The Baby, the Bathwater and the Legacy of Normalisation: The role of classical and contemporary criminological theory in understanding young people's drug use

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Since it began in the mid-1990s, the normalisation debate has attracted considerable attention and has tended to polarise opinion. In this article two of the main protagonists in the debate come together to discuss its legacy. Focusing on the twin themes of continuity and change they consider the relevance of early developments in the sociology of drug use and the way that issues of structure and agency should be understood in relation to contemporary drug use. Noting the value of classic criminological studies, including those with focus on drug use, the authors argue that normalisation remains a contingent process negotiated by distinct social groups operating in bounded situations. They also note how early studies anticpated much that has recently been written about drug use, including the emphasis on hedonistic leisure. As well as highlighting the value of earlier work, this article draws attention to the value of more recent criminological developments, particularly Laub and Samspon's theory of situated choice and Messershmidt's theory of structured action. What is considered especially useful about these approaches is that they help to make sense of the way that drug use is influenced by the interplay of structure and agency.

Key words: normalisation, situated choice, structured action

Introduction

The normalisation thesis is one of the most influential recent developments in the sociology of drug use and has become something of an orthodoxy in the field. Whereas illicit drug use was once widely attributed to individual or social pathology, it has increasingly come to be seen as an unremarkable feature of young people's lives; part of the broader search for pleasure, excitement and enjoyment framed within consumption-oriented leisure lifestyles. Although widely accepted, the normalisation thesis has been contested and debate in this area has been divisive. According to one review, contributors have tended to take one 'side' or the other and 'both sides of the debate over-egg the pudding in order to strengthen their case – leaving room for both sides to criticize the other's argument' (Wibberley and Price, 2000: 161). Some attempts have been made to find a middle path (see, for example, South, 1999; Manning, 2007), but the two 'sides' of the debate have yet to come together. Ten years on and this paper represents a collaboration between two of the main

protagonists in the normalisation debate – one a proponent of the thesis and one a critic[iii].

In revisiting the normalisation debate we do not intend to go over old battles, nor do we seek consensus simply for the sake of it. We continue to disagree on some points, though our recent exchanges have suggested the possibility of rapprochement and it is this that we wish to explore here. In considering this possibility we have come to view our work as offering distinct, though not necessarily competing, perspectives which contain notable points of contact as well as differences of emphasis and areas of disagreement. We begin by offering some brief reflections on the normalisation debate, before summarising and revisiting its major themes. A key focus for our discussion is provided by the structure-agency debate and related developments within criminology, according to which normalisation is contingent process negotiated by distinct social groups operating in bounded situations.

The normalisation debate

The normalisation of adolescent recreational drug use has been described most fully by a group of academics and researchers at the University of Manchester working on the North West Longitudinal Study. Their central thesis has been developed in a series of publications spanning the best part of a decade and evolved in important ways during this period (Measham *et al,* 1994, 1998 and 2001; Parker *et al,* 1995, 1998, and 2002; Williams and Parker, 2001). Initially, at least, a fairly full process of normalisation was envisaged, whereby 'for many young people taking drugs has become the norm' and it was predicted that: 'Over the next few years, and certainly in urban areas, non drug-trying adolescents will be a minority group. In one sense they will be the deviants' (Parker *et al,* 1995, 26). From what were later described as 'rather crude beginnings' these authors 'attempted to better define and re-test the concept of normalization and hopefully improve its utility in respect of understanding the growth of recreational drug use' (Parker *et al,* 2002, 943). The most comprehensive statement of the normalisation thesis was provided in the monograph *Illegal Leisure: The Normalization of Adolescent Recreational Drug Use* (Parker *et al,* 1998). Subsequent articles have reported more recent findings from the study, but the conceptual framework has remained largely unchanged since then (Parker *et al,*

2002; Williams and Parker, 2001). In this more comprehensive statement of the thesis six dimensions of normalisation were identified: these being drug availability or offers; drug trying or lifetime prevalence; recent use; intended future use; being 'drugwise' regardless of individual experiences with drugs; and evidence of a cultural accommodation .

