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Drugs and Popular Culture in the Age of New Media

Paul Manning

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This book examines the history of popular drug cultures and mediated drug education, and the ways in which new media—including social networking and video file-sharing sites—transform the symbolic framework in which drugs and drug culture are represented. Tracing the emergence of formal drug regulation in both the US and the United Kingdom from the late nineteenth century, it argues that mass communication technologies were intimately connected to these "control regimes" from the very beginning. Manning includes original archive research revealing official fears about the use of such mass communication technologies in Britain. The second half of the book assesses on-line popular drug culture, considering the impact, the problematic attempts by drug agencies in the US and the United Kingdom to harness new media, and the implications of the emergence of many thousands of unofficial drug-related sites.

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1 Introduction
Cultures of Intoxication

This book is about the relationship between drugs and popular culture, but some wider themes provide the backdrop for the discussion. These themes include the arrival of 'new media'; the continuing importance of 'old' media; the ways in which individuals navigate their way through the challenges that are presented to them by late modern capitalism; the ways in which individuals relate to each other within popular cultures; the parts that media play in the changing patterns of regulation and social control over intoxication and what happens when older hierarchies that used to organize 'experts' and 'expert knowledge' are destabilized by the accelerating and multiplying flows of information that have been produced by 'new media'. It is a book that draws on several disciplines including sociology, cultural criminology, cultural studies and media studies, but what it seeks to do is to situate the study of the cultural practices of intoxication against the wider backdrop of profound change in the organization and workings of the media, from the 'high modern' age of mass communication in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the arrival of the Internet and social media in the twenty-first century. The first half of the book concerns the part that 'old media' and mass mediated drugs education played in the regulation of popular drug cultures with a focus primarily upon Britain and the US whilst the second half considers how these changed with the emergence of 'new media', with a focus that extends a little beyond Britain and the US. This is the context in which governments, drugs agencies and 'health managers' now have to contemplate the value of mediated drugs education.

In his account of how 'drugs acquired their modern meaning' in the Britain of the Edwardian era (1992: 1), Kohn argues that discussions of drugs always served as conduit for the expression of the deeper social anxieties of Middle England. Half-jokingly he predicts that in an age in which Middle England had come to terms with sex before marriage, multiculturalism and women going out to work, drugs would lose their power to shock (1992: 183). Leaving aside the open question as to whether Middle England really has reconciled itself to these social changes, the argument here is that while intoxicative substances can never be divested of the social meanings and cultural association within which they are embedded, they might become

more 'normal'. Indeed, Musto (1999) argues that drugs have historically always had the power to signify particular cultural meanings, especially around identity, precisely because of the perceived need to control and 'discipline' communities known to be using them. The intimate relationship between substances, practices of intoxication, meaning and culture lies at the core of an important debate about contemporary trends in licit and illicit drug use and a brief rehearsal of the arguments involved will provide a helpful prologue to the subsequent argument in this book.

THE NORMALISATION DEBATE

In 1959 it was possible for one social researcher to conclude that most working class adolescents in Britain avoided drugs and were barely acquainted even with the nomenclature of drug use.[1] There may be grounds for treating this conclusion with a degree of skepticism because, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, mediated popular culture has always circulated ideas and symbolic representations of drugs to wider audiences, during the 1950s and every other decade. However, in Britain it is also clear that the popular use of drugs accelerated hugely through the first wave of widespread drug consumption in the 1960s, the heroin 'epidemic' of the 1980s, and the 'decade of dance' in the 1990s (Measham et al., 2001). By the end of the 1990s it was possible for the researchers associated with one of the first longitudinal self-report studies of drug consumption amongst the young, the North-West Longitudinal Study (NWLS), to propose the 'normalisation thesis' which rested not only upon conclusions drawn from quantitative measures of drug exposure and use among young people in the North West of England but, importantly for this book, also argued that the 'normalisation' of drug use involved a 'cultural accommodation' in which the meaning of drug use moved from something associated with deviant subcultures on the margins of society to something that was familiar to a 'normal' majority in their routine everyday lives (Parker et al., 1998: 152). The authors here are not referring to opiates or 'hard' drugs but to 'recreational' drugs. The 'normalisation thesis' has provoked considerable debate and a particular critique offered by Shiner and Newburn (1997).

