

University of Hull
Department of Criminology and Sociology

DRUG USE IN RELATION TO POPULAR CULTURE, MEDIA AND IDENTITY

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Olivia Mackay

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the extent to which representations of drug use within popular culture and media, are impacting an individual's identity within contemporary society. This concept has been vastly under-researched and theories, as well as drug normalisation in terms of an individual's identity, making this research tremendously invaluable as it to give a rigorous investigation in a modern setting.

Through the use of secondary data collection methods, this research has investigated the positive perception of drug consumption displayed in music, and the honest insights displayed in television and cinema; it has highlighted the usefulness of social media to individuals looking to create their own realities surrounding drug consumption in comparison the mass media that creates moral panics and fear. The research revealed that drug representation trends in both popular culture and media are perennial and impact an individual's identity differently. For example, fans of punk music during the 1970s cultivated the amphetamine look to fit into the social group surrounding this genre of music, even though they might not have experimented with amphetamine itself, whereas the media created a moral panic around mephedrone in which they and society used drug users as social pariahs.

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1 Introduction

“When we think about drugs, we may draw upon our own experiences or the knowledge and understanding of those close to us, but our experience is always intimately bound up with, or tempered by, the mediated images and in ideas about drugs that circulate through wider popular culture”, (Manning, 2013: 8).

This dissertation is about the depiction of drug consumption in popular culture and media, and how this is directly affecting an individual's identity; popular culture shall relate to music, television, and cinema while media will relate to mass and social media.

Although defining the term can be considered difficult, the term ‘drug’ can be defined as a ‘single substance that, when ingested, produces a physiological effect, pharmacological effect, or change’, (Bell, 2012: 74). Gossop (2007) offers a slightly different definition, stating it to be “any chemical substance, whether of natural or synthetic origin, which can be used to alter perception, mood or other psychological states”, (Gossop, 2007: 2). Furthermore, recreational drug use can be defined as the ‘use of drugs for pleasure or leisure’, (DrugScope, 2014); this is frequently mentioned throughout this dissertation. Drug use is something that has always been associated with distinct youth culture movements; in terms of popular culture, these movements included the ‘speeding mods’ on the 1960s whereby drug experimentation focused on amphetamines, ‘hippies’ throughout the 1970s and LSD consumption and heroin users throughout the 1980s.

This was of course picked up on by the media, who have waged a ‘war on drugs’ throughout the decades. Boyd (2002) highlighting that this trend is perennial stating that since the mid-1800s, media representations of drugs users and traffickers have centred on what is perceived as the ‘dangerous classes’, that threaten white, middle-class protestant morality, (Boyd, 2002: 397).

I decided to do this piece of work as I find the topic of drug use in contemporary society academically interesting. The idea that the representation of drug consumption in the media and popular culture can affect someone's social identity is vastly under-researched and theorised, which makes this piece of work vital in understanding that there are direct links and correlations. Consequently, the hypothesis is 'the representation of drugs in popular culture and media will have consequences on an individual's identity in contemporary society'. The core research question to be tested for this dissertation is 'how drug use is presented within popular culture and media, and how this can affect an individual's identity'.

One of the aims of this dissertation is to conclude whether listening to specific genres of music, corresponds to drug consumption or drug experimentation. The second aim is to highlight whether popular culture is seen to offer a positive perception of poly-drug use in contrast to social and mass media and whether this causes a moral panic. The overall objective is to emphasise whether trends in popular culture and media are perennial; therefore, popular culture

and mass media will not differ from the pre-conceived ideas set out historically, and how this ultimately affects the individual in contemporary society.

Chapters within this dissertation include a methodology section, literature-based discussion and a conclusion. The methodology section will primarily focus upon the research methodology and summarize the research technique. It shall take note of the advantages and disadvantages of both a literature-based discussion and secondary data collection. Lastly, it will address any ethical issues encountered during the writing of this dissertation. The second section will provide a comprehensive view of the existing literature that is relevant to popular culture, media, and identity. It will provide an in-depth analysis of the emergence of drug imagery in mainstream popular culture and media, bringing forward the normalisation and social identity concepts using fundamental case studies such as Leah Betts and mephedrone. The conclusion section shall draw together all the findings from the literature-based discussion, striving to support the research hypothesis.

2 Methodology

I decided to do a literature-based dissertation as I believed this topic to be vastly under-researched and theorised; it became relevant to combine pre-existing literature and to bring this into a more contemporary setting. Furthermore, I really wanted to study this topic and to be able to do this ethically, at an undergraduate level, it was necessary to use secondary data collection methods over that of primary data methods. This was necessary as trying to collect primary data could implicate the dissertation ethically, (this is something touched upon during the ethical considerations).

