Beyond the Mainstream

Youth subcultures, normalisation and drug prohibition: The politics of contemporary crisis and change?

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Abstract This article provides a new reading of the crossover between youth subculture and drug consumption, and seeks to demonstrate that drug prohibition has entered a legitimation crisis in social and political policy (Habermas, 1975). This article argues that contemporary drug normalisation is at the centre of the apparent failure of drug prohibition to understand and respond to the growth in oppositional messages derived from digital communication and the use of drug representations by mainstream capitalism to sell everyday commodities for profit. At the same time, UK and US newspapers have questioned the validity of the 'war on drugs' owing to political corruption and human rights abuses in Mexico, Afghanistan and Colombia. The article considers that drug normalisation has disrupted drug policy because intoxicants have become incorporated into everyday culture, and in particular youth subculture. Within the recent literature, young people's drug use has been theorised within a generalised framework of postmodernity. This article argues that drug normalisation theory is not a postmodern concept. It is a theory derived from the work of the Chicago School articulated by Alfred Lindesmith, Howard Becker and David Matza, who in turn influenced the UK National Deviance Conference and the subsequent CCCS theory of subculture. This created the theoretical opportunity to interpret substance consumption as a condition of normalisation separate from crime.
British Politics (2010) **5,** 337–366. doi:10.1057/bp.2010.12

Keywords: youth subculture theory; normalisation; Habermas; legitimation crisis; drug education; drug war politics

Introduction

In the early twenty-first century, new theories have emerged within the area of youth culture and intoxication (Bennett, 2005; Blackman, 2005; Measham and Shiner, 2009). In the study of youth subculture, there has been a growth in theories, derived from a postmodernist position, offering new terms, for

example 'post-subculture', 'scene' and 'tribe'. In the area of youth drug consumption, a key innovation has been the theory of drug normalisation. Sitting alongside these changes in social and cultural theory have been new developments in government policy towards the control of young people's lifestyles and forms of intoxication (Furlong, 2009). At the same time, representations of disordered alcohol and drug consumption by young people have received widespread coverage within the tabloid press (Kirsh, 2009). The first section of this article examines developments in government drug policy, discussing how prohibition has been constructed as a popular preventive to control young people's use of intoxicants. The second section critically addresses the theory of drug normalisation and argues that we have entered a *legtimation crisis* in prohibition policy (Habermas, 1975). In the final part, I shall argue that rather than postmodern approaches, the theory of subculture, based on the Chicago School premise of deviance as natural behaviour and re-articulated by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (Hall and Jefferson, 1975), creates the theoretical opportunity to interpret substance consumption as a condition of normalisation.

Constructing a Popular Preventive

Government drug policy aims to devise ways to prevent young people from consuming illegal substances. Drug use is not a new problem, and neither is the requirement of government to control it. In the United States, Beck (1998), looking at 115 years of drug prevention, suggests that there has been little change, and argues that drug education continues to be constrained by the limited dictates of the 'no-use' injunction. In Britain, recent policy developments suggest a new focus, emphasising the flexibility of harm-reduction approaches. For example, the government website wiredforhealth.gov (2009) states that drug prevention aims to: 'reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs as measured by the Drug Harm Index'. Further, government policy speaks of community, parent involvement and integrated treatment, suggesting that harm reduction is in the ascendancy (Stimson, 2007). Within current drug education strategies, I shall examine normative education and role models as two ideas that seek to change behaviour and influence young people to make the 'right choice'.

From the time of *Tackling Drugs Together* (Department of Health, 1995), the British government has played a leading role in focusing concern on young people's drug use through policy statements, briefings and documents (Blackman, 2004, p. 149). In addition, the public appointment of a US-style Drug Tsar, Keith Hellawell, in 1997, brought UK drug policy in line with the American style of addressing social problems. As a result, public policy attention on drugs became an everyday feature in the media, presenting a host of high-profile

individuals from sport, popular entertainment and politics, alongside ordinary people, as victims to demonstrate the dangers of intoxication (Blackman, 2007). In parliament and the media, the drug debate became fuelled by hatred and sadness, where emotions shaped the presentation of drugs as a social problem for 'middle England', on the basis that drugs were 'easy to access', and that 'your child' could be the next victim. Government and media played a leading role in expounding the need for a popular preventive. I want to argue that it is not just the case that young people or icons from popular culture contributed to an increased awareness of illicit drugs, but that a major contribution is also directly played by Government and media. By constructing the need for a popular preventive, both government and media went forward with a mandate so that abstinence went on the offensive. The first example of this was the return of cannabis to the Drug Classification B, in January 2009. The second, in October of the same year, was the removal of Professor David Nutt, Head of the Advisory Council on Drugs Misuse, for criticising government policy. Erickson and Hathaway (2010) also identify this change of emphasis by suggesting that drug prohibition has reaffirmed its position of control.

At the same time as the British government and media have created the context for a popular preventive, United Nations Drug reports (2008 and 2009), as well as government statistics themselves, have demonstrated that drug consumption by young people in the United Kingdom has been in decline. The National Association of Public Health Observatories (2009) claim that there is considerable variation of drug use by young people between regions in terms of the different types consumed, as well as differing use by men and women. A key finding indicated that: 'The rate of last year and last month use of any drug nationally has decreased year-on-year between 2002/03 and 2007/08' (2009, p. 19). It was further asserted that: 'Lifetime prevalence of use of at least one illicit drug has fallen steadily among young people between 1998 and 2007/08' (ibid, p. 84). At the same time, it was found that there had been an increase in cocaine consumption among young people, but a reduction in ecstasy use. It is estimated that in England and Wales there are 2.75 million 16–24-year olds who have used at least one drug in their lifetime, and three-quarters of a million who have used a drug in the previous month (Hoare and Flatley, 2008). Drugscope (2009) maintain that prevalence data gathered by the NHS, Ofsted, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA, 2007) all suggest that the number of young people using drugs is falling. The political paradox is that UK government statistics, along with the drug reports from the United Nations (UN) and Europe, demonstrate that the United Kingdom does have a drug use problem, but that drug use itself is in decline. Recently, both government and media combined to construct a popular preventive

focused on the legal drug mephedrone, or 'meow meow'. Measham *et al* (2010, p. 19) argue that the limited success of prohibition itself is a causal factor in the use of mephedrone, as drug users turn to unfamiliar and under-researched chemicals that are easily purchased online. Currently, there exist a range of websites offering to purchase *Herbal Highs*, such as headshop.co.uk, Am-Hi-Co.com and herbalaromas.co.uk. Thus, conflicting data about the extent of drug use demonstrate that constructing a popular preventive is socially complex and does not depend solely on facts or science. It also raises the question of whether prohibition holds wider ambitions to eradicate the human desire for intoxication.

