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WARSAW RESEARCH ON YOUTH STYLES OF LIFE

"DRUGS IN URBAN YOUTH CULTURE"

Outline and results of the research

Summary

Warsaw, May 2008

The Report contains the outcome of the research prepared in scope of the project „Warsaw Research on Youth Styles of Life. Drugs in Urban Youth Culture” and conducted since October 2007 to May 2008 under commission of the Warsaw City Office.

### **Main aims of the project**

- 1) standardization of the styles of life featuring Warsaw youth;
- 2) matching relevant styles of life with dangers of using psychoactive substances by youth, especially drugs;
- 3) diagnosis of the competences featuring adults working with youth, undertaking decisions and/or making public statements on this issue and, most of all, organizing and conducting prevention activities among the communities of Warsaw youth;
- 4) preparation materials for discussion during the international conference of ECAD: "Drugs in urban youth culture" scheduled to May, 2008 and devoted to socio cultural grounds of prevention activities undertaken by various subjects among urban youth in Poland and other countries belonging to ECAD.

### **Hypotheses**

#### **Hypothesis of moral panic**

Moral panic in media regarding „youth and drugs” may be realized in two ways:

- first, its course may be fiercefull (rapid and relatively short) – in this case the advantages of media coverage may predominate its social costs; discourse may extend the area of media and result in activation of social energy along with so called issue professionalization;
- second, panic can „smolder” for a long time existing as a media „duty issue”. In such case it is accompanied by a bunch of other phenomena such as social disorientation, increase in stereotypization of the subject of panic, proliferation of certain prevention programs, and finally policy decisions on funding given ways of work with youth, certain NGO trainings and commercial enterprises operating in public sector and others.

#### **Communicational hypothesis**

Currently we face not only a crisis in the intergenerational communication, but also among various peer groups. These phenomena constitute one of the disregarded effects of social and civilization transformation in our country

### **Hypothesis of the domination of therapeutic and training discourse**

In state of the professionalization of issue regarding drug addiction among youth the external discourses become more important (what is characteristic for the third stage of moral panic). At its core there is prevention discourse primarily based on applied psychological knowledge. Its snappy, massive and ritualized applications destroy its essence by simplifications, unjustified generalizations, routine and applications in inappropriate contexts, often based on worldviews.

### **SEP hypothesis**

SEP or somebody else's problem is a category allowing to describe how certain issues become insignificant in public discourse (as well as media discourse) and activities undertaken by individuals who regard given issue as alien and/or insignificant either for themselves or for their environment or as supposed to be concealed.

On the grounds of the research it is possible to state that sepizational practices in the dimensions of Me vs. World and Us vs. Them are usually applied in the private sphere by particular people (although acting in social institutions, such as families or schools); sepization in the Text vs. Not Text dimension takes the form of institutional approaches to solving problems (legal acts, educational and prevention programs). On the grounds of drug prevention in Poland we have come from the phase of concealed SEPs to articulated SEPs, which in public discourse are mostly manifested by stigmatization, degradation and exclusion. Countersepization of the youth drug addiction usually hides various concealed SEPs, most of the time being an effect of both lack of knowledge on youth and real contact with this group.

### **Ludic hypothesis**

There is a distinctive group of youth styles of life governed by the norms of ludicity and the present as a dominating temporal orientation. Even if the dominant value of a style of life is different, and ludicity only „happens”, it remains an important constituent of the whole. In both of the cases in such an approach to ludus there is not much left of the atmosphere of sacrum – which used to be a holy time accompanied by psychoactive substances in the past and among other cultures. Neither is it a reminiscent of youth counterculture of sixties and seventies. Currently drugs have become to much more extent a part of everyday life (and every day ludic behaviors) in the social life of youth.

### **Characteristics of the research project**

The project of the research assumed its realization in a few modules:

- a) quantitative research of teenagers and young adults studying in Warsaw;
- b) quantitative and qualitative research of adults;
- c) desktop research;
- d) analysis of media coverage on youth and drugs.

### **Questionnaires of the interviews**

In order to realize the aims of the research presented in chapter 1., the authors have designed new, original questionnaires. Because of the exploratory scope of the research, the questionnaires contained relatively big number of open questions. A significant amount of questions directed to youth was also applied in case of adults.

### **Youth sample**

The initial idea of analysis of representative sample of studying Warsaw youth unfortunately turned out to be unhelpful from the point of view of assumed aims. The reason for this are not demographical processes, but rather the status of the capital city as the biggest academic center and the ideology of educational boom, sanctioned by the last educational reform, which suggests older students that they should undertake general educational profile. In consequence, the population of Warsaw students between 13 and 24 years of age is dominated by students of tertiary education, while among teenagers there is a significant domination of students of high schools and gymnasiums. Eventually, after statistical consultations we decided to separately sample students of secondary education (N=600) and of tertiary education (N=600), resulting with a stratified quota sample (N=1200).

