

ONLINE DRUG CULTURE

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Illicit drug use frequently occurs in a context of a drug subculture characterized by social ties with other drug users, feelings of excitement and effectiveness deriving from illicit activities, and alienation from mainstream society. This paper argues that drug consumption has been regarded as a social and cultural phenomenon that creates its own cultural field. This field is defined as a drug culture and the studies of the drug culture endeavour to understand the interplay between mainstream culture, youth culture, and drug culture. Knowledge about that interaction is important for therapy programs and rehabilitation as well as for prevention. Accordingly, the paper will analyse the on-line drug culture with the aim of exploring a relatively new cultural space into which the drug culture is accommodated.

KEY WORDS: drug / drug culture / on-line communication / youth / social networks

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that the knowledge on drugs has increased during the past few decades, understanding of the drug phenomenon is still patchy (Hunt, Milhet, Bergeron, 2011). Data provided from the socio-demographic statistics, epidemiological data or clinical studies are unable to explain the meaning and interaction between drug users and cultural environment. The lack of research on the socio-cultural determinants of drug use is disproportionate to the impact and interaction that exists between culture and behaviours associated with the use and abuse¹ of psychoactive substances. Absence of research in this area derives from the subtlety and complexity of the interplay between social factors and individual behaviours, difficulties of measuring cultural influences,

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¹ The researcher employs terms involving the word 'use' in order to minimize stigma and judgement. According to Wills (1997), the term drug use is nondescript, does not allow for separation of the medicinal agent from the recreational drug. However, the term 'drug abuse' is deemed inappropriate as it can reflect negatively on the user and be considered judgmental. Drug misuse tends to imply that a drug has an appropriate use and is being used for an incorrect reason. For many illicit substances, including those synthetically manufactured, there is no other or appropriate use – the singular use is as a psychoactive drug (Wills, 1997). The World Health Organization (1981) maintains that both 'abuse' and 'misuse' are unsatisfactory terms as they tend to invoke value judgments (O'Donnell, 2015: 5).

with their intangible, subjective, even „invisible“ qualities. Given these limitations, the evidence is often indirect, and the arguments are to some extent theoretical and speculative, intended to stimulate greater research interest in the topic (Eckersley, 2005: 157). The complexity of culture is multifold, it implies the uniqueness and diversity of cultural meanings that are constantly being established and challenged under the influence of processes inside and outside of culture. Narrowing down the broad field of subcultural research into drug use to youth culture research and drug use among young people cannot avoid the insight into socio-cultural changes that have certainly been reflected in the subcultural and cultural practices surrounding drug use. In the wake of profound social and cultural change, drug use and drug use status are gaining new cultural meanings, interpretations and approvals, as well as new cultural spaces.

By the late 1990s, research on youth drug use began to develop as a more independent research field by utilizing the latest sociological and cultural studies (Cyclic, Pollock, 2002; Furlong, Carmel, 1997; Hayward, Hobbs; Kolind, Demant, Hunt, 2013). The study of young people's drug use has been radically transformed by the development of a sociological framework for understanding young people's routine engagement with, and accommodation of, 'recreational' drugs (Pilkington, 2007). The current 'customization' of drug use has several theoretical explanations, with the differences being associated with particular types of drugs. The 'normalisation thesis' (Measham, Newcombe, Parker, 1994) suggests that, by the 1990s, the trend towards the gradual 'desubculturalization' of drug use in society meant that recreational drug use had become 'normalized' within mainstream youth culture (Parker, Aldridge, Measham, 1998: 153-7). Although the drug subculture seems to have influenced the mainstream culture² and expanded its place in it, the processes that have taken place in the main culture have actually led to a 'normalization thesis' that has quickly come under sharp criticism.³ In the first case, it is argued, the theoretical focus of the 'normalization thesis' - on how individuals make choices about 'risks' in the context of information-rich environments - obscures more fundamental, structural determinants of drug use (MacDonald, Marsh, 2002; Shildrick, 2002). These determinants include the relative availability and cost of different types of drugs (Gossop, 2000: 38; Pearson, 1987; Parker, Bakx, Newcombe, 1988; Johnston et al., 2000; MacDonald, Marsh, 2002) as well as traditional patterns of inequality (Shildrick, 2002: 45). The conclusion that both MacDonald & Marsh and Shildrick draw is that the notion of the 'normalisation' of drug use should be recast as 'differentiated normalisation' (Shildrick, 2002: 36; MacDonald, Marsh, 2002: 29) to capture the empirical observation that different types of drugs and

