents a preliminary, methodological discussion on the challenges the ethnographer faces when studying policy by means of participant observation involving different structural levels in an organisation. The discussion draws on experiences from my ongoing fieldwork, which takes place in three different hostels for the homeless in Denmark. In these hostels the issue of drugs plays a pronounced and constantly recurring theme in talks and action among both residents and staff.

My fieldwork forms the basis of a study that examines policy as a phenomenon which is embedded in the processes, whereby the section about hostels for the homeless in the Danish Law of Social Services is transformed into practice. In this section it is stipulated that the homeless should only stay in the hostels on a temporary basis – contrary to the former legislation where the question of time span was not mentioned. Put together with other recent developments of interventions within the field of homelessness, this section of the law reveals an overall intention of making the homeless more resourceful and normal. In the hostels this intention is reflected in the way staff persistently observes and discusses the use of drugs among residents: Who seem to be under the influence of drugs? Who seem to be in control? Who needs to be in treatment?

Studying policy in practise prompts me to do participant observations on different organisational levels. Thus: I participant observe during formal as well as informal meetings among managers,

among staff members and among the homeless. Furthermore I participate in situations where staff and residents interact; including exchange of words on drug use and planning of substance misuse treatment. In that sense my endeavour to study policy leads to an exceptionally visible exposure of a generally known challenge to the ethnographer: how to manage being in a multisituated and multipositioned role. In my presentation, I will attempt to discuss methodological and ethical aspects related to this role. On the one side: this role provides a unique opportunity to follow the same themes of discourse seen from the perspectives of many different and unequally positioned actors. On the other side: ethnography is about establishing confidence with informants in the field, and how can that be done with managers, staff and the homeless simultaneously? The paper will discuss how the ethnographer may deal with this question by insisting on being positioned as a stranger.

Theme: Trends and Patterns in Drug Use.
'New' Drug Trends

Methamphetamine in Rural Areas of the Western United States

(Revised July 11, 2006)

by

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The objective of this paper is to present an overview of the "new" trend in methamphetamine use in rural areas of the western U.S.A. This development is the first large-scale occurrence of hard drug abuse in these areas. The causes of this new trend in methamphetamine use and abuse appear to be twofold. The first cause is increased social disorganization in many rural communities in the American west which has led to a greater demand for "hard" drugs (see Bursik, 1988). This increase in social disorganization is due to a poor economic conditions resulting from a major decline in the traditional extractive industries of timber, mining, and other natural resource-based industries in these areas.

Once the demand came into existence, the supply emerged. The second component of the rise in methamphetamine consumption in these areas is the ease of manufacture of the drug. Historically the distributors of heroin and cocaine have largely avoided rural areas in the west apparently due to the small potential markets. Methamphetamine, on the other hand, can be manufactured relatively easily with ingredients that are readily available in nonprescription decongestants and agricultural fertilizers. As law enforcement has become very active in apprehending the local, predominately small-scale manufacturers of methamphetamine, large-scale manufacturers and distributors based in Mexico have recently become the major source of supply, however.

It is hypothesized that new markets for hard drugs may emerge in Europe under similar conditions. That is, if social disorganization, a lack of organized traffickers in hard drugs, and the ingredients necessary to manufacture the drugs are present, a new market and supply may emerge (see Grund, 2003).

The sources of data used in this paper may include existing statistics: arrests for methamphetamine offenses; law enforcement data on apprehensions of methamphetamine laboratories; and data on rates of unemployment, poverty, and other indicators of social disorganization. These data are supplemented with interviews of judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and police officers.

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Qualifications

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ESSD conference 21-23 September 2006, Lisbon

ABSTRACT

Theme

Methodological perspectives in drug research

Title

E-POD (European - Perspectives on Drugs) – A case study of hallucinogenic mushrooms

Authors

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Objective

To utilize drug information in Europe to contribute to the development of clear information on emerging trends and patterns of drug use and drug markets. (Target 41, EU Drugs Action Plan - 2005-2008)

Methods

The identification and monitoring of emerging trends demands a different approach from the key indicators for estimating levels of drug use and associated problems. The EMCDDA is in the process of developing a pilot project using substance-based case studies to explore the capacity in EU member States to detect, track and understand emerging drug trends. The veracity of accumulated information is assessed by triangulation of a wider range of different sources in all of the EU member and candidate States.

The first case study for this project was to collect and analyse information on hallucinogenic mushrooms in the EU within a limited timeframe. The case study takes into account the mega trends that influence lifestyle and the economic interests of those involved in the market.

Significant results

A considerable amount of information is available, without commissioning additional rapid assessments. There may be duplication of effort within member States by the use of different reporting tools.

The internet, media, key informants and grey literature, are important sources of information. However, methods for collecting, analysing and reporting information from these sources need to be developed.