The normalisation thesis has been challenged by Shiner and Newburn (1996; 1997; 1999), who developed their critique prior to the publication of *Illegal Leisure*. Given its timing, this critique represented a response to the thesis as it was initially formulated. The proposition that various forms of drug use were undergoing a process of normalisation was being widely discussed at the time and was being readily endorsed by a range of academics, journalists, policy-makers and practitioners. Shiner and Newburn developed their critique in an attempt to sensitise this emerging orthodoxy, rather than to provide a simple oppositional stance. That drug use was increasing and changing in significant ways in Britain during the 1990s was not in dispute. What was contested was how the changes that were taking place at this time should be conceptualised. According to Shiner and Newburn the normalisation thesis (as it was then being presented) exaggerated the extent and acceptability of drug use among young people; paid insufficient attention to the normative context within which drugs were used; and overstated the extent and pace of change.

Revisiting the normalisation debate

Although the normalisation debate has moved on, the potential for disagreement remains. Nowhere is this potential more evident that in relation to claims that recent developemtns represent a radical break from the past. Such claims were challenged by Shiner and Newburn (1999, 149) on the grounds that recent increases in drug use formed part of a much longer historical process, 'one of evolution over an extended period rather than of a sharp, fundamental structural shift'. In exploring the question of continuity and change, we will consider two related issues: *first*, the role that early developments in the sociology of drug use have played in the normalisation debate; and *second*, the way that structure and agency should be conceptualised in relation to contemporary drug use.

'New' deviancy theories and the early sociology of drug use

Something like a systematic sociology of drug use began to emerge in the 1960s under the umbrella of the 'new' deviancy theories (see Becker, 1963; Young, 1971). The timing of this development was significant because it was during this decade that young people started to use illicit drugs in significant numbers, with some commentators suggesting that it was then that society's defences against drugs were 'decisively breached' (Marwick, 1998). The link with the 'new' deviancy theories was no less significant and reflected an underlying compatibility. 'New' deviancy theorists frequently expressed unease about the extension of social control into morally ambiguous areas and, as an allegedly 'victimless crime', drug use was ideally suited to their broader purpose (Cohen, 1971). The relevance or otherwise of early developments in the sociology of drug use has not been considered explicitly within the normalisation debate, but has been alluded to in a number of ways and has clear implications for the claims that have been made about continuity and change.

While Shiner and Newburn (1997; 1999) drew explicitly on the 'new' deviancy theories and associated developments in the sociology of drug use, the authors of the normalisation thesis emphasised the need for new perspectives. Despite this, the normalisation thesis contains enough parallels with earlier work for some to suggest that it attempts to combine Becker's insights with post-modern theory (Blackman, 2004). The proposed link with Becker's work is particularly noteworthy because it highlights the lineage of much that has recently been written about drug use. The rejection of explanations rooted in individual pathology and social dysfunction; the emphasis on the meaningful and goal oriented nature of deviance; and the focus on consumption and pleasure-seeking were all central to the 'new' deviancy theories and associated developments in the sociology of drug use. In illustrating this point we will consider two classic contributions to the field – *Outsiders* by Howard Becker and *The Drugtakers* by Jock Young.

i) Howard Becker (1963) *Outsiders*

Reflecting his experiences as a jazz musician and activist in the campaign to legalise *marihuana* (the American term for herbal cannabis), Howard Becker devoted two

chapters of *Outsiders* to the moral career of the marihuana user. In these chapters Becker rejected the conventional wisdom of the day which attributed marihuana use to particular psychological traits and went on to develop the hypothesis that users learn to view it as something that can give them pleasure. Once users have learnt to take pleasure in marihuana their continued use was said to depend on an ability to contend with powerful forces of social control that seek to limit access to the drug, ensure that its use must remain hidden from non-users and define its use as immoral. Participation in the user group was identified as helping to disable these attempts at control by providing access to a steady source of supply; increasing users' confidence that they can keep their use secret with relative ease; and providing a whole series of rationalisations and justifications - 'conventional society allows much more harmful practices such as the use of alcohol', 'the drug is beneficial not harmful' and 'its use can be controlled'. These justifications, Becker noted, enable users to argue that conventional morality about drugs does not apply to marihuana and to reorganise their moral notions so as to permit its continued use.