In the original 'normalisation thesis', Howard Parker, Judith Aldridge and Fiona Measham suggest that there are a set of specific observable dimensions through which 'normalisation' can be assessed. However, they are careful to emphasize that in their view 'normalisation' does not depend upon absolute measures of drug use, exposure or attitudinal change, but rather it is a relational concept that describes the extent to which drug use is embedded within popular everyday culture. This is an important point because the original Shiner and Newburn critique rests partly upon challenging the interpretation of the quantitative data produced by the first five years of the NWLS. The NWLS includes measures of both behavior and

attitude and the *first dimension* refers to the availability of drugs. The data suggested that as young people grew older they became more exposed to drug availability: nearly 60 percent of fourteen year olds reported experience of 'offer situations' but by the time they were nineteen this figure rose to 91 percent (Parker et al., 1998: 83). The *second dimension* aimed to provide a measure of the extent to which young people might move from 'offer situations' to '*trying a drug*'. At fourteen, 36.3 percent of these respondents reported 'trying' a drug, but by nineteen this figure had increased to 64.3 percent, with cannabis the most frequently cited choice (Parker et al.,1998: 83–84). The *third dimension* of normalisation according to Parker and colleagues was expressed through measures of regular use. Regularity of use is often captured in self-report surveys through questions on 'in the last year' and 'in the last month' usage. In the NWLS, at fourteen 20.4 percent of respondents reported use in the 'last month' and 30.9 percent in the 'last year', but at nineteen these figures had risen to 35.2 and 52.9 percent respectively (Parker et al., 1998: 85).

These are quantitative measures that the authors are quick to acknowledge have certain limitations. In particular, because of the erratic and episodic nature of adolescent behavior in so many aspects of their lives, including drug use, the 'last month' measure is often regarded as problematic by researchers. However, Parker and colleagues tried to supplement these measures with research techniques intended to capture more subtle and nuanced aspects of the 'pathways' traveled by these young people across the years from fourteen to eighteen. They distinguished 'current users', from 'ex-triers', those in 'transition' and 'abstainers' and spent time trying to capture attitudinal evidence through more qualitative research techniques. They found that even 'abstainers' were often quite 'drugwise', demonstrating an awareness of drug issues, and that most former users, prospective users, and even abstainers could recount 'drug stories' involving siblings, friends or acquaintances (Parker et al., 1998: 155). This is their *fourth dimension* of normalisation. A *fifth dimension* concerned the trajectory of these young people; their future intentions. In the past it had often been assumed that young people would simply grow out of drug use as they moved from adolescence to young adulthood. The first NWLS appeared to suggest that something very different was actually happening and that rather than abandoning regular drug use to take on the responsibilities of adult life, a significant number of the subjects in the NWLS intended to combine the two. The analysis of the 'pathways' suggested an increased velocity as young people neared their twenties, with 33 percent of former 'triers' now in transition toward 'current use' and 37 percent of those formerly in 'transition' now identified as 'current users'.

This evidence suggested that 'recreational' drug use might be becoming a feature of routine everyday life for teenagers and young adults. This is the proposition at the heart of the 'normalisation thesis'; that 'recreational' drug use should no longer be seen as something confined to and

occurring within a deviant subculture located at the margins, but rather a familiar aspect of leisure time for young adults. Most striking for the authors was that social class and gender appeared not to influence drug use: the process of 'normalisation' seemed to be underlined by the extent to which young people from all sections of society and diverse social backgrounds appeared to be familiar with drug use. Cannabis was by far the most common drug, though amphetamines and LSD were tried at least once by over a quarter of the respondents, with lower figures for other drugs (Parker et al., 1998: 84).

In a later review of literature, the NWLS team argued that at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, evidence suggested that while 10 to 15 percent of late adolescents were regular 'recreational' drug users this figure actually increased to 20 to 25 percent among young adults (Parker et al., 2002). The team also conducted a follow-up to the original NWLS in which 465 of the original 700 respondents were contacted again to provide a picture of what was happening as they moved into their early twenties. The follow-up found that availability was increasing, as measured by 'offer' situations; that lifetime 'trying' rates had increased from 36.3 percent of the sample at age fourteen to 75.8 percent at twenty two; that almost half the sample reported using cannabis in the last year, 16.2 percent reported using cocaine in the last year, 14.5 percent using ecstasy and 11 percent reported using amphetamines (2002: 954–955). Cannabis remained the 'key drug', however, with 25.8 percent of these twenty-two years olds reporting use in the last month.