New Developments: *Blueprint*

The current UK drug strategy 2008–2018 talks about protecting communities, dealing with drug-related crime and anti-social behaviour, preventing harm to young people, delivering new approaches to drug prevention and social re-integration alongside public information campaigns, communications and community engagement. Three recent policy initiatives have focused, first, on the link between drugs and alcohol, for example, the *Youth Alcohol Action Plan* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008); second, there has been the development of the *Blueprint* drug education programme in schools (Home Office, 2007); and, third, the government has banned 'legal highs' (BBC News, 25 August 2009). In 2009, the lead item 'What's New' on the Home Office website: *Tackling Drugs, Changing Lives* announced the success of the *Blueprint* drug education programme. On the government wiredforhealth website, *Blueprint* claims that the development of the new drug education programme is 'evidenced-based from "Worldwide research" '. A central strategy of the programme is the theoretical model of 'normative education'. 'Drugs: Guidance for Schools' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004, p. 7) states: 'Research shows that certain models of drug education can achieve modest reductions in the consumption of cannabis, alcohol and tobacco'. Thus:

> Normative education is important because young people often overestimate how many of their own age group drink, smoke or use illegal drugs … Recent research demonstrates that normative education is a highly important positive influence on knowledge and behaviour change. It also provides opportunities within the curriculum to address attitude development and discuss what influences young people's decision-making. (ibid, p. 20)

Blueprint argues that during lessons, the aim is to ensure that 'endorsement of drug use is not as widespread as they (young people) may think it is'. For BBC

News, Ollie Stone-Lee (10 May 2005) reported the Drugs Minister, Paul Goggins, saying that there must be an 'unremitting' message to young people that 'drugs are bad for you'. Normative education is based on the idea that it challenges young people's views and opinions about drug use in society. Niall Coggans (2006, p. 420) argues that the key assertion in the approach is that young people have an 'incorrect perception of reality', or that, as government policy states, young people have 'misconceptions'. Thus, government and drug educators have set themselves the task of correcting young people's misrepresentations. Normative education sets out to change behaviour, seeks to understand young people in a wider context and addresses the social and cultural factors that influence them. The key point in the model of normative drug education is that young people overestimate drug use and the cultural acceptability of drugs (Baker, 2006; Foxcroft, 2006).

While normative education suggests that it is taking a holistic approach, housed within it remains a behaviourist perspective, with a concentration on the individual, their personality and social group networks. The argument that young people are at risk from their friends and youth culture leads back to the notion of peer pressure (Coggans and McKeller, 1994; Blackman, 2004). Normative education is dependent on the notion of peer pressure because it argues that young people are collectively influenced by factors outside them. This means that it defines young people as being in deficit and lacking autonomy to make the correct decisions to resist drug use (O'Connor *et al*, 1998). However, the assertion that young people possess a misunderstanding, or an over-exaggeration, sets a dangerous precedent in understanding drugs in society (McInnes and Barrett, 2007). A key absence in the literature relating to *Blueprint* is the lack of any theoretical and empirical understanding of young people's youth culture. For *Blueprint*, the link to popular culture is undertaken through Media Road Shows and via media relations to be undertaken by the PR company Porter Novelli, owned by the American corporation, Omnicom. The evidence base upon which young people are to be corrected lacks not only historical, but also contemporary knowledge and research concerning the social and cultural complexities of young people's popular youth culture. Although the research put forward by *Blueprint* is feasible and is built on an evidence base, its weakness is the absence of an understanding of young people's lifestyle and identity (Hunt *et al*, 2010).

Role Models, Celebrities and the Wrong Message

Government policy tends to combine role models and peer educators and this is confirmed in drugs education policy at schools. The Advisory Group on Drug and Alcohol Education (2008, p. 46) states that: 'peer educators can

become positive role models and a valuable resource for younger pupils'. The adoption of role models as an idea is theoretically understood as emulation. Storey (1999, p. 8) notes that to emulate is to copy, and as a result the theory tends to define young people as passive rather than active consumers of messages. Emulation theory fails to offer an interactive understanding of how young people communicate, especially given the evidence from qualitative studies, which show that neither deviance nor hedonism is the sole motivation for drug consumption (Wilson, 2006; Anderson, 2009). The notion of role models has been central to government policy,[1] and forms part of the Home Office social inclusion strategy, the *Positive Futures Programme*, which states that 'as a catalyst to encourage project participation we steer young people towards education, training and employment'. The Home Office drug strategy, *Drugs: Protecting Families and Communities* (2008, pp. 26, 35), also argues that the government will work with national and local role models, and especially sports people who are identified as positive role models for young people.

Mowlam and Creegan (2008, p. 14) found that there was a 'lack of positive role models for children and young people to look up to and to learn from'. The online forum, *Children and Young People Now*, also encountered the same problem. At the start of 2009, it set up a discussion board to put forward role models to promote to young people. One example put forward by young people themselves was *Eminem*. American social theorist Robert Merton (1949, pp. 302–303) is credited with introducing the term 'role model' into sociology. He suggested that a reference individual is a role model, where 'the person identifies' with and 'will seek to approximate the behaviour and values of a peer, a parent or public figure'. Eminem (1999) wrote his song 'Role Model' for *The Slim Shady LP*, a rap that seeks to challenge the passive notion of social emulation by turning agency on its head. *Eminem* raps about taking drugs, truanting, alcohol, sex with women who have HIV, killing people and self-harm, and asks 'do you want to grow-up like me'? Ironically, *Eminem's* approach falls within the shock-tactics style of drug intervention, the message of which is 'do these things and you will be dead'. In essence, he is presenting himself as an anti-role model for young people. Although *Eminem's* message is in opposition to the public presentation of positive role models, which government and the media uphold, the aim remains the same, to be a positive influence on youth.

In Australia, Roche *et al* (2009) demonstrate that government policy is predicated on the belief in 'sending the right message', which establishes the grounds for more punitive drug policy, but they urge caution. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, the moral outcry against bad role models for young people has occurred at different levels in society. Firstly, the UN has condemned Britain's 'celebrity culture of intoxication', singling out 'offenders' such as Pete Doherty and Amy Winehouse. Under-Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Maria Costa (9 March 2008), argued that British celebrities

from the world of popular culture promote drug abuse through their influential position. The UN claimed that celebrities 'can profoundly influence attitudes, values and behaviour, particularly among young people' (Emafo, 2008). The BBC also reported a warning from Philip Emafo, President of the International Narcotics Control Board, that when celebrities took illegal drugs: 'It glamorized narcotic abuse' (BBC News, 3 May 2008). Second, in 2008 Justin Davenport and Anne McElvoy, in the *Evening Standard* (Davenport and McElvoy, 2008), reported that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, had called 'for celebrities who are filmed apparently taking drugs to be put on trial'. Scotland Yard said the commissioner was 'reflecting a view of many ordinary people'. Third, Members of Parliament have also been involved. The Labour MP, Dr Denis MacShane, for example, said that 'the police and prosecutors should arrest, detain, charge and seek prison sentences for famous rock-stars, sportsmen, and the super-rich who use cocaine but always escape prosecution'. Thus:

> Every parent is sickened at the way the celebrities who fill up the pages of *Heat* and *Hello* are allowed to get away with behaviour which is a terrible example to younger people. If schoolchildren and students see the names they admire in a state of intoxication from drugs and drink then they will follow suit. I want to see some of these people in prison. (M. Hookham, 'Celebrity cocaine snorters slammed', *Daily Star*, 14 June 2008)

The notion of role model is actively used in tabloid journalism and on celebrity websites. It is part of popular culture, and an increased awareness of its diverse applications would benefit those who seek to influence young people.