The social conditions surrounding cannabis have changed considerably since the time *Outsiders* was first published. So striking have these changes been that cannabis was said to be in the position of having already met the normalisation criteria of drug availability, trying, regular use and cultural accommodation in the 1990s, while there was little prospect of other drugs being viewed similarly (Parker *et al,* 2002). Given such marked changes, we might consider *Outsiders* to offer little more than an historical reminder of how things used to be. For all that has changed, however, the theme of continuity within change is well illustrated by Michael Hallstone's (2002) reent update of Becker's theory. Although historical changes in the position of marijuana have created some discrepancies, Becker's theory of using marijuana for pleasure, was considered to have 'survived the test of time remarkably well' (Hallstone, 2002: 840).

Other aspects of Becker's analysis remain no less pertinent. The state continues to be heavily invested in prohibition, with the cultivation, possession and supply of cannabis remaining illegal in most jurisdictions. Consequently, users still have to contend with powerful forces of social control that attempt to limit their access to the drug, ensure that its use remains hidden from at least some non-users and define its

use as immoral. As well as securing a supply and keeping their actions partially hidden, young people who use drugs must reckon with potential challenges - both real and imagined - to their status as morally competent social actors. Shiner and Newburn (1996; 1997) identified a series of rationalisations that young people use to disable ideological dimensions of drug control and protect their moral identity. In particular, they noted the role of 'neutralisation techniques', which commonly focused on differences between substances and worked on the basis that the substances being used were not harmful, were not really drugs and were not being used in a way that was addictive. What is of particular interest here is that these techniques emphasised the exceptionality of cannabis and functioned in much the same way that Becker described. A recent study of marijuana users in New York City also highlighted the steps that users take to manage their behaviour in a context where it is illegal and socially stigmatised (Johnson *et al,* 2006, 46). This study identified a distinct argot which is widely understood within the 'marijuana subculture', yet remains largely hidden from the mainstream. Among other things, 'marijuana argot' serves to maintain the 'subculture of secrecy' and conveys the 'dynamic expressiveness' involved.

Elements of Becker's analysis also have an applicability beyond cannabis. The authors of the normalisation thesis noted that their ideas refer only 'equivocally' to dance drugs such as ecstasy (Parker *et al,* 1998: 152; see also Measham *et al,* 2001) because the 'excesses' associated with the clubbing scene are 'not as acceptable outside this semi-private setting' (Parker *et al,* 2002: 941 and 960). Regular users who move into polydrug repertoires are said to present a 'conundrum' for the thesis, because 'outside club land, their poly-drug use and 'risky' nights out potentially clash with the notions of responsible, sensible recreational drug use which is at the core of our conceptualization' (Parker *et al,* 2002, 947). Recent attitude surveys confirm that young people who use illicit substances other than cannabis do so in a general context in which the vast majority of their peers, as well as their elders, are thoroughly convinced of the potential harmfulness of their actions (Pearson and Shiner, 2002; see also Gould and Stratford, 2002). There are, moreover, notable parallels between the position of dance drugs today and that of cannabis in earlier times. Michelle Gourley (2004) recently applied Becker's theory of deviance to ecstasy use in Australia, arguing that the meaning of drug use must be considered in the context of the

behavioural norms and shared understandings of the subculture in which they are learnt. She also identified a range of self-justifying rationalisations, which focused on the perceived safeness of ecstasy and served to neutralize conventional attitudes and legitimise its continued use.