² However, culture's role is perhaps more important in explaining health differences between populations, or changes in a population's health over time. Culture's role in providing meaning and the qualities that contribute to it - autonomy, competence, purpose, direction, balance, identity and belongings particularly important to young people because these attributes are the destinations of the developmental journeys they are undertaking. And it is among the young that the rise in psychosocial problems, including drug abuse, has been marked over recent decades (Eckersley, 2004; 2005).

³ Critiques of the 'normalization thesis' on the grounds of its insufficient sensitivity to the cultural context of drug use have pointed to the dangers, in particular, of extrapolating a cultural predisposition - 'normalization' - from behavioural data. These data, it is suggested, are themselves crudely determined from 'life-time reported use' indicators that exaggerate the prevalence of drug use since they fail to distinguish between experimentation and occasional or regular use (Shiner, Newburn, 1997: 515-9). There has also been criticism of the failure to recognize the slippage between 'recreational' and other drug use in certain local contexts (MacDonald, Marsh, 2002; Shildrick, 2002; Pilkington, 2006a). Finally, it has been suggested that theories of individualization of risk foster a too limited understanding of young people's drug decisions as individual consumer choices; this, it is argued (Pilkington, 2006b), underestimates the hermeneutic dimension of reflexivity reflected in the friendship group context of young people's drug decisions and use (Pilkington, 2007).

different modes of their use may become 'normalised' for different groups of young people depending upon the opportunities and constraints placed upon them by their structural location (Pilkington, 2007).

More generally, researchers have identified changes occurring in a post-modern or post-industrial society, in which transformations in the labour market have led young people today to 'negotiate a set of risks...largely unknown to their parents' (Furlong, Cartmel, 1997: 1). Researchers also point to the increased commodification of youth culture (Brain, 2000), with manufacturers deliberately marketing commodities to young people and manipulating 'youthful liminal drives'. Researchers have also argued that young people today are experiencing the paradox existing in the post-industrial consumer society where they feel, at the same time, both ontologically insecure and over-controlled (Garland, 2001; Hayward, Hobbs, 2007). This research has focused on developments in societal tendencies regarding youth identity formation. As part of such identity work, youth engage in 'edgework' (Lyng, 1990) and risk behaviour (Plant, Plant, 1992), in which extensive alcohol and drug intoxication play an important role (Kolind, Demant, Hunt, 2013).

Market orientated culture of consumerism and individualism plays a significant role in weakening social bonds and group identity. This creation of a 'separate self' could be a major dynamic in modern life, impacting on everything from citizenship and social trust, cohesion and engagement, to the intimacy of friendships and the quality of family life (Eckersley, 2005). It is no coincidence that the most popular drugs today are those-such as alcohol and party drugs such as ecstasy-that dissolve the boundaries of the self and induce a sense of belonging, a merging with others, which eases the pain of isolation (Eckersley, 2005). At CRF (Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research in Denmark), surveys of young people with problematic drug use have been conducted since 2008, partly as a way of introducing a monitoring system for in-patient youth drug treatment services in Denmark (Kolind, Demant & Hunt, 2013). These young drug users exhibit characteristics similar to the mainstream adults mentioned above, and a social network theory has been employed in order to show that problematic youthful drug use is most often a symptom of a sparse or weak engagement of young people in key social networks such as the family, school, or work (Pedersen, 2010; see also, Vind, 2010 according to Kolind, Demant & Hunt, 2013).

This paper argues that drug consumption has been regarded as a social and cultural phenomenon that creates its own cultural field. This field is defined as a *drug culture* and the studies of the drug culture endeavour to understand the interplay between mainstream culture, youth culture and drug culture. Knowledge about that interaction is important for therapy programs and rehabilitation as well as for prevention. Accordingly, the paper will analyse the on-line drug culture with the aim of exploring a relatively new cultural space into which the drug culture is accommodated.