Drug Normalisation

The political economy of the drug trade

Historically, drug production and consumption have been promoted by the state and intertwined with the economy, where legitimate businesses have given priority to the extraction of surplus value from intoxicants (Davenport-Hines, 2001). From the onset of European colonial empires, the subject of drugs has been concerned with power, capital and politics, not only to extract wealth but also to rule other civilisations. Early entrepreneurs from the British East India Company were eager to harness the financial rewards of opium to consolidate the British Empire in Asia. The drug became institutionalised through private and state interventions, making it the world's most valuable single commodity by 1839 (Chouvy, 2009). In South America, the Spanish Empire was quick to

realise the financial benefits of drugs to the Church, the colonial economy and the state. Inglis (1975, p. 52) argues that the Spanish rulers in Peru made quick fortunes on the slopes of the Andes with their coca plantations, and these entrepreneurs: 'Would use their influence to persuade the colonial authorities that it was essential to the colony's economy; and – particularly if they could extract revenue out of the drug – the colonial authorities would usually allow themselves to be persuaded'. McCoy (1991, p. 92) states that during their three centuries on Java:

> the Dutch created the largest and most lucrative of the colonial opium monopolies … From 1640 to 1799, the Dutch East India Company imported an average of 56 tons of opium annually, large quantities for the day and the amount rose steadily throughout the nineteenth century to 208 tons by 1904 … Although the Dutch began reducing their sales in the early twentieth century, in 1929 it was still operating 1065 opium dens that retailed 59 tons of opium to 101 000 registered smokers.

The intervention of prohibition under the League of Nations, and then the UN, outlawed drug production as part of the legal economy, and hence the illicit drug industry went underground and became criminalised. Since the Second World War, 'drug war' politics have been defined by American covert operations, which have underscored their foreign policy aspirations, where the links between the CIA and international criminal organisations, and also the support for corrupt regimes, have seen large-scale violations of human rights (Friesendorf, 2007; Campbell H, 2009). As a result, drugs have been utilised not only as a strategy for political intervention through military support, but also as a means to enable the growth of rogue business enterprises that exploit illicit substances such as a mechanism for capital accumulation (Bertram *et al*, 1996; Bickerstaff, 2009). Today, in Mexico, for example, there is a war occurring between the different drug militia, the Mexican Army and the US Drug Enforcement Agency. Hawley (2009) reports from Villa Ahumada for *USA Today*, stating that Griselda Munoz: 'found her son at a morgue with his skull caved in and four bullet holes in his chest. He was among the 21 people killed in this town near the US border after drug gangs abducted several men, then fought a massive running gun battle with the Mexican army'. The scale of the human disaster is high, with the BBC News reporting (24 February 2009) that beheadings, attacks on the police and shootings in clubs and restaurants are a daily occurrence, resulting in approximately 6000 people being killed in violence related to organised drug crime last year.

While the Mexican drug lords supply America's demand for drugs, in Europe the Netherlands remains a top destination for drug tourism (Korf, 2002). Holland's decriminalisation of small amounts of cannabis has fed into

the cultural development of the Coffeeshop trade. Coffeeshops were first opened in the mid-1970s, but the change in the law goes back to the early 1960s. The Dutch government have been accused of encouraging drug tourism, and indeed one of the key factors in cannabis normalisation are the different 'Cannabis Cups',[2] which highlight the popular agrarian success of the plant (Uitermark, 2004). Contemporary drug tourism is now linked to commercial opportunities related to the increased liberalisation of drug laws. As Reuter and Stevens (2007, p. 62) state:

> a few European countries, notably the Netherlands and Portugal, have effectively decriminalized the possession of small amounts of cannabis. This has been done by replacing criminal with civil penalties, or, in the Netherlands, by introducing a formal written policy for the expedient tolerance of distribution and possession of limited amounts of the drug.

These liberal changes at policy level are also symptomatic of the growth of corporate medical interest in the potential of cannabis. Developments in cannabis research are undertaken by various corporate companies, and GW Pharmaceuticals and Bayer (licensed by the British government to conduct research in this area) have announced the submission of a new drug, Sativex®, a cannabis-based medicinal extract product, for approval for use in Canada and Spain. In the United States, 14 states use cannabis as a medical drug, and the Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research at the University of California conducts clinical trials.[3] Clearly, there is no shortage of government resources in terms of funding cannabis research.

Normalisation theory: Its theoretical origins, position and critics

In *Chilling Out* (Blackman, 2004, p. 127), I pointed out that a weakness of drug normalisation theory was the lack of 'historical context to understand drugs in society'. This failing has now received some correction from Blackman (2007) and Measham and Shiner (2009). It was Alfred R. Lindesmith (1938, p. 597) who first applied the sociological term 'normality' in relation to understanding drug consumption. Lindesmith was a PhD student at the University of Chicago who interacted with key members of the Chicago School (such as Louis Wirth and Ernest Burgess), providing him with a grounding in interactionist theory, which also emphasised the critical role of fieldwork and the in-depth treatment of qualitative data (Galliher *et al*, 1998). Lindesmith's close connection with the Chicago School enabled him to make the link between the study of the drug user in their natural surroundings and getting research subjects to tell their stories. It is clear that the Chicago School's emphasis on field studies and

biographical narrative, alongside the approach of the 'Youths' Own Story', were fertile grounds for Lindesmith to build his understanding of normality applied to drug use. At the Chicago School, under Robert Park, the sociological approach and the application of qualitative research methods focused on understanding the social and cultural context of actions and meaning, without reducing young people's actions to symptoms of psychological inadequacy. Explanation was not only sought in the lives and culture of people in their environment, but also to understand behaviour within the context of social normality – that is, in relation to a person's position in the social structure and their relationship within the community. Lindesmith's approach towards the study of the drug consumer became central to the next generation at the Chicago School in the 1950s and 1960s (Becker, 2010, private communication). Among these, Howard Becker's early studies on marihuana use became part of the new theoretical perspective of labelling theory later advanced in his study *Outsiders* (Becker, 1963). Becker's focus on participant observation within an ethnographic framework saw drug consumption as a victimless crime where people in social groups pursued intoxicated pleasure. This represents an early example of drug normalisation.