These various studies conducted in diverse settings provide a consistent message which highlights an important element of continuity in our understanding of drug use. Much as it was when Becker wrote *Outsiders*, the normalisation of illicit drug use remains, in our view, a contingent process that is negotiated by distinct social groups operating in bounded situations. Normalisation cannot be assumed and is not the pre-given product of macro-social forces, though broader cultural and structural changes have facilitated increases in drug use and have encouraged the normalisation of such behaviour, albeit as a negotiated accomplishment (see below).

ii) Jock Young (1971) *The Drugtakers*

Working under the auspices of the British-based National Deviancy Conference, Young (1971) helped to stretch the 'meaning and viability of the radical conception of deviance to its absolute limit' (Sumner, 1994: 262). Like Becker, Young rejected the conventional wisdom of the time and set about challenging the 'absolutist monolith', which portrayed drug use as a disease found at the edges of society among the 'sick' and under socialised. Drawing on the work of Matza and Sykes (1961), he argued that drug use does not exist outside of the conventional value system, but can be readily understood in terms of widely accepted 'subterranean' values. What was distinctive about Young's analysis was the way in which it linked subterranean values to the political economy of 'late' or 'post' industrial societies. Such values were held to be identical to the customary definition of play and were contrasted with formal values, which were said to be consistent with the structure of modern industry in that they served to maintain diligent, repetitive work. Rather than forming isolated moral regions, subterranean values and formal values were considered to be mutually dependent upon one another (1971: 128):

> Leisure is concerned with consumption and work with production; a keynote of our bifurcated society, therefore, is that individuals within it must constantly consume in order to keep pace with the productive capacity of the

> economy. They must produce in order to consume, and consume in order to produce. The interrelationship between formal and subterranean values is therefore seen in a new light: hedonism, for instance, is closely tied to productivity.

Young went on to note that subterranean values are largely subsumed under the dominant ethos of productivity, with the result that they can only be expressed legitimately if - and when - the individual has earned the right to do so by working hard and being productive. These expectations did not apply equally across the social spectrum and some groups were said to exist beyond the ethos of productivity. Taken as a whole, young people were considered to be in the privileged position of not having to justify their play through productivity, though they were expected to invest in their future through education and training. Being drawn largely from the middle classes, Young argued that 'bohemian' youth, in particular, found they could disdain work and demand authentic play in what was considered to be 'a common response' to the incipient problems that arose in an age of staggering material abundance and unprecedented opportunities for leisure. As such, it was suggested that these young people might be rehearsing possible cultural solutions to the central life problems of the future.

More than thirty years on, there can be little doubting the prescience of this earlier analysis. Post-industrial societies have continued to experience a general increase in the consumption of leisure (Gershuny, 2000; Rojek, 2000), prompting Young (1999, 10) to argue, in his more recent work, that the 'Keynesian balance between hard work and hard play' has been 'tipped towards the subterranean world of leisure'. What were once thriving centres of industrial production have been replaced by a massive night-time economy, which provides the focal point for 'experiential consumption' and acts as 'the amphitheatre of drug, alcohol and sexual experimentation' (Hobbs *et al,* 2003: 46). As well as helping to explain the emergence of widespread illicit drug use, Young's analysis continues to offer important insights into the location and meaning of such behaviour. His emphasis on the privileged position of youth, and middle class youth in particular, is important in this regard because it draws attention to the way that lifestyle choices are linked to the structural conditions under which they are made.

Structure and agency in contemporary criminology

The normalisation thesis downplayed the role of structural influences, preferring instead to emphasise a rational action model of adolescent drug use based on a cost-benefit analysis. To some extent this emphasis reflected the absence of statistically significant differences between users and non-users in terms of socio-economic class, gender or 'race', which prompted the authors to point to a 'withering of traditional sociological predictor variables' (Parker *et al,* 1998: 154). Based on their longitudinal data the authors of the thesis also suggested that recreational drug use is no longer 'transitory nor closely tied to the period of adolescence' (Parker et al, 1998: 91), but is extending beyond 'traditional markers' (Parker *et al,* 2002: 960), with the result that the 'drug-wise children of the nineties are indeed bringing their psycho-active substance use with them into young adulthood' (Williams and Parker, 2001: 410).