1. DRUG CULTURE

Illicit drug use frequently occurs in a context of a drug subculture characterized by social ties with other drug users, feelings of excitement and effectiveness deriving from illicit activities, and alienation from the mainstream society. Identification with this subculture is recognized anecdotally as a barrier to recovery, but clear quantification of individual differences in perceived belongingness to the drug subculture has been absent from the literature (Moshier et al., 2012).

Post-industrial societies have continued to experience a general increase in leisure prompting Jock Young to argue that late modern sensibilities have been profoundly shaped by a culture of individualism, which stresses immediacy, hedonism and self-actualization. As a result, the 'Keynesian balance between hard work and hard play' has become 'tipped towards the subterranean world of leisure' (Young, 1999: 10).⁴ The elevation of leisure is particularly evident in the development of the night-time economy, which some commentators have argued has been significantly boosted by the post-industrial transformation (Shiner, 2014: 162).

Deindustrialisation has created a void in many Western cities, which governments and entrepreneurs have sought to fill by establishing sites of consumption and leisure to replace the nineteenth-century centres of production (Hobbs et al., 2003). Lying at the heart of this process, repeated city centre regeneration initiatives have resulted in a massively expanding night-time economy, which is geared towards young people, 'experiential consumption' and the weekend ritual. A place of 'dangerous adventure', offering release from 'the slate grey glare of daylight', the nighttime economy is replete with the suggestions for the illicit and has come to provide 'the amphitheatre of drug, alcohol and sexual experimentation' (Hobbs et al., 2003: 46).

Consideration on how cultural aspects of substance use reinforce substance use, substance use disorders, and relapses invoke the concept of drug cultures – the relationship between drug cultures and mainstream culture, the values and rituals of drug cultures, and how and why people value their participation in drug cultures. Drug culture has its own history (pertaining to drug use) that is usually orally transmitted. It has certain shared values, beliefs, customs, and traditions, and it has its own rituals and behaviours that evolve over time (SAMSHA, 2014). Members of a drug culture often share similar ways of dressing, socialization patterns, language, and style of communication. Drug users respond to this ideology by forming their own subculture that involves adopting alternative norms and values that condone drug use and protect its continuation. Whilst immersed in a drug-using subculture, individuals take on a drug user identity that supports their drug-using lifestyle (O'Donnell, 2015). Some even develop a social hierarchy that gives different status to different members of the culture based on their roles within that culture (Jenkot, 2008). On the other hand, drug culture is not homogenous, differences derive from different substances use, different cultural attitudes related to the use of substances, different locales and other socio-cultural specificities. Improving cultural competence demands knowledge about drug cultures represented within the client population. Drug cultures can change rapidly and vary across racial and ethnic groups, geographic areas, socioeconomic levels, and generations, so staying informed is challenging. Besides needing an understanding of current drug cultures (to help prevent infiltration of related behaviours and attitudes within the

⁴ The connection between deindustrialisation and drug use is well-established; in the UK, studies of new heroin outbreaks have pointed to high unemployment (Pearson, 1987: 74), social deprivation, poor educational experiences (Parker, Bakx, Newcombe, 1988: 22) and high levels of social exclusion (MacDonald, Marsh, 2002) as key factors, alongside local drugs markets, in explaining why, in some localities, young people 'cross the rubicon' from recreational to addictive drug use. In Vorkuta, the painful nature of massive deindustrialisation and depopulation is tangible and vividly reflected in young people's cultural practices. As people leave the city, their abandoned flats, cellars and garages are turned by young people into spaces for their own leisure. These spaces compensate for the complete lack of cultural infrastructure especially in the outlying mining settlements and provide warm, secluded spaces for cultural practices including the use of illicit substances. While in and of itself poor cultural infrastructure is not unique to Vorkuta – respondents in all fieldwork sites complained about constraints on leisure activities – its residents articulate a real sense of isolation and abandonment (Pilkington, 2007: 13).

treatment environment), counsellors also need to help clients understand how such cultures support the use and pose dynamic relapse risks (SAMSHA, 2014).