Secondary Data is classified as “the act of collecting or analysing data that was originally collected for another purpose”, (Bachman et al., 2011: 306). Secondary data allows for examination of already accessible material based on the speculations and acknowledgments within this research area; it will utilise core texts such as books, websites, journal articles and newspaper articles. Core texts, such as books, can be useful as they explain the pre-

existing data and acknowledge the relevant arguments that may be pertinent to today’s society. Journal articles offer the researcher a view of late modernity and websites and newspaper articles can note relevant and contemporary changes; these also tend to offer a personal view of the study.

One benefit of collecting secondary data is that it gives this dissertation access to a plethora of resources that have already been accumulated. This method allows from the use of a substantial scale of data which I believe could not have been replicated by an undergraduate student within the set time sale. It gives this dissertation access to more meticulous data evaluations, making it easier to submit findings and correlations between pre-existing data and theories.

However, it must be mentioned that secondary data has potential limitations. At the original time of this data being collected and created, the researcher has decided upon a subject of interest which could inadvertently lead to bias or a subjective outcome; this means that I can become hard to clarify whether the data collected was accurate. Both newspaper articles and journal articles can lead to a misrepresentation of results through tabloid political and ideological bias. Furtherance of this, what is known as the ‘dubious value’, when attempting to pinpoint the levels of crime in society, serves to highlight that there is a lack of understanding; this has become the ‘dark figure of crime’.

This dissertation does not include primary data and is solely based on academic material that was available as the University of Hull’s, Brynmor Jones Library. Any and all online sources where accessed through Google Scholar. Keyword searches were utilised and refined to ensure that sources found were both disparate and relevant to the key question; sources that fitted both these criteria where contemplated for inclusion.

Ethical Considerations

The most prominent ethical consideration that was made whilst planning this dissertation is attributed to the collection of primary data. The original idea for the dissertation focused on drug normalisation within university students, with primary data being accumulated through the use of interviews and surveys from students across the country. It strived to look at the differing drug use depending on the attending university, and the course undertaken by the student. However, in doing so, individuals would have implicated themselves and risked confessing to illicit drug consumption and experimentation, thus disclosing illegal behaviour. According to the ethics policy published by the University of Hull, "research involving human participants must consider the impact/s of the research on the participants. This includes direct, indirect and broader impacts (for example, impact(s) on their family, society, employers or colleagues), (Research Ethics Policy, 2017: 9). This means that the research being conducted for this dissertation should not impact the individual, which admitting to illicit drug consumption (whether anonymous or not) had the potential of achieving.

3 Literature-based Discussion

This literature-based discussion will critically analyse the surrounding literature regarding the representation of drug use within popular culture and media, and how this can have an impact on an individual's identity; it shall be separated into sections to guarantee that there is precise assessment and simplicity surrounding the key themes and arguments. The first segment intends to investigate popular culture and include themes such as music, television, and cinema. The theme of music shall explore the changing representations of drugs and drug consumption, referencing influential musicians such as Johnny Rotten and The Beatles. It will also discuss statistics surrounding music genre preference and drug consumption and experimentation rates. The theme of television and cinema shall explore the negative portrayal of drug use that is portrayed in British television dramas, *Shameless* and *Ideal*, as well as popular Scottish film, *Trainspotting*.

The second section will discuss both mass and social media, bringing forward theorists such as Ben-Yehuda and Kohn, who highlight the false reality of media representations. It will critically analyse the mephedrone epidemic of 2009/2010 and the death of Leah Betts, paying particular attention to, *The Sun* newspaper's contribution to the moral panic that ensued. When discussing social media, the contemporary studies by both Cavazos-Rehg and colleagues (2014) and Hanson and colleagues (2013a) will be drawn upon to support the idea that social media enables the user to create their own media and realities, that allow for positive perceptions of poly-drug use.

The final section will reference identity. This will discuss the normalisation thesis, creating links to the first two sections of popular culture and media. The social identity theory, which was

documented by Tajfel and Turner (1979), will also be utilised to aid in critically analysing whether popular culture and media do indeed have a direct correlation to an individual's social identity and stance on drug experimentation.

3.1 Popular Culture

Popular culture is arguably one of the most influential sources for positive perceptions of poly-drug use; it is noted that both illicit and licit drug use has continuously been considered lived elements within popular culture, therefore providing substantial concepts for popular culture literature. Blackman (1996) support this notion, stating that "one of the visible links between youth culture and drug culture is the visible display of youth styles; it is possible to argue that there exists a repository of ideas and images in popular youth culture which are drug-influenced, (Blackman, 1996: 139). This gives the view that both drug consumption and popular culture, (and their mediations through society), are of some importance; for example, the distinction between both licit and illicit is maintained through definitions that are politically, but more importantly, socially administered. Before delving into this research, it is important to note (as Oksanen, 2012 does) that the recent body of research surrounding popular music and drug use is virtually non-existent; a large section of contemporary literature has concentrated on rave and techno club music. Thus, the data may be skewed, (Oksanen, 2012: 143).