In 2002, then, the NWLS team concluded that '"sensible" recreational drug use was continuing to be gradually further accommodated into the lifestyles of ordinary young Britons' (Parker et al., 2002: 959). At the same time, a process of the criminalization of outdoor events, followed by the incorporation and commodification of raves in the early nineties, had led to the emergence of a burgeoning dance and club culture (Ward, 2010). The 'twenty-somethings' of the NWLS study were among the first beneficiaries of this significant expansion in the nighttime economy which the UK New Labour government hoped would drive urban regeneration in city centers. The NWLS team had already begun to focus upon this development and found that dance culture was characterized by an even higher pattern of poly-drug use in comparison with the respondents of the NWLS, with alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy featuring significantly in these new drug repertoires (Measham et al., 2001).

The 'normalisation thesis', then, suggested that in the first decade of the new century, 'recreational' drug use was becoming a familiar cultural practice in the mainstream of everyday life for teenagers and young adults. While only a sizeable minority regularly used drugs such as cannabis, most had 'lifetime' experience of one kind or another, and most knew friends or colleagues who were more regular users. In addition, the distinction between licit and illicit drugs was becoming blurred as the poly-drug styles

of dance culture were sustained by clubs, where it was possible to easily secure both alcohol and 'recreational' drugs. But this picture was challenged by some other researchers, including Shiner and Newburn (1997) who argued that the normalisation thesis exaggerated the extent of drug use among young people, over-simplified the choices made by young people through the methodology employed and failed to fully explore the meanings that young people attached to drug use. Part of the critique rested upon questioning the interpretation of the quantitative data in the NWLS. Shiner and Newburn argued that while the evidence of a historic increase in drug use was not in dispute, even in the case of cannabis only a minority were at any particular moment regular or 'last month' users (1997: 515). Shiner and Newburn questioned whether the geographical area of the NWLS, which included parts of Manchester, was representative of the country as a whole, given that Manchester was the center of the early 1990s rave club scene. Other national surveys, they suggested, did not confirm the NWLS picture of such extensive drug use. Using their own data, generated through a much smaller scale qualitative study that evaluated peer-led drugs education, they tried to establish a distinction between 'normalcy' and 'frequency' (1997: 519). In other words, while young people might report quite frequently finding themselves in 'offer' situations, that did not necessarily mean that they approved of drug use or regarded it as 'normal'. In conducting qualitative interviews with fifty-two young people they found a complexity in the accounts provided, particularly among those who had used drugs. The justification employed by some such as 'everyone does it' or the need to 'keep in with friends' pointed, according to Shiner and Newburn, to 'classic neutralisation' techniques whereby the deviant's defense of their action implied a sense of guilt and actually confirmed their underlying commitment to mainstream values (1997: 524). In other words, even self-confessed drug users were conflicted in their attitudes and were actually uneasy about their drug use.

Other researchers also found the evidence more equivocal in other parts of the country. Wibberley and Price, for example, found that some, limited experience of using a drug, most frequently cannabis, was 'not abnormal' but that more regular use of drugs was 'still much rarer than the use of alcohol' and yet close to half the sample said that they would not be worried if a close friend of theirs was using cannabis (2000: 160). Denham Wright and Pearl (2000) in a longitudinal survey of school students in the West Midlands found a very rapid increase in the numbers who 'knew someone who took drugs', from 15 percent in 1969 to 65 percent in 1994, but then the trend reversed, dropping to 58 percent in 1999. On the other hand, by the end of the 1990s, Shapiro claimed that rave events were widely regarded as 'a legitimate and lucrative arm of the leisure industry', which effectively 'normalised' the use of ecstasy within the infrastructure of the nighttime economy, as 'drug use increasingly becomes a fashion accessory . . . ' (1999: 32–33).

The NWLS team offered a defense of their work, which provides a helpful context for this book (Parker et. al. 2002). For them, normalisation has to be understood as 'a multidimensional tool, a barometer of changes in social behaviour and cultural perspectives . . . ' (2002: 943). In other words, the value of the concept did not depend upon a quantitative demonstration of aggregates involved in drug use. Rather, the concept referred to dynamic processes of change in social behavior and culture. Cigarette smoking, they pointed out, could be said to have been normalised in earlier decades and yet actual cigarette smokers were only for a very brief period in history a majority of the population. The evidence that significant minorities were involved in drug use, and the point that a much larger number would have 'lifetime' knowledge of 'drug stories' and 'offer situations' was central to their case.