Destructive forms of substance abuse have escalated under urbanization, industrialization and incorporation in the global market economy (Courtwright, 2001). The human anguish and self-destructive forms of addiction are politically structured; the land of immigration, opportunity, and economic abundance is behind the ‘individual moral falling’ (Gusterson, Besteman, 2010).⁵ Membership of a drug-using subculture offsets the adverse consequences of societal stigma, marginalisation and social exclusion (O’Donnell, 2015). The element of control within this discourse facilitates the view that the drug user is unclean, self-destructive and somewhat inhuman (Burroughs, 1992). Social stigma⁶also aids in the formation of oppositional values and beliefs that can promote unity among members of the drug (sub)culture. The criminalisation and vilification of drugs have the opposite effect and force drug users underground (Becker, 1963). When people who abuse substances are marginalized, they tend not to seek access to mainstream institutions that typically provide sociocultural support (Myers et al., 2009). This can result in even stronger bonding with the drug culture (SAMSHA, 2014). The drug culture enables its members to view substance use disorders as normal or even as status symbols. The disorder becomes a source of pride, and people may celebrate their drug-related identity with other members of the drug culture. Stigma creates a ‘self-fulfilling prophesy’ due to identification with and adoption of the label which may increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour (O’Mahony, 2002).

To understand what an individual gains from participating in drug culture, it is important first to examine some of the factors involved in substance use and the development of substance use disorders. As an initiating force, the culture provides a way for people new to drug use to learn what to expect and how to appreciate the experience of getting high (SAMSHA, 2014). In applying an expectancy theory to substance use, it is assumed that drug-taking behaviour is motivated by the desire to attain particular outcomes associated with drug consumption (Leventhal, Schmitz, 2006: 2042). Expectations can be important among people who use drugs; those who have greater expectancies of pleasure typically have a more intense and pleasurable experience. These expectancies may play a part in the development of substance use disorders (Leventhal, Schmitz, 2006). Activities such as rituals of use, which make up part of the drug culture, provide a focus for those who use drugs when the drugs themselves are unavailable and help them shift attention away from problems they might otherwise need to face (Lende, 2005). Drug cultures serve as an initiating force as well as a sustaining force for substance use and abuse (White, 1996). As noted, the drug culture teaches the new user “how to recognize and enjoy drug effects” White (1996: 46). There are also practical matters involved in using substances (e.g., how much to take, how to ingest the substance for the effect) that people new to drug use may not know when they first begin to experiment with drugs. The skills needed to use some drugs can

⁵ Culture can impact on health at several levels. Within populations, it could influence the levels of inequality-for example, through the part individualism plays in market-orientated political doctrines that are associated with greater inequality. It could also interact with the socioeconomic status to moderate or amplify its health effects-for example, materialism and individualism might accentuate the costs of being poor or of low social status by making money more important to social position and weakening social bonds and group identity (Eckersley, 2005: 158).

⁶ Popular anti-drug strategies present the drug user as deviating from the norm, using drugs that are unacceptable to society, potentially acting like a foreigner, deviating from mental or physical health and from the morals of the majority. Therefore, the stigma attached to drug addiction causes problems for both the drug user and society (O’Donnell, 2015: 55).

be quite complicated, and hence the drug culture has an appeal on its own that promotes initiation into drug use (SAMSHA, 2014). In addition to helping initiate drug use, drug cultures serve as sustaining forces. They support the continued use and reinforce denial that a problem with alcohol or drugs exists (SAMSHA, 2014). The importance of the drug culture to the person using drugs often increases with time the person's association with it deepens (Moshier et al., 2012). White notes that as a person progresses from experimentation to abuse and/or dependence, he or she develops a more intense need to “seek for supports to sustain the drug relationship” (White, 1996: 9). In addition to gaining the social sanction for their substance use, participants in the drug culture learn many skills that can help them avoid the pitfalls of the substance-abusing lifestyle and thus continue their use. They learn how to avoid an arrest, how to get money to support their habit, and how to find a new supplier when necessary.

The drug culture has an appeal on its own that promotes initiation into drug use. Stephens uses examples from a number of ethnographic studies to show how people can be as taken by the excitement of the drug culture as they are by the drug itself (Stephens, 1991). Media portrayals, along with singer or music group autobiographies, that glamorize the drug lifestyle may increase its lure (Manning, 2007; Oksanen, 2012). In buying (and perhaps selling) drugs, individuals can find the excitement that is missing in their lives. They can likewise find a sense of purpose they otherwise lack in the daily need to seek out and acquire drugs (SAMSHA, 2014). In successfully navigating the difficulties of living as a person who uses drugs, they can gain approval from peers who use drugs and a feeling that they are successful at something (Pearson, Bourgois, 1995; White, 1996).