Parents of the analyzed students are mostly very active in the occupational sphere. There are clearly visible high percentages of people employed in the private sector and possessing own enterprises.

**Characteristics of youth population and sample according to types of schools in N and %.**

<b>school type</b>	<b>N in population</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N in sample</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>secondary schools</b>				
Gymnasium	47.007	33,1	201	33,5
Basic vocational school	4.170	2,9	13	2,2
General lyceum	57.432	40,5	227	37,8
Specialized lyceum	4.031	2,8	47	7,9
Technical secondary school	13.912	9,8	25	4,4
Post lyceal high schools and for adults	15.381	10,8	67	10,0
Missing	-	-	20	3,3
<b>Sum</b>	<b>141.933</b>	<b>100*</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Tertiary schools</b>				
The University of Warsaw	56.292	13,2	116	19,3
The Warsaw University of Technology	30.479	7,2	78	13,0
The Warsaw University of Life Sciences	23.136	5,4	45	7,5
Other public	191.232	44,9	153	25,6
Other private	125.000	29,3	208	34,7
<b>sum</b>	<b>426.139</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100*</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>568.072</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>100</b>

\*rounding error.

### **Adults**

The sample of so called adults (N= 302) was from the very beginning thought of as a convenient cluster of experts. We were aiming at reaching adults acting in close environment of youth and all the related problems. Consequently such a sample is dominated by educators, school psychologists and school headmasters. The structure of the sample is presented in table 5. In the analyzed group there were 72,1% (N = 217) females and 27,9% (N = 84) men. Almost all the respondents graduated from tertiary schools (91,4%; N = 276).

### **Desktop research**

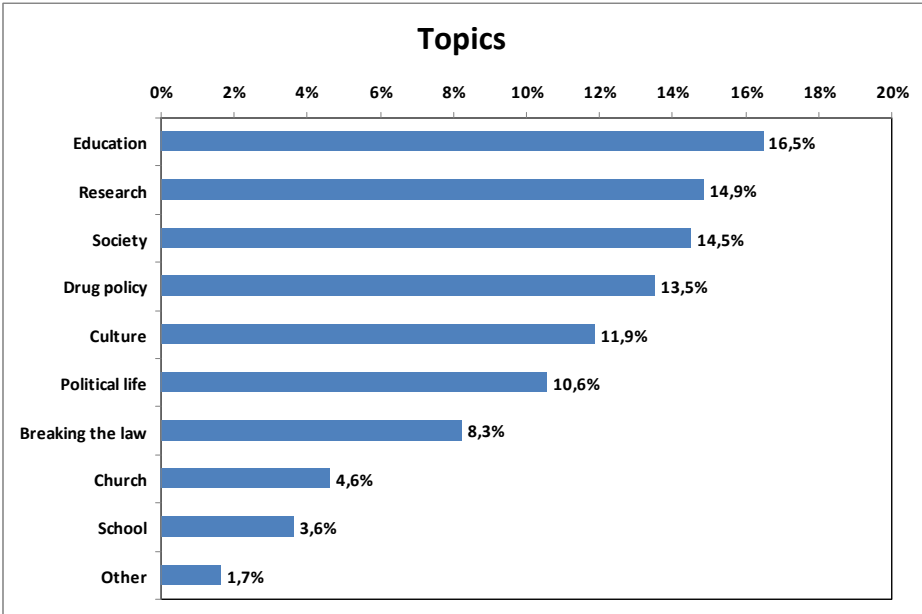
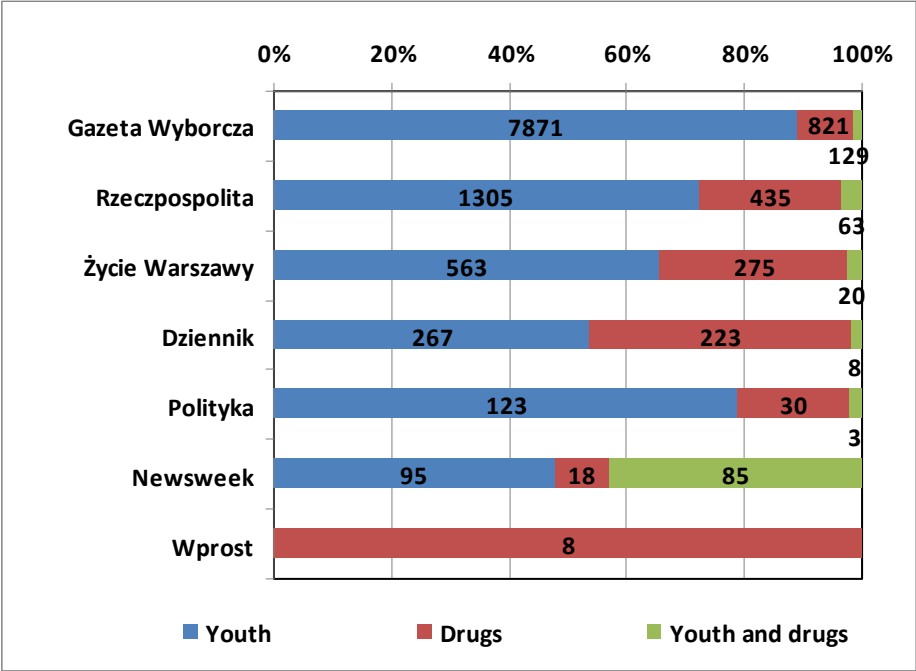
The documents on the activities of particular institutions and organizations working in the area of addiction prevention or in general targeted at youth were collected by the conductors of the research during their visits in the due organizations, especially at schools. We have applied them to the initial recognition on the character of the work with youth. That is why they were not analyzed in such a rigorous way as previous data. However, this analysis enabled us to see that school prevention programs represent very unequal level and style of prevention activities: from a bit corruptive „promotion activities”, through ticking off the task, up to elaborated and competent instructions for teachers, telling what to do in case of meeting a student under the influence of psychoactive substances. What is interesting, some of the