In Britain, during the 1960s, the key figures at the National Deviance Conference moved towards the development of a more indigenous and sophisticated form of British labelling theory to interpret deviant practices (Blackman, 2004, p. 111). Here, the work of Howard Becker and David Matza had a major impact on Jock Young's (1971) study *The Drugtakers*. Measham and Shiner (2009, p. 504) specify that Young's major contribution was to argue that the subterranean values of drug consumption were part of the dominant ethos: 'Rather than forming isolated moral regions, subterranean values and formal values were considered to be mutually dependent upon one another'. However, it was the ideas of Matza (1964, 1969) that were fundamental to both Young, and then Parker (1974), especially given that both focused on the idea of bringing the so-called deviant drug user into conventional understanding through collapsing the boundary between what is upheld as normal and deviant. Although both Young and Parker focus on different social class fractions, with the former being preoccupied with the affluent middle classes, and with the latter focusing on deprived working-class youth, both identify that these different sets of young people are engaged in subterranean leisure practices, but both suffer from deviance amplification. In Parker's (1974, p. 14) study *View From the Boys*, he positions his qualitative study on downtown youth based on Matza's (1969) elaboration of the Chicago School approach of naturalism 'to remain true to the phenomenon he is studying'. In terms of the politics of fieldwork and the theoretical descriptions of a culture under social and economic constraint, Parker's early study follows in the tradition of the Chicago School ethnographies of young deviants.

The 'drug normalisation thesis' emerged during the 1990s and has subsequently evolved into a dual theory, which is applied within macro and micro analyses of drug consumption issues. One of its problems is that theorists have employed this flexibility to move between levels of analysis. The theory originated from the work of Howard Parker and his research team at the University of Manchester, through a series of publications on the North West Longitudinal Study. In *Illegal Leisure*, Parker *et al* (1998, p. 152) state that the theory of drug normalisation

> refers only to the use of certain drugs, primarily cannabis but also nitrites, amphetamines and equivocally LSD and ecstasy. Heroin and cocaine are not included in the thesis. Similarly chaotic combination drug use and dependent 'daily' drug use form no part of our conceptualization.

They further argue (ibid, pp. 153–157) that there are six key factors that result in drug normalisation, namely drug availability, drug trying, drug use, being drug wise, future intentions and the cultural accommodation of the illicit. Parker (2005, p. 213) has suggested that another part of the drug normalisation thesis is increased recognition in British drug policy of the possibility of non-problematic drug use. This fits alongside the idea that normalisation describes patterns of 'sensible drug consumption which are a "barometer of changes in social behaviour and cultural perspectives" ' (Parker *et al*, 2002, p. 943). The evidence put forward for drug normalisation by Parker *et al* (1998) is broadly twofold: statistical data, specifying large numbers of young people who claim to have used drugs, in terms of frequency and regularity, and changes in culture, which they identify as being more 'drug centred'.

Measham and Shiner (2009, p. 502) point out that, 'although widely accepted, the normalisation thesis has been contested', creating 'sides' which have been 'divisive'. Two leading critics have been Shiner and Newburn (1997 and 1999), who focus on normalisation as a form of exaggeration and inaccuracy, and also Shildrick (2002, pp. 45–46), who contends that the concept of normalisation 'imposes its own meta-narrative on young people's experiences' and is 'a potentially destructive concept'. In this there is some commonality with Shiner and Newburn, in that Shildrick considers that the normalisation thesis overstates the extent of drug consumption and fails to consider issues of social class inequalities. Although at times Shildrick is critical of normalisation, she ultimately prefers to revise rather than reject the concept by proposing 'differentiated normalisation' to account for different types of drugs and drug use (ibid, p. 36).

Support for the Parker *et al* (1998) argument relating to the normalisation of recreational drugs comes from a series of qualitative empirical studies. Research undertaken by Malbon (1999), Hammersley *et al* (2002), Duff

(2003, 2004, 2005), Jackson (2004), Harling (2007) and Measham and Moore (2009) focuses on choices and decisions applied by young people to their drug use, especially in the context of enjoyment. This does not mean that these studies fail to focus on risk, as some of the research subjects in these studies do highlight some of their negative encounters with intoxicants. Normalisation is not just a matter of the disparity between drug users' experiences and the message of prohibition, nor is it that these studies support the rationality of drug users. It is clear that diverse forms of drug consumption are part of an attempt by young people within their cultural context to give order to their lives. For young people, drug use is understood as offering security, identity and expression. The outcome for young people is that participation in the normalisation of intoxication has resulted in youth being the object of regulation and control. As a result, surveillance cultures have increased the regulation of everyday life, thereby revealing the use of intoxicants, which establishes the necessity for further intervention and control (France, 2008).

Legitimation Crisis in Drug Prohibition

In this section, I want to look at the question of whether drug prohibition has entered a period of a legitimation crisis as outlined by Jurgen Habermas (1975), where institutions are out of step with social and cultural values and government faces a loss of public confidence. In the United Kingdom, the UN global drug policy is being upheld, but at the same time the 'drug war' policy that underlies prohibition has been questioned (Bewley-Taylor, 2003). New Zealand, the Netherlands and Portugal, for example, have all undertaken degrees of drug reform and oppose the drug war approach to drug prevention.[4] The UN asserts that its role is to tell the truth about drugs on a scientific basis in order to achieve security. However, Jacques Derrida (1993, p. 2) disputes these claims of legitimacy and argues that prohibition is based on 'moral and political evaluations'. One of the key principles of the 'drug war' approach is that information concerning drugs should be *against* drug use, in contrast to information *about* drug use (Dorn and Murji, 1992).

Crucially, Habermas (1975, p. 97) claims that: 'What is controversial is the relation of legitimation to truth'. Below are a series of media headlines from the United States and the United Kingdom, which question the drug war approach to prohibition policy.[5] Consider, for example: The *Wall Street Journal*, 'The War on Drugs is a Failure' (Cardoso, Gaviria and Zedillo, 2009); *CNN,* 'War on Drugs is Insane' (Cafferty, 2009); the *New York Times*, 'Drugs Won The War' (Kristof, 2009); and Benson and Rasmussen (2000), *The American Drug War: Anatomy of a Futile and Costly Police Action* (which details the negative impact of the drug war on public health and the

criminalisation of young people). In the United Kingdom, Simon Jenkins states that: 'The war on drugs is immoral idiocy', (Jenkins, 2009); BBC News notes, 'Phoney UK drug war criticised' (18 May 2009); Bruce Robbins reports for *The Courier: Tayside and Fife*, that: 'Police force losing war on drugs' (Robbins, 2008); and Duncan Campbell for *The Guardian* (Campbell D, 2009) records a UN drugs report detailing that there is 'no evidence that the global drug problem was reduced'. Looking at these newspaper stories, the clear message being put forward is that the drug war has failed. The death of innocent people and the corruption of government officials would indicate that the UNs' drug prohibition policy is both wrong and damaging to society (Klein, 2008). The problem for the UN and for governments is that under increased questioning of their legitimacy, they are forced to justify their own existence and power in the face of the collapse of their authority to argue that prohibition is a truth. One response to a decline in legitimacy is to respond in a disciplinary or punitive way, As Habermas (1975, p. 93) states: 'Crisis tendencies that appear … can be traced back to structures that have resulted from suppression'.