The emphasis that the normalisation thesis placed on rationality and choice also reflected a political stance which challenged the prevailing discourse of irresponsible and disordered youth. At a time when the popular and political debate was being framed in such terms, the finding that nearly half the young people included in the study had tried illicit drugs (and nearly all had been exposed to drug offers) by the time they were 18, suggested that such behaviour could no longer be convincingly explained in terms of individual pathology, peer pressure, subcultural rebellion or structural determinants. This political stance was potentially risky, however, because the assertion that there has been an increase in drug use provided a key rationale for government policy. As such, it has been argued that 'normalization thesis comfortably sits within the framework of control' (Blackman, 2004:138).

Part of the problem here is that a cost benefit analysis prioritises individual 'choice' and agency in the context of a consumer society which increasingly emphasises the individualisation of risk and responsibility. Although drug users and drug dealers do not always act according to simple rational choice models (Caulkins and MacCoun, 2003; Pedersen, forthcoming), this emphasis reinforces 'the individualistic morality of our consumer culture' (Garland, 2001: 198) By combining the notion of rational recreational drug use with a post modern view of risk society, the normalization thesis potentially reduces drug use 'to the personal and diminishing the significance of

structural inequality and the ideological power of the dominant order' (Blackman, 2004:145). This may, in turn, be used to legitimate a drug policy focused on individualised risk management, so that academic research is (mis)used 'to increase moral and punitive regulation' (Blackman, 2004: 142).

We consider the emphasis recent studies place on the pleasures of drug use to be analytically important, though we share concerns about the way in which this emphasis is often tied to highly individualised notions of risk (see Coffield and Gofton, 1994; Parker *et al,* 1998; Hunt and Evans, 2007). In seeking to rebalance the scales away from individual pathology, peer pressure, low self esteem and the miseries of 1980s dependent drug use towards agency, rationality and pleasure-seeking there is a danger that structural dimensions of drug use are being overlooked. What s required then is a perspective which recognises the role of agency and pleasure, but locates them within a broader stuctural framework. Working separately, we have both made moves in this direction. In so doing, we have each drawn on recent developmetns within criminological theory: one of us (Shiner) has looked to recent developments in life-course criminology and the notion of 'situated choice', while the other (Measham) has looked to gendered perspective and the notion of 'structured action'.

The observation that crime is committed mainly by young people is one of the most enduring and widely replicated of all criminological findinsg and has prompted the suggestion that any theory of criminal offending should seek to explain how such behaviour fits with the course of individual development from infancy to old age (Smith, 2002). It is precisely this that John Laub and Robert Sampson have sought to achieve with their age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Drawing on control theory and the 'new' deviancy theories, Laub and Sampson emphasise the interplay between structure and agency, viewing offending as a form of 'situated choice'. While recognising that crime is purposeful, meaningful and exciting, they maintain that these 'agential processes' are reciprocally linked to situations and larger structures: that is to say, situations and structures are partly determined by the choices that individuals make, yet simultaneously constrain, modify and limit the choices that are available to them. Some situations constrain the behavioural choices more thoroughly than others and

desistance from crime is said to be facilitated by 'turning points' or changes in situational and structural life circumstances. A good marriage or a stable job are specifically identified as having the potential to reshape life course trajectories by reordering short-term situational inducements to crime and redirecting long-term commitments to conformity.

This emphasis on the interplay of structure and agency sits comfortably with the analysis that Young (1971) developed in *The Drugtakers*. The agential processes Laub and Samspson describe approximate to something like subterranean play (offending is said to be attractive because it is exciting), while the emphasis they place on the constraining influence of work, parenthood and marriage underlines the privileged position of youth. Viewed from a life-course perspective adolescence represents a period of relative freedom during which the bonds that tie children to family and school have weakened, but are yet to be replaced by a new set of adult roles and responsibilities. As a result, young people tend to be less constrained during this phase of the life-course than at any other time and are freer to engage in acts of delinquency and deviance (see also Smith, 2002). As well as being compatible with Young's early work, Laub and Sampson's approach helps to explain why drug use is distributed across the population in the way that it is.