schools conducted own research (with different outcome) on the atmosphere at their premises, students' demands or creation of the school brand.

**Press analysis**

The press analysis was planned in order to verify the hypothesis on character of public discourse on youth and drugs

**Articles chosen for the press analysis according to Journals**



### **Intergenerational communication model**

We present two models recreated on the grounds on the empirical data analyzed in chapter III:

- compatibility of the sets of values featuring adults and youth;
- juvenologic competences of adults.

Together they constitute the model of basic intergenerational communication. Let us remind that they are considered as the most important condition of undertaking any reasonable decisions and activities towards youth – including prevention activities. They are also confronted with the hypotheses which we assumed in the research (see chapter 1) and the analysis of voices in the press contents (in chapter 4). Theoretical grounds for this interpretation are provided by the classic and little big book of Margaret Mead where are presented 3 types of culture - post figurative (tradition and adult domination); co figurative (which is dominated by peer bonds) and pre figurative (where, among others, due to civilization changes the world order is reversed and adults have to learn from their children), see also further. The data interpretation obtained in such a way made us introduce the complex notion of resentment as an explanatory variable in our research. Max Scheler conceived resentment as a returning negative emotion featured by grudge and hostility, impulses of envy and vengeance, inhibition and feeling of impotence. It is often accompanied by competition. Here all these elements are strengthening by the conviction of righteousness and sense of duty. „Situations – says Scheler – in which resentment threatens in a general way are the attitudes of the older generation towards younger one. (emph. - M.S.)

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Both the model of compatibility of opinions and the juvenological competences evidently highlight prolific discrepancies between youth and adults, as well as gaps in adult knowledge not only on particular behaviors of youth, but also its values, problems, needs, issues in the contemporary popular culture and styles of life. Many of them are surprisingly compliant with press and training/therapeutical discourse, but it has to be stressed that these discourses organize adult imaginations on youth only to certain extent. In some parts of this knowledge, especially were old mental and cultural patterns are still valid (representative for post figurative culture), media and training/therapeutical discourses still loose. One of the costs of

this process, evident in this case, is the multidimensional resentment of adults against both the popular culture and youth.

It is worth to take a closer look at the fact, that the discourse, which we call training/therapeutical, accordingly to what Michel Maffesoli has written, "does not fulfill the promise of consolation", for it does not provide knowledge but only ideology. This ideology may be justified by scientific explanations, but in practice it may as easily disable the possibility of cooperation and understanding. This discourse is not efficient due its lack of sense of humor, it does not keep a distance, and – contrary to anticipations – serves objectification of youth. Along with the media discourse (which is unacceptable as for the dignity of young people, journalist competences and language aesthetics) they bring unnecessary chaos to the mutual intergenerational communication.