3.1.1 Music

Beginning firstly with the notion that music inspires drug consumption, preceding the 1990s, recreational drug experimentation was vastly viewed as a marginal activity. Beginning firstly with the notion that music inspired drug consumption, prior to the 1990s, recreational drug experimentation was vastly regarded as a marginal activity; Shapiro (1999) remarking that those who took part in such activities were to be branded as 'mad, bad or sad', (Shapiro, 1999: 17). Looking at contemporary society, Brian and Measham (2005) point to a new culture of inebriation whereby both illicit substances and alcohol are at the forefront, (Manning, 2007: 3). It can be speculated that the relationship between drug consumption and music is perennial, with each coming decade offering a new music genre coupled with a novel, 'fashionable' drug to experiment with. This is exemplified in the role of a reefer (a cannabis cigarette) within jazz and blues in the early twentieth century, as well as amphetamines and hallucinogens at the close of the century with dance and rave music. From this, it can be maintained that popular music appears to offer listeners the possibility, real or imagined, to share the drug experiences with the cultural producers, meaning that these pleasures are considered a 'secret' between performers and fans. Andrew Blake touches on this, commenting that pop music has been central in the construction and rotation of symbolic frameworks that 'make sense' of drugs and drug consumption, (Manning, 2007: 101). Popular music has arguably offered the most extensive cultural space within which drug pleasures and experiences can be globally represented; these

energies and opportunities for drug experimentation in musical form have found a parallel in the willingness of famous musicians to experiment with drugs.

A prime example of this comes from The Beatles, whose careers survived and flourished on drugs such as Drinamyl and Preludin (a stimulant drug, previously used as an appetite suppressant); this drug trend spread from the band to the fans, (Normal, 1992: 98 cited in Shapiro, 2000: 20). Drugs, for the most part, provided The Beatles with a means of escape and distraction from being in the public eye; they openly discussed their drug consumption, arguing that they never wanted their fans to mimic their actions. Gooddens (2017) quotes John Lennon, who, in 1970 said, "I do not lead my life to affect other people"; a year adding "I do not feel responsible for turning [fans] onto acid. Because I do not think we did anything to kids; anything someone does, they do themselves" (Gooddens, 2017: ND). This suggests that musicians realise the promotion of drug consumption is replicating onto individuals, however they perceive it to be an individual's choice not because of their influence.

The representation of drug consumption continued with the emergence of a new club culture termed 'mod'. Bands such as The Who, and Small Faces, began to express the amphetamine style both lyrically and stylistically. Shapiro (2000) exemplifies Roger Daltrey, lead singer of The Who, who punctuated the popular song 'My Generation' with the amphetamine stutter – something which is considered typical of a user who had great difficulty getting their words out fast enough. Furthermore, Small Faces explicitly mentioned 'speed' and 'itchycoo park' (rumoured to be an explicit reference to amphetamine formulation) during their performance of 'Here Comes the Nice' on Top of the Pops, (Shapiro, 2000: 20). This amphetamine culture became prominent, during the 1970s Punk era and thus had a more profound impact. During this period, the commodification of punk and rock genres of music had increased alongside its cultural respectability. Shapiro (2000) exemplified Johnny Rotten, lead singer of the Sex Pistols, who can be considered a prominent drug figure during this period. Rotten gained his renowned stage name from the state of his rotten teeth; he became so influential to the punk style and scene, that many adolescents that followed punk music, attempted to cultivate his amphetamine look, without partaking in drug use, (Shapiro, 2000: 27). This highlights that the 'drug look' became favourable among fans because they wanted to convey a particular identity or fit into a specific social group.

Shapiro (2000) further relates this to contemporary society and the rise of the dance culture that came from Ibiza. This new dance culture, which is based on the sounds of house and garage, sprang up in the UK with many DJ's looking to recreate the 'sounds of the summer'; this led to the emergence of MDMA. Shapiro (2000) continues with this, stating that these critical developments in popular music, and the catalytic appearance of ecstasy, combined to create a unique symbiosis, heralding the normalisation of illicit drug use, (Shapiro, 2000: 18). This suggests

that lyrically and stylistically, the positive representation of drug experimentation and consumption is deeply rooted in music and can be considered perennial.