A relationship between the drug culture, counterculture and main culture is changeable, multidirectional and very complex, and as such, intrinsically linked. How does the drug culture lead to belonging? Liberation, self-relief, getting rid of the habit of repression, freedom of access to psychological pleasure and enjoyment or new social and political values, rebellion movement and promise for a new creative world.

In some communities, participation in the drug trade – an aspect of drug culture – is simply one of the few economic opportunities available and is a means of gaining the admiration and respect of peers (Bourgois, 2003; Simon, Burns, 1997). However, drug dealing as a source of status is not limited to economically deprived communities. In studying drug dealing among relatively affluent college students at a private college, Mohamed and Fritsvold (2006) found that the most important motives for dealing were ego gratification, status, and the desire to assume an outlaw image (SAMSHA, 2014).

Drug culture reinforces users' discovery that drug using is not bad, evil or harmful as professed by adults, religious, teachers, policymakers and law enforcement. Drug using peers inform new users without the parental, church, school, legal or media warnings of the negative effect (Zinberg, 1984). Drug users are crucially influenced by peers and their environment. They relate to companionship and approval of peers (Peele, 1990). People refocus their values as their using progresses, often into criminality, stealing, sex work, even murder, which can be acceptable depending on the rules within that group. The peer group influences an individual's initiation into and maintenance of drug using and the attitudes held by this group are predictive of future use (O'Donnell, 2015: 71). Group cohesion is crucial to survival. Their harsh reality invokes repetitive and routine performance of rituals to ensure survival. Survival depends on mutual support.

2. ONLINE DRUG CULTURE

Over the last two decades, the use of information technology, connection to the Internet, and the adoption of computer-mediated communication have increasingly become a normal or routine part of everyday life, especially for teenagers and young adults (Wellman, 2004). One major change that has occurred in drug cultures in recent years is the development of Internet communities organized around drug use (Gatson, 2007; Murguía et al., 2007) and drug use facilitation, including information on use, production, and sales (Bowker, 2011; *U.S. Department of Justice*, 2002). Such communities develop around Web sites or discussion boards where individuals can describe their drug-related experiences, find information on acquiring and using drugs, and discuss related issues ranging from musical interests to legal problems (SAMSHA, 2014). Even as parents, teachers and government officials urge adolescents to say no to drugs, the Internet is burgeoning as an alluring bazaar where anyone with a computer can find out how to get high on LSD, eavesdrop on what it is like to snort heroin or cocaine, check the going price for marijuana or copy the chemical formula for methamphetamine, the stimulant better known as speed (Wren, 1997).

The drug culture on the Internet has proliferated in several ways. One is in the tolerance or outright endorsement of illegal drugs, especially marijuana, in on-line forums and chat groups. Another is in explicit instructions for growing, processing and consuming drugs. On-line testimonials make recreational drugs sound like fun. Tripping out on LSD, a high school student reported, "was one of the coolest things I've ever done." A frequent snorter of cocaine said, "I always enjoy the first toot, "adding:" I can place a phone call and within an hour get it delivered. It is as routine as coffee in the morning. And just about as necessary. "There has even been a chat group for people "thinking of trying heroin." That kind of talk would be nothing new to a high school or college bull session, but face-to-face contact can help adolescents evaluate a speaker's credibility. The anonymity of on-line discussion, in contrast, tends to make even outlandish statements seem credible to impressionable young eavesdroppers (Wren, 1997). Nevertheless, while the Internet might be a contested space of communication, there is evidence that the Internet is being used as a tool of resistance by drug users in the face of dominant drug discourses. 'Innovative drug users', who learnt drug practices through websites, applied new knowledge then disseminated it through online networks (Boyer et al., 2007), offer an example of resistance against dominant drug discourses produced through on-line communication (Barratt, Allen, Lenton, 2013).