Drug trends are influenced by mega trends and technological expansion has provided the means for widespread diffusion via the Internet. Some of the barriers that operate to prevent diffusion of trends include the experience of negative effects, lack of cost-effective positive effects and unacceptable routes of administration. Legal controls to reduce access may result in sales of alternative, legal but more toxic, substances and demonstrate the need to take account of economic and cultural factors.

Conclusions

The exercise provides practical experience for the development of a European system to detect, track and understand emerging trends. It does this by identifying and evaluating the utility of different information and data sources, fostering methods that support triangulation whilst avoiding duplicated effort.

The first case study of hallucinogenic mushrooms illuminated the conditions in the EU that contributed to an increase in use and identified the conditions that may have served as barriers to the diffusion of this trend. In so doing, it provides better understanding of this trend and important insights into the development of optimal responses to emerging trends.

How Much for a Dime Bag? A Cross-National Perspective on Drug Markets Among Youth

Relatively little is known about drug markets, or how youth obtain illicit drugs. Since much attention is focused on preventing youthful drug use, this seems a tremendous oversight. The Drugs, Alcohol and Violence International (DAVI), a multi-sample cross-national study of youth ages 14-17, explored the context of drug obtainment (relationship), the type of location where youth obtain drugs, and the costs of cannabis and other drugs. This paper examines 'drug markets' among samples of detained youth, school dropouts, and students in the greater metropolitan areas of Philadelphia, Toronto, Amsterdam, and Montreal. (Students were not included in Amsterdam.) Students reported a lot of sharing of drugs, either getting them from others or giving them to others for free across all sites. Although the majority of detainees and dropouts at each site report getting drugs themselves, many also indicate that friends give them drugs. Cannabis was typically obtained outdoors or in a house or apartment. Few youth reported getting cannabis at school. In Amsterdam, where cannabis can be purchased in small quantities in coffeeshops, this was the most common place to get cannabis, even though 18 is the legal age for purchase. Youth most often reported purchasing cannabis in nickel, dime or other small bags, which correspond to their price (5 and 10 dollars respectively). The small bags are not weighed, so are not a standardized quantity. Perhaps the biggest exception was Amsterdam, where youth most often reported quantities in grams or joints, which is how cannabis is usually marketed in coffeeshops. The lack of standardization of units makes economic cost estimates suspect. Survey data can, however, more aptly describe drug market characteristics such as general location of purchase, and relationship with the seller for the more widely used drugs.

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ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

1 Theme

Drug markets

2 Title

Factors influencing minority ethnic community-police engagement around drug supply issues

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5 Abstract

Across Europe, members of minority ethnic communities are over-represented in drug law offence statistics, including those on drug dealing. However, these data alone give an extremely distorted picture of drug dealing: racism and stereotyping means that non-white people, who are highly visible because of their skin colour, are associated with drugs by both the police and general public, fuelled by adverse media reports. The consequence is that this group are over-represented in reports of drug crimes to the police, in statistics on recorded drug offences, and in charges for drugs offences. In addition, after coming to the attention of the police, members of minority ethnic populations are proportionally more likely than the rest of the population to be charged for drug distribution than for possession of drugs.*

Not unsurprisingly, this situation has negative impacts on the relationship between the police and minority ethnic communities. Members of minority ethnic communities have expressed concern about drug supply within them, but the perceptions of, and stereotypes attached to some of these communities in relation to drug supply issues have implications that hamper the police service's endeavours to engage with them.

This can be illustrated by a study from London. The police service in London report a commitment to inspiring confidence from, and responding to the needs of minority ethnic communities. They are also committed to tackling the supply of crack cocaine and heroin, with which members of the Jamaican and Turkish communities respectively are strongly identified. A research study was conducted with members of these communities, and with professionals working with them, in order to identify the factors facilitating or hindering community members' willingness to engage with police and with other initiatives aimed at tackling drug supply.

Members of these communities report concerns about drug supply issues, but are extremely reluctant to co-operate with the police to address them because they perceive that they are unfairly targeted as drug dealers, by both the police and the media. The challenge is to implement a long-term, community engagement programme with strategic level commitment. This would achieve more sensitive, effective policing; increase trust between the police and the community; and facilitate channels of communication between the two.

*Fountain, J. Bashford, J. Underwood, S. Khurana, J. Winters, M. Patel, K. Carpentier, C. (2002) *Update and complete the analysis of drug use, consequences and correlates amongst minorities. EMCDDA scientific report.* EMCDDA / P1 / CT.01.P1.13/ 2002. Lisbon, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction).

Mules or couriers? Issues of determination, empowerment and agency among Caribbean and West African female drug traffickers .

Theme 2: Drug markets – dynamics of trafficking

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There is a growing number of Caribbean and West African female drug couriers in UK prisons. In court their defence it is often constructed around need and coercion. These construct two opposing images of identity. As providers of families the women carry responsibility and are empowered. They shoulder the burden of both parents and take on the role of the men whose role in the upbringing of children is marginal.