It is obvious that adults are unable to reach the state of perfect competence in their contacts with youth, what is due to natural and cultural competences. Sometimes, however, they could simply ask about some things. One other thing is that the „evil” culture, which youth simply comes across as a fact and has to face, is mainly the effect of the co figurative process maintained by adults themselves. All the educators compete with the decision makers and creators of that particular popular contemporary culture. Youth in this struggle is just a set of pawns; they have to wait quite a long time until they become generals.

### **Typology of styles of life in the perspective of gender.**

Here we came across a surprise. In all our previous research on styles of life featuring youth we saw that gender was the most important ground to differentiate and constitute youth tribes and distinct, formerly very sharp styles of life. In the meantime and in this research youth is ruled by a postmodern unisex: only a few features differentiate styles of life of girls and young women and boys and young men; we will take a closer look at them

### **Typology of educational tribes**

This typology is essential because a particular type of school not only focuses objective data closely connected to the stage of student development, social condition (with Warsaw distinctive in view of the rest of Poland) and cultural background, but also enables to show two paths which are followed by Warsaw youth on their way to maturity (one being smooth and easy and the other – more difficult and rough). One more argument for such a differentiation is the fact that we have for the first time the opportunity to analyze youth

brought up under the influence of the ideology of educational boom – and practically – after the reform of educational system. It also represents the whole of the educational career.

Styles of life which we have reconstructed from this perspective can be divided into two dynamic types:

- style represented by almost half of the students of gymnasiums, general lyceums and public higher schools; grounded on the reproduction of status (first of all – educational) and reproduction of intelligence culture and ethos;

- style of the gymnasialists coming from families, where parents have different than higher education, students of post gymnasial technical schools, post lyceal schools and for adults and students of private higher schools; its basic force defining the style is the formal promotion through education, and in culture: unstable location and a bunch of chaotic processes strongly determined by external circumstances.

Besides, particular subtypes divided according to schools can be describes as:

**Students of gymnasiums** – tribe colonizing world (with the means of devices at hand, both in virtual web and real) to one end: to recognize and extend their social surrounding; intelligent, full of doubts in case of self esteem, very active, with prolific and casual (apart from family) social bonds, having good taste and high competences in the dominant popular culture, from which they most often choose (contrary to what adults may think) – high level of messages; they have a good start due to families of origin, but are not spoiled by money, if they reinforce elites, they will constitute the type of enlightened entrepreneur and western middle lass being contaminated with Polish intellectuals;

PREVENTIONALLY OVERSOCIALIZED, lack of competences and communication respecting their individuality;

**Students of general lyceums** – tribe under pressure or *comme il faut*; their values are getting towards more mature sets, social bonds focus in packs of friends and web. They are overwhelmed by the pressure of their educational success and influence their well being and self esteem, although they have learned to steer this process; besides, they already constitute the elite with intelligence ethos, appreciating worthy (and comfortable life), well oriented in both the Gutenberg Galaxy and the Culture of Image.

PREVENTIONALLY AUTONOMOUS (actually) – they mostly require reasonable leaders who help to organize world in such a way that they may achieve aims with more ease;

**Students of post gymnasial technical and vocational schools** - tribe (so far) without allocation, seduced by the low level message of popular culture, what is apparent in their well being, although they may win in the near future (lack of experts), what decreases their self criticism and pessimism in the area of achieving aims; relatively retreated and misanthropic, the most religious and the least tolerant.

EXPERTS ON PROBLEMS— one may learn a lot by listening to them;

**Students of post lyceal high schools and for adults** - tribe of strenuous promotion, the most outstretched between all the three types of Medal having needs and features of traditional intelligence, but following more difficult path, the most retreated.

SECURED BY TRADITIONALISM, but in due course NOT IMMUNE to challenges of post modernity;

**Students of public higher schools** – tribe already perfect, because they already have overcome biggest challenges – studying and lacking only incomes suitable to their social position; these individuals who do not reproduce the status of family of origin, quickly make up lacks in their style of life (but not necessarily cultural competences what we know as academic teachers), cool, but over tired, during their path to education have differentiated their tastes (especially musical), socially closed, engaged professionals, closest to their aims.

FIGHT WITH ADDICTIONS in THE NAME OF HEALTHY STYLE OF LIFE, not necessarily with success, because a bit of the dark side is not too harmful on the social market;

**Students of private higher schools** – tribe of *Self-made-men a la Pologne*; they are not to successful children of transformation and the ideology of educational boom; their extreme ego securial individualism made their self esteem flying in the sky; immature social bonds (resembling rather students from gymnasiums rather than their equals); quite primitive and loud ludicity based on low level messages from popular culture, not too active, but make their living (often to pay tuition, but they declare high demands), under grown with resentment, but aware of the appearance of their success;

THREATENED WITH ADDICTIONS and actually the most helpless.