Surveys of drug use dating back to the mid-1980s have repeatedly highlighted a pattern that conforms to the widely observed age-crime curve: such behaviour is relatively unusual among young people in their early teens, but increases sharply in the last few years of compulsory education, before reaching a peak shortly thereafter and then falling away quite sharply (see, for example, ISDD, 1994; Ramsay and Percy, 1996; Ramsay et al, 2001; Chivite-Matthews et al, 2005). Following this general pattern, the 1998/9 *Youth Lifestyles Survey* (YLS) found recent drug use to be most widespread among young adults in their late teens and early twenties. It also found the ratio of past-to-recent users increased with age, suggesting a particular propensity towards desistance among those in their mid-to-late twenties (Shiner, 2007).

The value of a life-course perspective has been further highlighted by detailed multivariate analysis based on the 1998 BCS and 1998/9 YLS (Shiner, 2007).

Controlling for a range of variables, including various lifestyle indicators, the multivariate models included a series of age-effects, which confirmed that the late teens and early twenties are the peak age of drug use and that the probability of desistance increases with age. There was little to suggest that the school-to-work transition constitutes much by way of a watershed though this may be considered unsurprising given that the working week leaves regular spaces for the pursuit of hedonistic leisure, primarily through the 'weekend ritual' (Young, 1971; Hobbs *et al,* 2003). Domestic transitions had much more marked effect and appear to encapsulate more fully the constraining influence of the social bond. The highest rates of cannabis use, hallucinant use[iv] and cocaine use were found among young adults whose living arrangements conferred considerable independence, but entailed little responsibility (i.e. they were living away from the parental home and were either single or were cohabiting without children). Those arrangements that implied greater domestic responsibility (i.e. being married with or without children; cohabiting with children) reduced the probability of recent use and increased the probability of desistence.

A life-course perspective also helps to explain the emergence of a 'gender gap' among young adults and the continuing importance of a gendered understanding of drug use (Ettorre, 2007). Up to the late teens and early twenties males and females report very similar rates of recent use (as reported in the North West Longitudinal Survey, Parker *et al,* 1998), at which point male users begin to outnumber female users by as much as two-to-one (Shiner, 2006). Such a difference may be explained, at least in part, by the gendered nature of early adult transitions, whereby young women tend to adopt more adult-oriented roles at an earlier age than young men, particularly within the domestic sphere, therby providing reduced opportunities for Illicit drug use.

A similar emphasis on the interplay between social structure and human agency has been developed by James Messerschmidt (1993). By focusing on specific practices in specific social settings, such as street gangs, lynchings and other criminal practices, Messerschmidt examines how social structures and circumstances – such as gender, ethnicity and poverty – constrain and channel behaviour. At the same time, he considers the the way that what people do constructs social relations and social

structures. Drawing on the work of Giddens, Fenstermaker, West and Zimmerman, Messershmidt (1997) develops a theory of 'structured action' whereby black girl gang members 'do gender' and 'do race' through 'doing crime', while lynchers 'do white supremacist masculinity' through lynching. Social action is said to be 'creative, inventive, and novel', though 'it never occurs separately from, or external to, social structures' (1993: 77). It is through social action that specific social structures are said to be constructed, so that for girl gangs:

> what is usually considered atypical feminine behaviour outside this situation is, in fact, *normalized* within the social context of inter-neighbourhood conflict; girl gang violence in this situation is encouraged, permitted and privileged by *both* boys and girls as appropriate feminine behaviour. Thus, 'bad girl' femininity is situationally accomplished and context bound within the domain of the street (Messerschmidt, 1995: 182, original emphasis).