Yet they also seem to be instruments in the hands of the drug trafficking organisations. They may be simply duped into running the drugs with lies about the risk and punishment, a manipulation of their naivety. At worst women are coerced with threats against themselves or against family members. In either case, women appear as instruments with no control over the action. They also have no control over the drugs which they simply deliver, like mules. They also receive a fraction of the proceeds.

In prison many women continue in their role as providers and express guilt about abandoning their families. While conceding that drug trafficking was wrong, they rank it as less onerous than stealing.

Objective: to understand the tension between the portrayal of female traffickers as instruments of trafficking gangs on the one hand and agents providing for families and taking active decision in improving their lives

Getting a sense of responsibility and moral accountability of traffickers, and their sense of the existing sets of penalties in terms of deterrence and justice

Methodology: interviews with convicted at prisons in the UK, and in the Caribbean

Conclusion:

structural poverty and endemic corruption create both the needs for individuals to escape by any means, and to disregard the law as the state has no moral legitimacy; drug couriers regard themselves as victims who have been let down by the state, but they were in charge of their own actions.

There are implications for the rehabilitation efforts in the prison system and for drug policy. It is difficult to prepare offenders for reintegration into society when they have never felt part of a social contract. The moral authority of corrupt governments in legislating against 'victimless' crimes is hazardous.

1. **THEME** Methodological Perspectives in Drug Research
2. **TITLE** THE ONSET OF HEROIN USE AMONG 'HIGH RISK'
YOUTH IN IRELAND: AN ETHNO-EPIDEMIOLOGICAL APPROACH
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5. **ABSTRACT**

Despite a leveling-off in heroin uptake rates since the peak of Ireland's 1980s opiate epidemic, Irish drug surveillance data point to a sustained incidence of heroin use amongst marginalized youth. Although available epidemiological data have played an important role in monitoring trends in heroin use and the prevalence and range of medical consequences (HIV, HBV and HCV) associated with injecting drug use, little is known about the social course of initiation into heroin use or about the risk environments, economic exchanges and social groups in which youth initiate injection. This recently initiated study aims to address gaps in previous research on heroin use in Ireland through the adoption of an ethno-epidemiological framework. Conceptually, the research is informed by Anthropological ethnography, drawing theoretically from systems ecology and incorporating social, behavioral and environmental variables in understanding both community and individual health outcomes. The study aims to recruit 40 young people between the age of 18 and 25 years who initiated heroin use within the last two years. An effort will be made to recruit youth from across a spectrum of relative housing statuses, including youth who are homeless (living on the streets), youth who are in temporary shelter care, youth who are in transitional or some kind of supervised housing, and youth who may have stable housing. Building in this kind of theoretical variability into the sample will provide the basis for understanding the role of housing status in the initiation and maintenance of heroin use and injection risk. Sampling and recruitment will follow a targeted sampling approach, using information from preliminary ethnographic mapping for the purpose of locating natural settings in which the target population can be found and contacted, including a variety of street venues where drug users congregate. Data collection will proceed using many of the approaches routinely employed in Anthropological fieldwork, including ethnographic observation and life history interviewing. The paper concludes by discussing the methodological merits and potential contribution of an ethno-epidemiological approach to furthering current understanding of heroin initiation among young people with particular reference to the development of social and epidemiological descriptions of the types of physical environments and social groups in which youth initiate heroin use, the administration practices they employ, their rationale for employing these strategies (particularly injection) and their experience in drug-related help-seeking.

Alfred Uhl

Abstract

Merits and disadvantages of the survey methodology in drug research

Alfred Uhl

General population surveys and school surveys are widely accepted tools in the epidemiology of substance use. We are aware that no method to collect empirical data can yield perfectly reliable results, but we should at least aim at understanding which methodology produces useful results under which conditions. It is well known, that surveys encounter massive problems if items touch stigmatised areas or illicit activities, if prevalence rates are particularly low, if complex issues are assessed, if persons have to comment on issues they have no opinion on yet, etc. Especially problematic are **international comparisons based on different survey instruments and/or involving highly different cultural backgrounds and/or based on different languages.**

From my practical experiences, I can conclude that most experts involved with planning, coordinating and interpreting surveys are highly interested in practical aspects. This includes not forgetting to include any relevant topics and to see that the questionnaire works out in the sense that most subjects fill in most items without overtly complaining. There is much less interest in critical questions concerning validity and reliability of items though, particularly if no easy solutions are at hand and if some insurmountable limitations of the methodology have to be acknowledged.

I will give some very illustrative examples of grave problems and inconsistencies from the latest Austrian population study on substance use and the Austrian ESPAD participation. **A particular emphasis will be put on the reliability of survey based prevalence information concerning the use of cannabis and cocaine.**

Based on this I plan to discuss what decision to take in this respect, trapped between the short-term pragmatic need to convince decision makers to fund survey-based research, the indispensable scientific principle to produce an honest picture about possible conclusions and the long-term professional need to systematically criticise problematic research tools to improve the level of research methodology and scientific knowledge in the long run.