For Habermas, one of the key conditions of the legitimation crisis is the failure of democratic states to rectify the contradictions engendered by late capitalism. Since the 1990s, we have seen how capitalism has become more explicitly linked to representations of drugs within society, resulting in a contradiction in that drugs are illegal, but these images are exploited by corporate companies to sell commodities for profit. In the last 15 years, the most significant change in the representation of illicit drugs has been the advent of the internet, which has brought forth a vast array of images related to drugs. Previously, the representations of illicit drugs were linked to certain popular music artists, festivals, youth cultures, films, novels, magazines and selected terrestrial television programmes. Now, not only does the internet carry all the previous representations mentioned, but it has also enabled new organisations and individuals to put forward their stance on the drugs debate. This change has brought an expansion of myriad sources of information about drugs, which are both pro- and anti-drugs. For example, consider the huge range of prohibition videos on *YouTube*, which highlight the dangers of drug consumption. Then, in contrast, it is possible to watch spoof anti-drug videos, or view images of ordinary young people apparently in states of intoxication. The internet has seen the birth of DIY drug representations of individual experience. In a sense, we are now seeing the Chicago School deviants 'own story' through the lens of digital technologies. What is significant about drug information on the internet is not just the question of accuracy or misinformation, but that we may have reached what Habermas (1975) calls a crisis in sources of legitimate information. The authority of the prohibition message derives from the governing structures, but the growth of alternative sources of drug information means

that the state is unable to demonstrate the function for which it was instituted, that is, to achieve drug prevention.

In the United Kingdom, during 2009–2010, the government faced severe questioning in the media concerning the sacking of their chief drug advisor, Professor Nutt, head of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).[6] Habermas (1975, p. 47) argues that: 'A legitimation deficit means that it is not possible by administrative means to maintain or establish effective normative structures to the extent required'. In January 2009, the UK government also reclassified cannabis from Class C to Class B, five years after downgrading it. However, in April 2008, the ACMD advised against reclassification, but the government did not heed the advice of its experts. Habermas (1975, p. 69) states that: 'If governmental crisis management fails, it lags behind programmatic demands that it has placed on itself. The penalty for this failure is withdrawal of legitimation'. It is clear that the case of Professor Nutt confirms the analysis of Habermas (1975, p. 70), who also states that: 'The personalisation of substantive issues' here acts as 'confirming and exploiting existing structures of prejudice … through appeals to feeling' in trying to regain legitimate government. The movement of cannabis back and forth along the drug classification matrix, and the opposition to senior government experts by government ministers, is a clear example of a legitimation crisis caught in action.

If prohibition messages from the UN or the UK Parliament fail to tackle the promotion of drug representations, then government is seen as lacking the authority to properly govern. This is made more complicated by broader cultural changes. Blackman (2007, p. 54) argues that through the commodification of popular culture drug use has become embedded within society as a feature of mainstream consumption. Corporate companies including Faberge, Yves Saint Laurent, Virgin, Body Shop, Sony and Fila have used images of drugs to market their respective products, irrespective of whether there is any link between their product and intoxication (Blackman, 2004, pp. 75–81). Here, drugs go beyond the idea of 'cultural accommodation', because they feature as a mediating device between producers and consumers. Entrepreneurs have manipulated the risky, exciting and cool side of their products to mirror the desires of young people within their youth cultural lifestyle. From Virgin mobile phones to the Body Shop, hemp products present cannabis as an ordinary commodity alongside common items of shampoo or crème, yet the use of the cannabis leaf as a marketing symbol conveys the transgressive power and thrill of the illicit. For example, in 2008–2009 the soft drink *Cocaine* attracted negative attention from tabloid newspapers and the BBC. The poster campaign for *Cocaine* included a line of white powder on a black background, plus erotic and satanic representations of young women. Business is not taking a leading role in marketing drug consumption, but through accessing 'insider knowledge' the entrepreneur is able draw upon drugs as a source or field of

knowledge of infinite marketability. Clearly, we can see a contradiction here between drug prohibition and private enterprise's use of drug imagery. Habermas (1975, p. 27) talks of 'contradiction' where 'individuals and groups repeatedly confront one another with claims and intentions that are, in the long run incompatible'.

The politics of drug normalisation directly relate to the way in which drugs have become incorporated into everyday culture such that its resonance may be unknown (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 286). The UN and governments may declare that drugs are illegal and harmful, but capitalism has identified drug imagery as a major source of income generation, as a site of mediation through which their products can receive a new lease of life. The marketing of drug-referenced material has created a contradiction at the centre of macro drug policy. The problem for the UN is that the message that drugs are dangerous may be understood as hollow while corporate companies manipulate drug meanings to sell their commodities (Hallam and Bewley-Taylor, 2010). This is how normalisation has disrupted drug policy. Drugs have been integrated into the capitalist consumer market while being illegal. Drugs have to be understood in their full cultural, social and economic context, not solely as a matter of health, social policy or crime.

Youth Subculture: Setting Out the Field of Oppositions

In the last 10 years, there has been an expansion in subcultural studies, not only in terms of empirical studies, but also in theoretical analysis. The trajectory of the contemporary subcultural debate can be set out in a range of positions:

'Post-', 'after-' and 'beyond-' subculture: Redhead (1997), Muggleton (2000), Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003), Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004), Moore (2004), Greener and Hollands (2006), Huq (2006).
Neo tribe: Hetherington (1992), Bennett (1999, 2005), Rief (2009), Riley *et al* (2010).
Defence of subculture: Hodkinson (2002), Blackman (2005), Haenfler (2006), Shildrick and MacDonald (2006), Wilson (2006), McAuley (2007), Sandberg and Pedersen (2009), Gunter (2010).
Scene: Hesmondhalgh (2005), Huq (2006), Anderson (2009).

Subculture is a contested concept that fuels argument and forces theorists to take positions in relation to the theory of subculture set out by the CCCS (Hall and Jefferson, 1975). The basic stance is either to retain or reject the CCCS concept of subculture based on an acceptance or a refusal of postmodernism. Running alongside this debate, we have the issue of how drugs are understood within young people's groups. Thus, we have two oppositional

theories: traditional subcultural, which defines drug use as deviant, and postmodern approaches, which understand drug use as non-deviant.