This directly links to the notion that listening to specific genres of music positively correlates to drug consumption. Lewis (1980) conducted a survey in which 2,950 16-year-olds were asked who their favourite recording artist was and several questions concerning drug usage; he found that heavy metal listeners were more likely to engage in drug experimentation (across all categories of drugs) compared to other genres such as Jazz, Rock & Roll, and Disco-Dance. For example, out of 831 heavy metal listeners, 275 frequently smoked marijuana in comparison to 88 for Rock & Roll, and 39 for Disco-Dance; another example shows that, again out of 831 heavy metal listeners, 53 frequently took stimulants over that of 6 for Jazz and 1 for country music. This trend is mimicked across other categories of drugs such as cocaine, PCP, tranquillizers, inhalants and opiates, (Lewis, 1980: 176 – 179). Furtherance of this, Lewis draws upon the Youth in Transition Survey (1970), which focused on 19-year-old males. Robinson found a slight correlation between individuals with a preference for protest rock and self-reported drug consumption; he found that protest rock and drug consumption was the strongest for marijuana and hallucinogens and weaker with amphetamine and barbiturates. However, it must be noted that Robinson believed that this was more to do with peer group usage over the positive representation of drug consumption by the musicians.

3.1.2 Television and Cinema

Another popular culture source comes from television and cinema, which are seen to offer negative but normal views of drug consumption, with shows such as, *The Mighty Boosh*, and *Shameless*, depicting marijuana as a normal part of everyday lives. Manning (2007) firstly draws attention to popular British television drama *Shameless*, which is seen to portray a picture of normalised, but illegal, recreational drug use – something which is not far removed from the everyday lived realities of many young, ordinary people in the UK, (Manning, 2007: 1). The main character, Lip, is seen ordering a pint of lager, a whiskey chaser and an 'E' (ecstasy), to relieve himself of relationship drama; this specific scene offers the audience the idea that poly-drug use can be routine. Whilst customers may not be able to buy illicit drug substances over the bar, drugs are quite likely to be on sale somewhere close by. This normalised image is supported by the television programme, *Ideal*. Carter (2007) believes that, *Ideal* was an important development in British television broadcasting as it was the first sit-com to have a drug-dealer as a main character while acknowledging the illegality and making drug dealing appear as unglamorous as possible, (Carter, 2007: 169).

The risks of the show, overall, appear severely mediated by the attempts to show the life of a drug dealer as unattractive and squalid.

A prominent film is the Scottish, *Trainspotting*, which despite being about a group of heroin users, became popular across Britain; its 1996 release coming at a pivotal time for the British drug culture. *Trainspotting* follows a group of young Scottish heroin users during the late 1980s in Edinburgh, Scotland; the narration is done by that of the protagonist, Mark Renton, who is a self-proclaimed heroin addict. Throughout the film, Renton goes through periods of being both on and off heroin, which seemingly corresponds with the highs and lows of Renton's life; throughout these periods of heroin use and withdrawal, the audience is shown the image of a heroin addict, with Renton's narration offering insight into the attitude of a heavy user and their mentality. Director, Danny Boyle, comments on his representation of drug use throughout the film, stating:

"This isn't what drugs are about. When you take drugs, you have a [expletive] time – unless you're very unlucky. We wanted the film to capture that. There's half of the film which is considerably darker. If you prolong the experience with drugs, your life will darken. The film doesn't try and hide that. But it also doesn't try to hobble along with the moral consensus" (Byrne, 1997: 173).

This quote highlights that film is attempting to show an honest view of drug use and what prolonged use (addiction) can do to someone. Overall, the film fits the notion that cinema and television offer a negative view of drug use in comparison to other forms of popular culture. This is evident through the fact that Renton's values and convictions surrounding life and heroin use conflict with the overarching message of the film; the dual messages of Renton's rocky relationship with heroin serves to challenge the popular notions of heroin addiction.

3.2 Media

For the majority of people in contemporary society, primary exposure to drug consumption derives from mainstream media outlets such as newspapers and region-specific television broadcasts. Manning (2007) cites the work of Jenkins, who observes that the perennial public scepticism concerning the lurid drug scare, circulates mainstream media outlets because an increasing portion of the news audience has either direct or indirect exposure to drugs, (Manning, 2007: 8). Ben-Yehuda (1994) builds from this, remarking that the representation of the drug 'problem' by such media outlets bears little resemblance to the reality of the situation, (Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 200). This suggests that, although the audience may have the knowledge or lived experience of drug use, media outlets still portray it in a distorted way with a potential outcome of a moral panic. Kohn supports this, arguing that how mass media represents the drug 'problem' in the UK, is nothing more than an attempt to divert attention away from other burgeoning issues such as high unemployment and poverty, (Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 200). Boland (2000) notes that these views on drug consumption are embedded in the public mindset; therefore, the media can use drug users like social pariahs that can be blamed for today's social ills, (Boland, 2000: 173); this leads to individuals in society doing the same. However, Manning (2007) comments that the suggestion that mainstream media outlets play an essential role in the identification, definition,

and construction of social problems is not new. Mainstream media outlets have long played an essential part in the differentiation of patterns of intoxication and what is deemed 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' drug use (Manning, 2007: ND).