In a public online discussion about the drug ketamine, group members debated the validity and the meaning of both the drug experiences of other members and the published research about ketamine risk. These drug users developed their own 'layperson' evaluations of the risks and benefits of ketamine use, with internet forums providing the means or setting for this to take place (Tackett-Gibson, 2008). Studies indicate that, through these discussions, on-line environments and associated communication technologies can help produce resistance or alternatives to dominant discourse (Boyer et al., 2007; Tackett-Gibson, 2008). These peer-reviewed studies are supported by much of the research included in the NIDA-funded book *Real drugs in a virtual world* (Murguía, Tackett-Gibson, Lessem, 2007). This body of work found that drug-using peers exchanged information and experiences in public on-line forums, and consumed and produced information in a collaborative fashion, not unlike the on-line collaborators of Wikipedia. In these cases, the Internet appeared to function as an

alternative public space-effectively serving as a counter public-where a different mix of drug-user subject positions were produced, a capacity emphasized in Walsh's recent commentary (Walsh, 2011 in Barratt, Allen, & Lenton, 2013).

Ideas on how the Internet may operate as a site of resistance to the dominant drug paradigm with its emphasis on prohibition control and the construction of users as subjects in need of regulation realize Internet as technology for democratization (Walsh, 2011). However, the claim about on-line tolerance of drugs and generally free nature of on-line community that rejects prohibitionist mentality and challenges any assumption that drug use is wrong has its critics. They do not accept that the Internet is inherently democratizing (Barratt, Allen, & Lenton, 2013). On-line communication can also serve to legitimate dominant discourses by systemically silencing minority and alternative voices, positioning them as outside of mainstream opinion even though they may still be permitted to participate in public spheres.⁷ Indeed, governments use the Internet as much as other media forms to promote and control the discussion about drug use (e.g., Ecstasy. Face Facts, Australian Department of Health and Ageing, 2012). Leaning cautions that the Internet can be a radical media only if "it affords true anti-systemic action, the articulation of contrary identities and the production of media content outside the normal spheres of action" (Leaning, 2009: 106).

On-line and of-line drug culture is a broad field with different cultural discourses on drug use, ranging from marketing sites, through user exchanges, to dominant (pathologizing) and counter-public (alternative drug-user subjectivities) views on drug use. Many of the Web sites where these on-line communities develop are originally created to lessen the negative consequences of substance use by informing people about various related legal and medical issues (Murguia et al., 2007). As in other drug cultures, users of these Web sites and discussion boards develop their own language and values relating to drug use. Club drugs and hallucinogenic are the most often-discussed types of drugs, but on-line communities involve the discussion of all types of licit and illicit substances, including stimulants and opioids (Murguia et al., 2007; Tackett-Gibson 2007).

That mixture of different inputs is well illustrated in case studies of on-line Internet communication, which indicated some new combination of normative and alternative approaches to drug, use. That a mish-mash of different drug use discourses, which can be found on the Internet, indicates some kind of a neoliberal harm-reduction approach connected with drug users' on-line communication praxis. Studies online interactions in public Internet forums show the new type of a cultural pattern in the digital social media landscape. They reveal that these forums follow the same cultural logic embedded in the analysed communication between drug users found in the e-mail, and used forum spread the message that ecstasy users needed to understand the risk of PMA and the need to test their pills to help them avoid harm. The employed discourse constructed them as responsible drug-using subjects. In the framing of the problem, a girl called Lily assumed that the risks involved in taking drugs could and should be successfully managed and minimized: people who use drugs have a responsibility to themselves and

⁷ Not all on-line drug information is pro-drug. Join Together uses the Internet to help isolated community groups around the country trade experiences in fighting drug and alcohol abuse. Its Web site downloads for subscribers more than 300,000 documents a month about alcohol, tobacco and drugs. "We're finding it a very powerful medium for disseminating information much more rapidly and in a user-friendly way," said Mr. Rosenbloom, Join Together's president. Ethan A. Nadelmann, the director of the Lindesmith Center in New York, which advocates for liberalizing drug policies, said the internet allowed an unfettered discussion that government had foreclosed in a more structured public debate (New York Times, 1997).