Drug normalisation theory developed by Parker *et al* (1998, p. 26) asserts that there is a 'demise of youth cultures and subcultures', which 'underpins the post modernist's explanation of social change. This too fits with the issue of drug availability and the increasingly wide range of illicit drugs used by young people'. The apparent increased use of drugs is explained by the normalisation theory in terms of non-deviant drug-taking by young people, and thus further reduces the relevance of subculture theory because it is tied to deviance. Drug normalisation aims to go beyond the apparent narrow understanding of deviance linked to subculture by showing that drug use has become part of mainstream normalised youth culture. It would appear that for Parker *et al* (1998), poly-drug use is an expression of drug normalisation, which can only be explained through postmodern understandings of young people's actions where risk has become routine. Young people's drug use is theorised within a generalised framework of postmodernity, but Parker *et al* (1998, p. 22) do acknowledge uncertainty about the postmodern argument by stating that 'making these connections is another matter'. In other words, they tiptoe around the application of postmodern theory to drugs, wanting to embrace Beck's (1992) ideas of risk but wishing to retain structural inequality, as they still freely use the term subculture (Parker *et al*, 1998, pp. 152, 256, 158). Shildrick and MacDonald (2006, p. 127) argue that postmodern approaches are more focused on music cultures, dance and stylistic groups. Anderson (2009, p. 14) supports this argument, but there is contrary evidence to suggest that a range of studies on goth, punk and UK hip hop (that is, grime and rave cultures) uphold the concept of subculture (Hodkinson, 2002; Haenfler, 2006; Dedman, 2010). Wilson's (2006, p. 171) ethnography on rave culture is supportive of the term subculture, and claims that dance culture is a 'prototypical twenty-first century subculture'.

The New Subcultural Debate Emerges

Two major contributions to this debate have come from Jenks (2005) *Subculture: the Fragmentation of the Social*, and Gelder (2007) *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practices*. Both studies offer insights and new ground to interpret the concept of subculture and see drugs as a feature of deviance. Jenks locates subculture centrally within the discipline of sociology, tracing its origins and understanding within different paradigms. Gelder is more focused on the historical and literary contexts of subcultural actions from the sixteenth century to the present day. Both assert that the origins of the term subculture derive from the work of the Chicago School of Sociology on

deviance, yet neither Jenks nor Gelder provide detail about who, within the School, used subcultural theory. Furthermore, intoxicants are present as a theme in the analysis, but with little special consideration. The subcultural debate received further development in 2005 through the *Journal of Youth Studies*, which promoted the current debate with two papers, Blackman (2005) and Hesmondhalgh (2005), which put forward a critique of the postmodernist formulation of subcultural theory, although both papers had relatively little to say about intoxicants. In contrast, two empirical studies on drugs and young people, Lalander (2003) and Sandberg and Pedersen (2009), are supportive of subculture as a tool for analysis to explain young people's substance consumption, but offer little on post-subculture or drug normalisation. Here, drug consumption is explained within a traditional subcultural deviance framework.

Three Different Theories of Subculture and Drugs

In *Chilling Out* (Blackman, 2004), I identified three major subcultural positions: structural-functionalist, Marxist and postmodern, and discussed how each theory of subculture created the opportunity to interpret the relationship between drugs and young people differently.

Traditional theories of subculture; drugs, deviance and resistance

The American structural functionalist theory of subculture elaborated by A.K. Cohen (1956) was based on Durkheim's (1897) theory of anomie and Merton's (1938) theory of individual adaptation, combined with a Freudian theory of the unconscious mind to consciously solve collective problems for working-class youth who suffer from status frustration. Here, drug consumption is theorised as dysfunctional for the individual and thus for society. Drugs subsequently became defined as a threat to the equilibrium of society (for example, Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). This importation of American subcultural theory into Britain remained unchallenged until Downes' (1966) critique and reassertion of the Chicago School normalcy of deviance within subcultural settings.

Phil Cohen first articulated the British theory of subculture in a paper delivered to the CCCS in 1970. He removed the Freudian spring from the American theory and replaced it with an Althusserian reading of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's concept of the imaginary. In *Resistance Through Ritual*, Dick Hebdige and John Clarke (Hebdige, 1975 and Clarke, 1975) detail how subcultures 'adopt a particular set of symbolic objects' and develop a 'group self-consciousness', which creates a 'stylistic fusion between object and

group'. In relation to drugs, Hebdige (1975, p. 89) states that, 'the mod had to be on the ball at all times, functioning at an emotional and intellectual frequency high enough to pick up the slightest insult or joke or challenge or opportunity to make the most of the precious night. Thus speed was needed to keep mind and body synchronised perfectly'. From here, Hebdige (1979, p. 114) develops his reading of subculture where drugs are one feature among others of a stylist practice of resistance. Hebdige (1979, p. 17) states that: 'The challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style'. Subcultural style for Hebdige is interpreted in isolation, away from the social context of its subcultural practitioners and performers. This analysis, and that of the CCCS, is based on an interpretation of subcultural style as a macro text. Little consideration is given to the interactional issues of lived relations; those whom Cohen (1972, p. 24) called the 'bearers and supports of the subculture' (Blackman, 1995, p. 22). The CCCS theory identifies drugs as an integral practice of subcultural groupings, which is reminiscent of the Chicago School understanding of deviance as a normal expression within an urban community. In this sense, we can see that the initial work of the Chicago School, which saw deviance as a normal response to social and economic constraints, became the foundation of the CCCS theory, which enabled drugs to be interpreted not as a social problem but as a signifier of subcultural identity and which would lead to Parker *et al*'s (1998) 'drug normalisation thesis'. I would suggest that the drug normalisation theory is not a postmodern theory – it is derived from the ethnography-informed Chicago School of Sociology, but it also required Cohen's (1972, p. 30) subcultural epistemological break, that it is 'important to make a distinction between subculture and delinquency'. Thus, it was the CCCS' theory of subculture, which could explain drug use as a normalised 'recreational' part of a subculture's signifying style. Separating subcultural activities from crime made it possible to interpret drug use as non-deviant within the subculture.

Postmodernism and post-subcultural theories

The postmodern theory of post-subculture is based on a critique of the CCCS theory. However, before the 1990s, there had been a series of critiques of subculture from within the CCCS (for example, Willis, 1972; McRobbie and Garber, 1975; Clarke, 1982) and also from Blackman (1995) and Thornton (1995). The source of the new criticism has been twofold. First, from the work of Steve Redhead, and second through the ideas developed by Michael Maffesoli, taken up by Andy Bennett and David Muggleton.

Redhead's major contribution was to centrally locate drugs within the subcultural debate. It is important to grasp that Redhead's argument against

the CCCS theory of subculture is a strategy to engage in other debates. In his efforts to establish the legitimacy of 'popular cultural studies' as a new discipline, in opposition to what he terms 'unpopular cultural studies', Redhead (1995, p. 76) sampled Jean Baudrillard's thesis of the 'end of the social' to dismiss the CCCS radical tradition, discredit contemporary youth studies and critique sociology in general. Redhead argues that sociology is too bound to modernism, and that subcultures are a manifestation of social theory, which has died because the social has become meaningless as a result of the extension of electronic global media. Subculture is theorised by Redhead, in his post-modern worldview, as part of the emancipatory project developed by theorists belonging to the past, and is thus to be discredited.