3.2.1 Mass Media

The most prominent feature of mass media that surrounds drug use is moral panics; Cohen (1971) conceptualised moral panics and folk devils, stating:

“Societies appear to be subject, now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerge to come defined as a threat to societal values and interests, its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people ... Sometimes the object of the panic is entirely novel, and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight, (Marsh et al., 2011: 2).

This is supported by Goode (2017) who highlights that a moral panic is an intense and heightened sense of exaggerated concern about a threat, or supposed threat, posed by deviants or ‘folk devils’, (Goode, 2017: 149). Jewkes and colleagues (2005), depict moral panics as events that occur randomly and provoke an extreme reaction, (Jewkes et al, 2005: 22). Beginning to relate this to contemporary society, Thompson (1998) regards that the new decade is the age of moral panics, stating that tabloid headlines are continually warning society of new dangers that result in moral laxity; however, Thompson continues by stating that moral panics are not a new concept as there has been a multitude of moral panics over issues such as crime and youth activities, (Thompson, 1998: 1). Young (1971a) highlights that within these moral panics, mass media can create 'fantasy notions' around drug takers and the consequences of deviancy amplification. Furtherance of this, Murji (1998) persuasively argues that:

"The dominant, conventional approach has seen the media as a key force in the demonisation and marginalisation of drug users, as presenting lurid, hysterical images and as a provider of an un-critical platform from which politicians and other moral entrepreneurs can launch and wage drug 'wars'. The media is thus seen to comprehensively misrepresent drugs, their effects, typical users and sellers ... In many ways, the media may even define what we 'see' as drugs ... thereby conditioning public attitudes about the 'drug problem' and what the response to it should be" (Murji, 1998: 69).

This serves to highlight that due to the media negative image of drug consumption being so prominent, high-ranking members of society are able to control information given to the public – a lot of said information being false or distorted.

These ‘fantasy notions’ surrounding drug moral panics creates what is known as outsiders. Taylor (2008) conveys that the negative and, quite frankly, stereotypical depictions of drug users by the

media, creates criminal outsiders that are a threat to middle-class sobriety, (Taylor, 2008: 370). This is supported by Peretti-Watel (2003), who emphasised the importance of the aforementioned 'folk devil' stereotype, using the public's pre-conceived notions of heroin users as a prime example. For instance, Peretti-Watel stresses that the media's depiction of heroin users is that of devils that concentrate all types of vices (Peretti-Watel, 2003: 322). This has links to Becker's (1963) illustration of drug users being framed as 'others' and presented as a risk to 'us' as a society.

Boyd (2002) supports the idea, noting that these perceptions created by the media are indeed perennial. He relates this to the USA, but these themes are equally tenable to the UK:

"Since the mid-1800s, media representations of drug users and traffickers in the US have centred on what is perceived as the 'dangerous classes' and racial minorities as the 'other'. Drug traffickers are constructed as the 'outsiders' that threaten the world order of white, middle-class protestant morality. They are depicted as dangerous, out of control, and a threat to the nation and the family. Today's war on drugs is characterised by the 'routinisation of caricature' which promotes worst-case scenarios as the norm, sensationalises, and distorts drug issues in the media', (Boyd, 2002: 397).

This quote serves to highlight that between the 1800s and today's society, the image of drug users and traffickers represented in the media hasn't differed from the 'dangerous thug' that risks being a detriment to society's morality.

However, there are a plethora of criticisms attributed to moral panics that must be observed. Firstly, the formulation of moral panics implies that the media's audience is passive; however, audiences today are considered much more active and are able to critically evaluate media content; this may be due to the rise of social media as a different source of news. Additionally, Sparks (1992) notes that the term 'moral panic' can be overused to such an extent that society risk reducing this period of late modernity to an endlessly cyclical state of 'pickiness', (Sparks, 1992: 65). Taylor (2005) supports this believing that moral panics are nothing more than a 'simmering' panic than a moral one. Moreover, Thornton (1995) found that the media failed to produce a moral panic over the rave culture as this culture, and taking drugs such as ecstasy, had become mainstream and 'normal'.

An excellent case study that shows how the media negatively portrays illicit substances and creates moral panics is that of mephedrone. Mephedrone, also known as 4-methylmethcathinone, is a central nervous system stimulant that is structurally similar to amphetamine, (Kari et al., 2011: 2). Presently, there are no pharmacokinetic or pharmacodynamic studies concerning mephedrone, nor are there any psychological or behavioural studies which assess the effects on humans; any reported psychological or behavioural effects of mephedrone are based on user reports as well as clinical reports on the

toxicity of mephedrone, (Pistos et al., 2011: 192). This means that any media-generated human effects are cultivated to produce fear and does not stem from scientific research.