others to look after themselves and their friends by taking precautions and making their drug use activities as safe as possible. The Bluelight e-mail and Lily's introduction and distribution of it illustrate how harm reduction discourses are embedded within wider neoliberal discourses around individual self-responsibility. Within harm-reduction discourses, drug-using subjects are generally constructed as able to make their own decisions about drug use through a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis (Barratt, Allen, Lenton, 2013). This construction, however, produces a dilemma for drug users in that it simultaneously inscribes them as empowered individuals, while also failing to adequately acknowledge the constraints of the socio-cultural context within which they are embedded (Fraser, 2004; Moore, Fraser, 2006). Some scholars (Mayock, 2005; Miller et al., 2001; Moore, Fraser, 2006) argue that this construction can result in drug users being more easily blamed for 'causing their own problems', while the social and structural determinants of health which lie outside their control are largely ignored (Barratt, Allen, Lenton, 2013). We do not mean to suggest that all versions of harm reduction draw solely upon neoliberalism or focus only upon individual behaviours to the detriment of social and societal factors. What these critics have argued is that harm reduction discourses can be and are often used in a way that privileges neoliberal subjectivity: people are urged to change their behaviour to reduce risk to themselves and others (Barratt, Allen, Lenton, 2013).

Furthermore, while harm-reduction models generally claim to be 'value-free' (see Hathaway, 2001), Lupton argues that these models are not value-free because they work under the assumption that all citizens should strive towards good health above all other concerns (the 'health imperative') (Lupton, 1995). As such, it has been argued that in many harm-reduction models, the (assumed) cost-benefit analysis is in favour of non-use, despite acknowledging but largely ignoring the importance of benefits and pleasures of drug use (Hathaway, 2001) and elevating the importance of caring for one's health by being risk-averse (Miller et al., 2001). These tensions can be seen within the on-line interactions that resulted from Lil's posting (Barratt, Allen, Lenton, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Social networks have been identified as an important influence on young people's relationship with illicit drugs. It is well established that drug use provides a basis for peer clustering, with users and non-users tending to form distinct networks, but there is some disagreement over the precise interpretation of this pattern. Online communities establish a forum where drug users are free to produce different subject positions (Barratt et al., 2014). As the parties in drug discussions on Internet sites do not know each other, they need to make their own positions visible. Indeed, participants in an online community assess each other's level of experience and knowledge on the grounds of self-presentations performed primarily through text (Rosino, Linders, 2015). Moreover, in a virtual community, one needs to reproduce one's position(s) continuously due to the situational nature of the interaction.

Conversations within on-line communities of some drug users were analysed through the social learning theory outlined by Becker, and the authors propose a supplementary stage to Becker's model (Rosino, Linders, 2015). This additional stage, "learning to communicate and comprehend knowledge and interpretation", relates to the distinctive aspects of on-line settings by emphasizing written communication, modes of articulation, technological proficiency, and community norms and argot (Rosino, Linders, 2015: 730-732). As Halbert and Kotarba (2007) also demonstrate, drug

subcultures – described by Becker as occurring in a physical environment and in face-to-face encounters – can now also operate in virtual environments (Davey et al., 2012; Rosino, Linders, 2015; Soussan, Kjellgren, 2014 according to Kataja, Törrönen, Hakkarainen, 2018). The Internet has become a space for disseminating drug information knowledge, practices and new innovations in drug use. On-line drug culture has become a virtual part of the drug culture and further research should be aimed to identify their influence and significance and inform the practice of treating drug use problems.

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ON LINE KULTURA DROGA

Nedozvoljena upotreba droga se često pojavljuje u kontekstu podkulture droga koju karakterišu socijalne veze sa drugim korisnicima droga, osećanja uzbuđenja i efikasnosti koja potiču od nedozvoljenih aktivnosti i otuđenosti od društva. U ovom radu se tvrdi da se konzumiranje droge može smatrati socijalnim i kulturnim fenomenom koji kreira sopstveno kulturno polje. To polje je definisano kao kultura droge i studije kulture droge nastoje da razumeju povezanost između glavne kulture, kulture mladih i kulture droge. Saznanja o toj interakciji su važna, kako za terapeutske programe i rehabilitaciju, tako i za prevenciju. Shodno tome, u radu će se analizirati on-lajn kultura droge sa ciljem da se istraži relativno novi kulturni prostor u kome se akomodirala kultura droge.

KLJUČNE REČI: droga / kultura droge / on-lajn komunikacija / mladi / socijalne mreže