In detail, Redhead (1995:90) is virulent in his critique and hostile towards the academic study of youth, stating that 'the decline of sociology of youth and sociology of deviance, as a discipline, and a genre of writing, is fast becoming a cliché', and that: 'Authentic subcultures were produced by subcultural theories, not the other way round' (Redhead, 1990, p. 25). Although this critique has been broadly accepted (see Melechi, 1993; Miles, 1995; Muggleton, 1997; Rietveld, 1998; Bennett, 1999, 2000; and Malbon, 1999), Greener and Hollands (2006, p. 413) have challenged Redhead's assertion to argue that rave culture is not superficial but can possess a 'common set of values, and contains elements of a rather cohesive and homogenous culture'. Further fuel for the subcultural debate derives from Michael Maffesoli's *The Time of the Tribes* (1996), which is used as a new theoretical foundation by Muggleton (2000) and Bennett (1999) to construct a Neo-Weberian paradigm in opposition to the Marxist CCCS theory of subculture. Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004, p. 11) also advance Muggleton's ideas that subculture is 'redundant in relation to contemporary youth culture'. The postmodernist analysis is taken further by Muggleton (1997, 2000), who follows Redhead's interpretation of Baudrillard to assert that subcultures are part of modernism. Muggleton (2000, pp. 47–49) defines post-subculturalists as revelling in choice 'no longer articulated around … the structuring of class, gender or ethnicity'. Thus, he understands subcultural identity as 'free-floating signifiers' torn away from social structures. On this basis, Muggleton (2000, p. 47) argues that 'there are no rules' for subcultural identities, because, following Redhead's assertion, he claims that there are no authentic subcultures. However, if you look at the visual case studies of the mods or punks presented by Muggleton (2000, pp. 97, 88, 148), each conform to subcultural regulations. Following on from Redhead, Muggleton develops a stereotype of the CCCS approach labelled 'theoretical orthodoxy'. This is reinforced by Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003, p. 7) in their criticism of the CCCS as possessing an 'explicitly political agenda'. An earlier stereotype was produced by Hargreaves and Hammersley (1982, p. 140), which claimed the CCCS 'response is to discharge vast quantities of superficially persuasive

rhetoric – a kind of CCCS "gas" as it were – which casts an imperceptible yet intellectually disabling cloud of dogmatism across the theoretical terrain'. Muggleton (2000, p. 42) argues that the CCCS were working with an 'emancipatory meta-narrative' with a 'totalising conception'.

The criticism that certain postmodern studies overlook the social and economic context of young people's lives away from the subculture echoes Angela McRobbie's (1991, p. 19) criticism that 'few writers seemed interested in what happened when a mod went home after a weekend on speed. Only what happened on the streets mattered'. The issue of realism is picked up by Shildrick and MacDonald (2006, p. 129), who argue that there has been 'marginality of questions of class and other forms of structural inequality in the making and meaning of youth cultural identity and experience'. This is supported by Nayak and Kehily (2008, p. 13) who state that: 'these recent studies of youth culture appear to elide matters of social class and offer little commentary about new social divisions'. Shildrick and MacDonald (2006, p. 128) further accuse postmodern theorists for neglecting 'ordinary youth and those who are economically disadvantaged in favour of middle class youth focused on music and style' (also see Hollands, 2002; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Nayak, 2006; Pilkington, 2006). They call for theoretical refinement and empirical renewal to retain the concept of subculture and oppose those theorists who maintain the concept should be 'dumped' (2005, p. 129). Moore (2004) sees subculture as relevant to studying drug problem groups, while he asserts that it should be 'retired' from the study of recreational drug consumers. In an attempt to forge a new position or a compromise, Greener and Hollands (2006, p. 413) see theoretical value in both 'traditional subcultures and postmodern approaches towards youth culture'.

Subcultures, music, pleasure, resistance and postcoloniality

The postmodern theory of post subculture links resistance with pleasure, arguing that subculture is understood in terms of hedonism as a new form of self-expression. Rietveld (1998, p. 195) and Melechi's (1993, pp. 32–33) theory of subculture – as an 'act of disappearance' – is achieved by exchanging Baudrillard's ideas on the 'ecstasy of communication' with the ecstasy of drug consumption in subculture. Melechi and Rietveld's theory of subculture is causally linked to the use of drugs to achieve intoxication to experience a trance-like condition, combined with Baudrillard's (1988) notion of artificiality and the meaningless superficiality of post-tourism. Wilson (2006, p. 159) is critical of those studies that take a postmodern approach as being too preoccupied, and claims that they 'overstate' what young people gain from the rave experience – for example, that ravers 'lose themselves in order to find

themselves'. This is supported by Nayak and Kehily (2008, p. 13) who argue that: 'A feature of post modern approaches to youth culture is a tendency to produce rich and aesthetically pleasing accounts of young people at play at the expense of some earlier subcultural themes'.

In relation to dance culture, Malbon (1999), Jackson (2004) and also Rief (2009) all follow similar paths focused on drugs in their studies of young people, following a non-deviant drug-taking perspective. Although neither Malbon nor Jackson makes any connection with the normalisation thesis and its link with postmodernism, Rief does link drug normalisation with the concept of tribe. Malbon's work is parallel to Pini (1997, p. 281) in the sense that she is similarly preoccupied with the physicality of the pleasure of the dance floor linked to intoxication. The idea of rave as a form of resistance within the development of self reflection has a parallel with the ideas put forward by Rietveld (1998) and Melechi (1993). Although keen to focus on sociality, Malbon and Pini ignore the social relations of club culture and rave subculture. As a result, Malbon fails to place drug consumption within the political context of state control and also ignores the fact that club culture has consistently and incestuously celebrated drugs as a form of resistance to authority (Collin, 1997; Blackman, 2004). The form that this resistance takes may be contradictory, and even superficial, but the fact cannot be escaped that the dance-rave subculture has a history of revolt, even where there have been attempts to turn this pleasurable revolt into support for the dominant culture such as through mainstream tourism and leisure (Mckay, 1998). Malbon is highly critical of the theorisation of youth culture representing or expressing resistance, preferring to stay within localised cultural analysis focusing on the politics of subjectivity. A key feature of Malbon, Rief and Jackson's studies is the centrality of dancing and a presentation of their research subjects' interpretation of their drug consumption as reflecting the everyday context and participation within a dance subculture. Rather than employing the concept of subculture, Jackson is drawn towards the work of Bourdieu on habitus and looks to Foucault and Goffman to add more focus on the use of the body within a subculture. Jackson's (2004, p. 159) approach is influenced by post-modernism (Lyotard and Baudrillard) but he has little time for Maffesoli or the ideas of Redhead, which play a more significant role in Malbon's study. Although music plays a key role in Jackson's study, for him it is the physicality of clubbing that unites participants in their search for heightened pleasurable intoxication.