In 2009, mephedrone was at the forefront of public agenda after the tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*, published a fake report under the headline 'Legal drug teen ripped his scrotum off'; this story had been initially published as a joke on an online forum and later quoted in a police report. This was information *The Sun* had failed to include (Kari et al., 2011: 3). Before the general election in 2010, the purportedly innocuous drug had the attention of the general public and politicians as the leading media outlets called for an immediate ban on the substance. *The Sun*, one of the aforementioned leading media outlets, launched an open campaign in which they demanded action from the government whilst simultaneously dismissing statements to wait on advice from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs; this instigated weeks of media debate regarding mephedrone, (Kari et al., 2011: 4).

During the campaign, *The Sun* reported that an 18-year-old and 19-year-old had died whilst under the influence of mephedrone; it was only speculated that mephedrone played a part in the deaths of both these boys. Toxicology reports state that mephedrone was not present.

However, the drug had already been framed by the media as dangerous, and the emotively reported deaths of these young adults had narrowed the possibility for an open and frank discussion about the actual harm of mephedrone, and the best policy options to be implemented.

Petley and collaborators (2013) exemplify the death of 14-year-old girl, Gabi Price, who also gained widespread media coverage. Tabloid papers reported that Price had taken mephedrone alongside ketamine, later dying of heart failure; it was further testified by the pathologist report that Price had died of natural causes following pneumonia from heart failure. Petley believes that stories such as these allow moral panics to 'construct a discourse of information' in which deaths are misattributed to drug consumption and the 'real' causes are ignored, (Petley et al., 2013: 126). This suggestion was supported by David Nutt (2010), who was the former chairman of the UK's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs; he stated that the knee-jerk policy change that was implemented, only served to highlight the ongoing tensions between "the causes of evidence-based policymaking and the imperative of headline-driven politics", (Kari et al., 2011: 1). Overall, this case study supports the previous arguments surrounding moral panics as mephedrone was represented as a 'threat to societal values or interests', (Cohn, 2002: 1, cited in Petley et al., 2013: 127). It clearly shows how mainstream right-wing British media framed mephedrone as a moral epidemic and a 'killer of youth', perpetuating the traditional war on drugs rhetoric. Alexandrescu (2013) uses Van Dijk's (1998, 2005, 2009) socio-cognitive model to explain that this 'war on drugs' rhetoric illustrates ideological discourses that derive from social elites, aiding in their domination because they can structure cognitive maps of social universes and shape the social context in which they are decoded, (Alexandrescu, 2013: 27). This suggests that

tabloid newspapers were using their position of power and the growing 'War on Drugs' rhetoric to dominate an individual's views and morals.

Another example of the media's distorted and negative portrayal of drug consumption comes from the death of Leah Betts. Betts was an 18-year-old schoolgirl from Latchingdon, Essex, who on the 11th November 1995, took MDMA and drank seven litres of water in 90 minutes. Four hours later, Leah Betts collapsed into a coma from which she never recovered. This received extended media coverage from the time it occurred, through to her funeral and over two months later when the inquest returned a verdict of accidental death, (Murji, 1998: 71). During the peak of media attention, the aforementioned newspaper, The Sun, gave its front page to the story with the headline 'Leah took ecstasy on her 18th Birthday' and a full-page photograph of her lying on a hospital bed with a respirator on her face. Osgerby (1998) notes that, for the media, Leah's death was a 'potent image of innocence corrupted by a dangerous and malevolent subculture', (Osgerby, 1998: 183). After Leah's death, the media began to focus on the putative fact that it was the first time Betts had taken the drug; however, it arose later that she had taken ecstasy at least three times previously – although this was much less publicised.

In terms of this case study supporting the idea that the media creates drug moral panics, Cohn noted that psychoactive drugs had been a remarkably consistent source of moral panics, using the reaction to the ecstasy-related death of Leah Betts as a 'melodramatic example'; Cohn argues that Leah's death had been 'symbolically sharpened' by her 'respectable home background: father an ex-police officer, mother had worked as a drug counsellor ... Leah was the girl next door", (Cohn, 2002: xiii, cited in Shiner et al., 2015: 1)

3.2.2 Social Media

Thanki and colleagues (2016) define social media as encompassing numerous types of social interaction applications and sites, including social networking sites, photo and video-sharing sites, blogs and microblogs, discussion and forum sites, review and rating sites and social streams, (Thanki et al., 2016: 115).