Following Messerschmidt then, a study of drug use becomes a way of exploring not just the existence or otherwise of differences in prevalence rates, but also the way that people may 'do gender', 'do class' or 'do race' by 'doing drugs'. Both Measham (2002) and Østergaard (2007) look beyond the apparent similarity of statistical indictors regarding young women and men's drinking and drug use in the UK and Denmark respectively, to consider how gender affects such leisure time consumption; how consumption affects gendered leisure time social interaction; and to the changing nature of 'doing gender' in twenty first century Europe. Such a perspective recognises that not only are drinking and drug use bounded by gender, but also that they perform gender as a situated accomplishment. This can be seen in the culturally dominant traditional or *emphasized femininity*: from teenagers at house parties (Østergaard, 2007) to mothers within the domestic sphere (Measham, 2002), balanced with the alternative *'bad girl' street femininity* evident in girl gangs (Messerschmidt, 1995), 'club babe' femininity at dance clubs (Measham 2002) and the 'gangsta bitch' persona adopted by crack using sex workers on the streets of New York City (Maher, 1997). Such an analysis aligns with Ettorre's notion of drug use as 'embodied deviance', whereby the performance of femininities is accomplished by engendered bodies performing such body tasks as restraint, reproduction, representation and regulation. Consequently it is:

> Through an awareness of the complexities of the workings of gender, embodiment and power we are able to contextualize and understand the conditions and experiences of living, drug-using communities of gendered, embodied subjects (Ettorre, 2007:70).

Conclusion

Having started out on different 'sides' of the normalisation debate, we have come to a similar point in our thinking, though there continue to be some points that we disagree on. Whilst we agree that the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s was a period of accelerated change, we disagree on precisely how this process might be characterised. One of us is happy to talk in terms of unprecedented change resulting in a radical break from the past (Measham), while the other maintains that there are important elements of continuity which tend to get lost when such a vocabulary is used (Shiner). Setting this disagreement aside, the most notable element of convergence has been evident in our thinking about the role of social structure and human agency. We have both sought to move beyond rational action models of adolescent drug use and individualised notions of risk management without falling back onto a form of structural determinism. More than this, we have each come to view drug use as the result of a complex and fluid interplay between structure and agency, which can be understood in terms of 'situated choice' or 'structured action'.

In coming to these respective positions we have both drawn on the wider criminological literature. As such, we are agreed that established criminological theories have much to offer, though we also recognise that such theories should be reworked and reframed in light of changing patterns of use. Beyond this, we agree that normalisation represents the negotiated accomplishment of distinct social groups operating in bounded situations; that recent increases in drug use have been facilitated by the growing economic significance of leisure fuelled by the changing political economy of post-industrial societies and marked by the growth of a massively expanding, consumption-oriented night-time economy; that widespread drug use has been encouraged by the emergence of increasingly protracted transitions into adulthood; and that many young people continue to 'grow out' of drug use, albeit in ways that reflect the changing nature of adolescence and adulthood. We are also

agreed about the need to recognbise the way that gender, ethnicity, age and socio-economic background continue to shape these transitions.

The implications for policy are clear and, once again, highlight an important element of continuity. There is, without doubt, much that can be learnt from the past. Illicit drug use has proliferated despite proactive prohibition and increasingly punitive responses by the state which have led to a new wave of 'criminalisation of intoxication' (Measham and Moore, 2008). Given the juxtaposition of these developments, the 'new' deviancy critique is arguably more relevant now as when it was first written. Like the normalisation thesis, this critique held out little prospect that illicit drug use could be legislated out of existence – because such behaviour is rooted in deep-seated, enduring structural relations; is an expression of widely held and deeply engrained social values; is purposeful, goal-oriented and, to an extent, rational; and because the current criminal law is inefficient and ineffective as a basis for drugs control. As Young (1971, 222) maintaned all those years ago: 'We must learn to live with psychotropic drug use' because 'it is only by treating citizens as responsible human beings that any sane and long-lasting control can be achieved'. The final irony, perhaps, is that this vision seems no closer to be being realised today than it did forty years ago.

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[iii] This collaboration grew out of a joint paper presented at the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy, 2nd Annual Conference, Lisbon, April 2008 entitled *The Baby, the Bathwater & the Legacy of Normalisation: Understanding young people's drug use,.*
[iv] The term hallucinant was coined by Ramsay and Percy (1996) to refer to hallucinogens and stimulants, including amphetamines, LSD, magic mushrooms, ecstasy and amyl nitrate.