Within popular music studies, the term *scene* is used in contrast to subculture to describe developments in musical genres, impacting on communities within the relationship between the audience and musician. Leading advocates Straw (1991) and Shanks (1994) have different understandings of the term, but seek to apply the concept in a manner that offers agency. Hesmondhalgh supports

this idea (though admits the term is 'confusing' and 'plagued by difficulties'), and maintains that: 'The concept of scene is richer, provides new understandings of musical collectivities in relation to space and place, and offers insights into the formation of aesthetic communities in modern urban life' (2005, pp. 23, 30, 38). It is in this sense that Anderson (2009, p. 14) applies the term *scene* to describe rave culture operating as a collective where drug use is a major part within the different international dance communities she observed. However, she also uses the concept of subculture quite freely, and her treatment of drug normalisation remains underdeveloped. The central focus remains on the criminalisation of rave culture as a form of recreation (Measham and Moore, 2009). The focus on rave as a non-deviant practice, where drug consumption is one factor among others, makes her international study align with Hammersley *et al's* (2002) micro-focused study in the United Kingdom. In opposition to Redhead and other post subculturalists, young people in the Anderson and Hammersley *et al* studies are part of a family culture and wider community. They take part in normal social aspirations and see rave as meaningful.

A problem faced by the subcultural debate, according to Greener and Hollands (2006, p. 415), is the extent that it is 'UK based, if not western in its orientation'. This argument is more rigoursly pursued by Huq (2006, p. 25) through her assertion that we live in a 'postcolonial world'. She states that the 'CCCS treatments of ethnicity were largely confined to white objectification of African Caribbean style' (ibid, p. 33), and correctly identifies the CCCS neglect of Asian youth, except for where they are victims of racism. At the same time, little attention has been given to racial formation and ethnic identities within the post subculturalist studies. Lipsitz (1994, p. 110) sees the problem of Hebdige's analysis of race and subculture as disguising the contradictions of 'blocked class politics' and as offering 'no autonomous identity', dialogue or creativity for young Black and Asian youth. Back (1996) demonstrates the lack of attention given to ethnic identities, and through his work alongside that of Huq (2006) shows that Black and Asian youth culture research is now more common (Mahendru, 2010). Gilroy (1987, 1993) has for some time offered corrections to the subcultural tradition and put Black representation at the centre of youth cultural politics, and this has been built upon through an expansion of hip hop studies including Rose (1994), Mitchell (1996), Gidley (2007) and Bradley (2009). For example, Dedman's (2010) approach is to support the concept of subculture, arguing that young people's involvement in grime subculture shows active cultural and musical production. Gunter's (2010) ethnographic study on young Black men within school, and as part of 'hanging out' on the 'road culture', uses the concept of subculture to explore aspects of what he calls deviant 'badness'. He also interprets young people's everyday activities within a naturalistic perspective

derived from Matza's understanding of the Chicago School, and sees no relevance in the term post subculture (even though his study is about the appropriation of new spaces by Black youth). For Nayak and Kehily (2008, p. 27), the development of global culture and the production of new spaces for young people is where cultural hybridity can act to create modes of resistance. However, they also urge caution and cite Stuart Hall (1996, p. 248) to remind us that colonialism is not dead, poverty remains and young people suffer across the global from basic malnutrition. Furthermore, the notion of multiculturalism according to France *et al* (2007, p. 310) has tended to 'show little acknowledgement or recognition of the role of youth culture', and as a result, where Black and Asian youth culture feature as part of a multicultural youth culture, they suggest that there has been a tendency to see such groupings as dangerous and subject to criminalisation (Alexander, 2000).

Conclusion

The aim of recent British governments has been to construct drug prohibition as a popular preventive with assistance from a tabloid media to reinforce negative messages against specialist government advisors (Nutt), the reclassification of cannabis and criminal control of 'legal highs'. A contradiction behind this punitive response is that we have seen growth in the use of drug imagery within mainstream capitalism to market products of corporate companies. At the same time, a critical issue within drug prohibition has been the questioning within newspapers, both in the United States and the United Kingdom, of the effectiveness of the 'war on drugs' policy, alongside television coverage of the related human rights abuses in different states. Furthermore, popular drug tourism, decriminalisation policies, the diversity of drug products and messages available within the internet, along with capital investment by government into research on the medical use of cannabis, have contributed to a *legitimation crisis* in drug prohibition.

The apparent failure of prohibition has been amplified by the concept of drug normalisation. Prohibition has created the context for a popular preventive, but at the same time the failure of prohibition has created a legitimation crisis. In popular culture, we see the image of Western youth at play undertaking recreational drug consumption, but this does not fit easily alongside evidence of corrupt and brutal regimes, police and governments. As a concept, drug normalisation explains the patterns of substance consumption by sets of young people and reinvigorates critical interpretation of the relation between drugs within the legitimate and illegitimate economy. The mainstream economy from the nineteenth century opium trade to the contemporary globalisation of intoxicants through rave culture demonstrates that drugs are a

lucrative commodity, irrespective of the law. Significantly, the concept of drug normalisation allows young people's use of intoxicants to be described in terms which are not pathological, but relate to their cultural recreation. The concept promotes agency by allowing subjects to speak about their patterns of consumption away from deficit theory and in relation to cultural production and meaning. It has been argued that the Chicago School approach, combined with the CCCS theory of subculture, has enabled normalisation theory to account for young people's drug use as a non-deviant expression of their subculture.

Acknowledgements

I thank Howard Becker, Fiona Measham, two of my PhD students, Cara Robinson and Todd Dedman, the reviewers and editors of the journal *British Politics*, and especially Debbie Cox.

Notes

1 See, for example: Drugs and Role Models in Sport: Making and Setting Examples (2003-2004); Drug Education in Schools: An Update, September (2000, p. 9) (both OFSTED). Also see: Drug Education: An Entitlement For All (Advisory Group on Drug and Alcohol Education, 2008).
2 Cannabis cups, Highlife Cup, IC 420 Cup, Tokers Bowl, No Mercy Weed Cup, but there are other cannabis cups to be awarded throughout the world in Australia, Spain and the United States.
3 The states are: Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.
4 New Zealand, for example, has a new class in the Misuse of Drugs Act, the class D model, which is a 'holding' category where drugs can be put before they are understood. The Portuguese Government has voted to decriminalise the consumption of illegal drugs such as cannabis and heroin. See BBC News, 7 July 2000.
5 Also see, DVD by Ed Asner (2003), titled: Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure.
6 See BBC News, 'Cannabis row drugs adviser sacked' (30 October 2009); BBC News, 'Drugs adviser criticised by Smith' (9 February 2009). Several newspapers also expressed anger at Professor Nutts' departure.

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