Cavazos-Rehg and colleagues (2014) analysed demographics of almost 1 million followers of pro-marijuana Twitter handle as well as the content under that handle. They found that 73% of followers were 19-year-olds or under, with 54% being female. Furthermore, they found that content posted, mainly concerned positive cannabis discourse, with many being perceived as humorous, (Thanki et al., 2016: 117).

Another Twitter-based study comes from Hanson and colleagues (2013a). They performed a qualitative analysis of the quantity and content of tweets containing the drug name 'Adderall'. Hanson recorded 213,633 Adderall-related tweets over six months, with a peak coinciding during the examination period. These tweets were also analysed for content relating to motives, side effects, poly-use and possible normative influence. It was concluded that Adderall discussions

through social media outlets such as Twitter, may contribute to normative behaviour regarding its abuse (Thanki et al., 2016: 117).

The limitations of discussing social media in relation to its portrayal of drug consumption comes from the fact that social media is a relatively new concept, and again vastly under-researched in terms of this topic. Therefore, data and theories are very limited and it is hard to draw comparison and correlations between social identity and social media. However, from the data found, social media clearly contrasts mass media, as it suggests that social media allows for less negative perceptions. This could be because people are able to portray a distorted view of their life in which they can make poly-drug use seem favourable, making viewers believe that it is normal behaviour.

3.3 Identity

“The transition from adolescence to young adulthood is a crucial period in which experimentation with illicit drugs, in many cases, begins. Drugs may have a strong appeal to young people who are beginning to struggle from independence as they search for their identity. Because of innate curiosity, thirst for new experience, peer pressures and resistance to authority, sometimes low self-esteem problems in establishing interpersonal relationships, young people are susceptible to the culture of drugs”, (UN Commission Document 1999, 14:4).

As the previous section highlighted, popular culture, in particular music, was a catalyst for recreational drug use to become culturally accommodated amongst a vast amount of conventional young people. Parker and colleagues argue that 'it was the watershed whereby drugs moved from subculture status to become part of mainstream youth culture', (Parker et al., 1995: 24). Drug users are now as likely to be female as male and come from all social and academic backgrounds; therefore, they could no longer be simply written off as 'delinquent, street-corner, no-hopers', (Parker et al., 1998: 1-2). Due to the magnitude of these changes, licit and illicit drug use could no longer be adequately explained by either subcultural theory or traditional notions of deviance – hence the creation of the normalisation thesis.

3.3.1 Normalisation Thesis

The term 'normalisation' is fundamentally concerned with how 'a deviant, often subcultural population or their deviant behaviour can be accommodated into a larger grouping or society,' (Parker et al., 1998: 152). The term can be used in various contexts; therefore, Parker and colleagues utilised the concept as a way of exploring and explaining the unprecedented increase of drug use of young adults throughout the 1990s. Parker and colleagues describe normalisation concerning recreational drug use as follows:

"Normalisation cannot be reduced to the intuitive phrase 'it is normal for young people to take drugs'; that is both to oversimplify and overstate the case. We are concerned only with the spread

of abnormal activity and associated attitudes from the margins to the centre of youth culture, where it joins many other accommodated 'deviant' activities such as excessive drinking, casual sexual encounters and daily cigarette smoking ... Normalisation need not be concerned with absolutes; we are not even considering the possibility that most you Britons will become illicit drug users", (Parker et al., 1998: 152 – 153).

Parker and colleagues (1998) acquired evidence for the normalisation thesis from the North West Longitudinal Study, which began in 1991 and tracked over 700 young people to assess how they developed attitudes and behaviours surrounding drugs. They found that 91.1% of respondents had been offered an illicit drug and that drugs were becoming more routinely available in locations such as schools, colleges, pubs and clubs. The study also revealed how six in ten respondents had tried an illicit drug and found precise closure to gender and social class differences. Most importantly, Parker's study revealed how culturally accommodated drug use was becoming as a result of broader social changes, which has altered young people's experiences of growing up in late modernity. This further suggests that 9% of participants that have not been offered drugs are 'abnormal'.

The normalisation thesis is one of the most significant theoretical developments to have emerged in youth and drug studies literature; this is because it differed from previous criminological and psychological theories that associated drug use with deviance or resistance, (Pennay et al, 2016: 187).

Manning (2013) comments on the normalisation thesis, adding that there is a strong case for viewing drug consumption and its cultural practices as occupying a more visible position within contemporary popular cultures. Of course, this view is dependent on the normalisation thesis; the argument being that recreational drug use is now so familiar to those aged 35 and below that it should be regarded as 'normal', (Manning, 2013: 49). This is supported by Taylor (2008) who believes that in the context of the normalisation debate, drug use in the UK as well as the media's reporting of drugs, drug consumption and drug-related crime has become such a regular force and indeed a normal image, (Taylor, 2008: 371).