But the NWLS team offered an additional argument that can be regarded as the *sixth dimension* of the normalisation thesis. They pointed to evidence of 'cultural accommodation' to drug use in both the original *Illegal Leisure* (Parker et al., 1998: 156) and in their more recent defence (Parker et. al., 2002). This is not a quantitative measure but an observation and assessment of features of popular culture. They suggested that 'there are multiple indicative signs of recreational drug use being accepted as a "liveable with" reality by the wider society' (2002: 949). The evidence they find for this is located within media and popular culture; they cite television drama, stand up comedy and films as key indicators, alongside the cultural patterns manifest in the nighttime economy and British youth culture. In other words, the mediation of popular drug culture is at the heart of their argument. So the extent to which we should regard 'recreational' drug use as 'normalised' depends partly upon what we decide 'normal' means in quantitative terms but also how much significance we attribute to the drug discourses and patterns of representation we find circulating through popular culture and in the ways that people engage with such cultural currents.

THE NORMALISATION THESIS A DECADE FURTHER ON

There is emerging evidence to suggest that the accelerated increase in recreational drug use that characterized the 1990s has slowed and is now perhaps going into reverse, at least within the United Kingdom. The picture produced by any particular piece of research depends partly upon the questions asked and the methodology employed. For this reason it is very unlikely that a single definitive measure of drug use can ever be provided, but it is possible to assemble some kind of assessment by placing together in combination the variety of 'micro' case studies of particular localities, broader surveys, and trends captured by official data gathering exercises, such as the British Crime Survey (and now the England and Wales Crime Survey) and its equivalents.

In the early 2000s, Allen found that more than half the young people surveyed in the setting of a youth club in London reported using drugs (2003) but by the middle of the 2000s it was becoming clear that licit and illicit drug repertoires were not static and might be subject to significant shifts in and out of particular substances. There was evidence of some migration from illicit drugs toward alcohol at least on the club scene (Measham and Brain, 2005). However, toward the end of the first decade of the new century the data produced by the British Crime Survey/Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) suggested that the upward rise in reported drug use reached a peak in England and Wales in the middle of the first decade (around 2003–2004) but slightly declined subsequently. According to the most recent CSEW for 2011–2012, 36.5 percent of adults, or approximately 12 million people, reported using drugs at some point in their 'lifetime', while 8.9 percent, or nearly 3 million, reported use in the 'last year' (Blunt, 2012). However, for the purposes of assessing the 'normalisation debate' the most useful comparisons are those to be made between the mid-90s at the height of the 'decade of dance' and the present day. The data for sixteen to twenty-four year olds, the age cohort that could be described as the vanguard of dance culture, is telling. In 1996 the percentage reporting use of any drug in the last year was 29.7 percent and this has gradually declined to 19.3 percent, though the last half of the decade represented something of a plateau at around 21 to 22 percent before most recently dropping below 20 percent (Blunt, 2012: 13). Among sixteen to twenty-four year olds, the percentage reporting 'last year' usage of class A drugs in 1996 was 9.2 percent and this fell to 6.3 in the 2011–2012 survey. A large proportion of the decline has been caused by a movement away from cannabis (last year use 26 percent in 1996, down to 15.7 percent in 2011–2012), while last year reported ecstasy use among sixteen to twenty-four year olds was also down from 6.6 percent in 1996 to 3.3 percent in 2011–2012 (Blunt, 2012: 12). However, the point that drug repertoires are subject to change in taste, and availability, is underlined by the increased use of cocaine (powder) where reported last year use among sixteen to twenty-four year olds has increased from 1.3 percent in 1996 to 4.2 percent in 2011–2012; by the rise of mephedrone to be used more frequently than ecstasy (3.3 percent last year usage in 2011–2012); and by the peak in the use of ketamine in 2010–2011 at 2.1 percent before dropping to 1.8 percent in 2011–2012. While only a small minority use opiates this has barely changed over the decade and a half from 0.4 percent of sixteen to twenty-four year olds reporting use in 1996 and 0.5 percent in 2011–2012 (Blunt, 2012: 12–14).