Whilst normalisation does not necessarily mean that everyone partakes in drug consumption, it implies that non-acquaintance with drugs has become the deviation. MacDonald and Marsh (2002) usefully suggest that 'differentiated normalisation' may be occurring, with many adolescents abstaining from drug consumption, and some being frequent recreational users – a minority being dangerous, problematic drug addicts, (Carrabine, 2014: 273).

In terms of the media's negative representation of drug use creating normalisation, Young (1971) highlights that stigmatisation from mass media may be used to enable or causes those who use drugs to affirm their identities as deviant and rebellious members of subcultures that differ from 'straight' society, (Carrabine et al., 2014: 272). In terms of popular culture, due to the vast amount

of recording artists that partake in drug consumption and exude a drug style, it's more than likely that to individual's engaging with these musicians, drug consumption is normal behaviour as someone with immense amounts of popularity and fame is showing it to be an acceptable behaviour.

However, Shiner and Newburn (1997, 1999) argued that the normalisation thesis tends to exaggerate the degree of change that has taken place within contemporary society, and, that drug consumption remains a minority pursuit within youth culture.

3.3.2 Social Identity

Moving on, Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that the social identity theory emphasised obtained attitudes that mediate an individual's identification with a specific social group (Hammersley et al., 2001: 137). This implies that an individual may act or respond differently depending on their diverse social groups. Stets and colleagues (2000) believe that social identity is a person's knowledge that her or she, belongs to a specific social category or group; a social group is considered to be a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category. Through a subconscious social comparison process, similar individuals are categorised and labelled 'in-group'; individuals who differ are categorised as the 'out-group', (Stets et al., 2000: 225). Miller (2014) agrees with this, extending to say that many individuals, particularly adolescents and young adults, are willing to experiment with drugs simply because their peer group are favourably inclined to do the same. Thus, if an individual perceives a favourable response from peers for drug experimentation, they are more likely to engage in this behaviour, (Miller et al, 2014: 318).

Hammersley and colleagues (2001) exemplify cannabis in relation to social identity; they question that very little is known about contemporary experiences surrounding cannabis use and the problems that mass users encounter and how it fits into their everyday lives. Hammersly notes that cannabis use (or any substance use) can only relate to identity in one of two ways; the first being that cannabis is used to signify membership to a group or cannabis does not signify membership to a group, (Hammersley et al, 2001: 137). They note that as well as being a signifier for identity, it could also signify social setting as there is unlikely to be homogenous social group of cannabis use.

4. Conclusion

The core research question that was being tested was 'how drug use is presented within popular culture and media can have an effect on an individual's identity' which is something this literature-based discussion has achieved. Both popular culture and media outlets are seen to create and support the normalisation thesis through different sources, as well as impacting on a person's social identity in differing ways.

Beginning with popular culture, musicians are showing drug consumption in a positive light through their fame and popularity, and, even though they may not have the intention of putting this trait onto their fans, this trend is being replicated. This is affecting an individual's social identity as people are beginning to identify with the social group surrounding a particular band and, subconsciously or not, cultivating their behavioural patterns and style. In terms of the normalisation thesis, as individuals continually engage with this drug behaviour, it becomes a prominent normal image for them to encounter.

However, television and cinema are seen to have the opposite effect as they tend to show more realistic images of drug consumption such as addiction and squalid living conditions. Although the audiences may realise that this is dramatized, it may have a direct impact on what social groups they identify with.

In terms of mass media, newspaper and region-specific broadcasts clearly have a direct impact on both the normalisation thesis and social identity theory through their use of moral panics. Moral panics serve to distort information to create fear within society; although this presented imagery can be considered false, the repeated reporting of drug scares serves to highlight that drug consumption and experimentation is a 'normal' part of society even though it threatens societies moral laxity. This could also affect a member of society's social identity as an individual may become apprehensive to affiliate themselves with a social group known for drug experimentation or known to accommodate those who partake in drug consumption.

Social media endeavours to offer a different perception to drug use, suggesting that there is a large number of individuals who socially accept those who take drugs and that this 'war on drugs' rhetoric is nothing more than a media scare tactic. This may be due to the fact that social media allows its users to create its own media and realities; for example, those who find drug consumption socially acceptable are able to block out negative media stories that stem from drugs and only receive positive interpretations.

Both popular culture and media highlight that, whether presenting drug use positively or negatively, these trends are perennial. As Lewis (1980) states, there has been a long-standing linkage between new forms of popular music and immoral behaviour, such as drug use, (Lewis, 1980: 176). For example, the 1950s and 60s saw a link between Rock and Roll and alcohol and

the 1960s and 70s with protest rock, marijuana and LSD. This continued with the 1980s and 1990s with genres such as Indie and Brit-pop and drugs such as ecstasy and MDMA.

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