The CSEW presents a complex picture in England and Wales. What we can say is that the fears of a continuing acceleration in drug use among teenagers and young adults that appeared to be a possibility a decade ago have proved unfounded. There seems to have been a gradual decline in overall drug use among these age groups in recent years; though it is also likely that the CSEW underestimates drug use among the young because

it is administered to stable households, which may fail to capture transient youthful populations, such as students, and it is precisely these social groups that are likely to have higher than average rates of drug use. It also explicitly excludes prisoners and young offenders. And while overall rates of reporting have gradually declined, patterns for particular drugs, including Class A cocaine, have increased. Other large scale surveys such as the National Foundation for Educational Research and Department for Children, Schools and Families *TellUs* survey of school students in England also point to a modest decline in reported drug use among the Year Eight and Year Ten pupils (eleven to twelve year olds and fourteen to fifteen year olds). Eleven percent reported taking drugs in 2008 and this decreased to nine percent in 2009 (Chamberlain et al., 2010: 33). Similarly, the *Smoking Drinking and Drugs* (SDD) survey of eleven- to fifteen-year-old-school students, whose commissioners included the Department of Health and the Home Office, also pointed to an overall decline in reported last year use from 20 percent in 2001 to 12 percent in 2011 (Gill et al., 2012: 21). Seizures of drugs in England and Wales nearly doubled between 2004 and 2008–2009 when they reached a peak at 241,473, but there has been a subsequent decline to 212,784 in 2010–2011 (Coleman, 2011: 11). The problem with using either seizures or arrests as a measure of normalisation is, of course, that changes suggested by these data sets are likely to reflect shifts in police and customs strategy as much as real movements in drug consumption. but again there is qualified evidence of a slight decline in drug supply to England and Wales. Overall, then, this evidence points to deceleration and slight decline in drug use in England and Wales in very recent years set against the backdrop of historically high rates of use.

GLOBAL NORMALISATION? EUROPE, THE US AND AUSTRALIA

In a survey of youth attitudes across European Union member states conducted in 2011 for the European Commission by Gallup, 57 percent of those interviewed said that it was very or fairly easy to obtain cannabis, and 22 percent indicated that they believed it very or fairly easy to obtain ecstasy or cocaine (The Gallup Organization, 2011: 9). This represented a slight decline on 2008. Just over one quarter of young people reported using cannabis at some point in their lives, though only 6 percent in the last month and 12 percent in the last year (The Gallup Organisation, 2011: 16). The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) annual report suggested that among European countries where cannabis use had been increasing sharply during the late 1990s and early 2000s (particularly Denmark, Germany and Ireland), these trends had leveled off and there was evidence of a gentle decline in reported lifetime use of cannabis among school students in several countries, including Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark, though there were also continuing increases in

others, such as Portugal, Sweden and Finland (EMCDDA, 2012: 39–45). Similar patterns can be identified for ecstasy and amphetamine use in Europe with those countries reporting the fastest rates of increase in the late 1990s and early 2000s mostly now reporting either declines or a leveling off in reported last year usage (EMCDDA, 2012: 52–54).

On the other hand, the annual report in 2012 pointed to evidence that cannabis cultivation was increasing across Europe, seizures were increasing, that 12.4 percent of young adult Europeans reported using cannabis in the last year and that around one quarter of all fifteen to sixty-four year olds reported using cannabis at some point (EMCDDA, 2012: 39–41). The shifts in drug repertoire identified in Britain can be traced across Europe, too, with a movement from amphetamines to methamphetamine use, as indicated by patterns of seizures (EMCDDA, 2012: 53), and cocaine emerging as the most popular illicit stimulant in recent years. 15.5 million Europeans or 4.6 percent of the fifteen- to sixty-four-year-old population reported using cocaine at least once in their lifetime, with many European countries reporting sharp increases in last year use among young adults through the 2000s up to 2009 but with evidence of a stabilization or decline in 2010–2011 (EMCDDA, 2012: 64).

How do these patterns compare to the US and other parts of the Western world such as Australia? Broadly, European rates of reported drug use are slightly lower than those in the US and Australia. In the US, rates of last month reporting of any drug use among eighteen to twenty-five year olds increased slightly between 2002 and 2011, from 20.2 percent to 21.4 percent, driven particularly by an increase in cannabis use, according to the annual data published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2012). Among school children in the US, the *Monitoring the Future* longitudinal survey of 50,000 eighth, tenth and twelfth grade students pointed to an increase in the reported last year usage from 20.2 percent in 1991 to 27.1 percent in 2012. While the reported usage for most drugs had slightly declined over this period, marijuana use had increased from 15 to 24.7 percent, and use of inhalants, from 23 to 29 percent (Johnson et al., 2012: 52). Of course, the more relaxed regulatory approach to marijuana use that operates in certain US states needs to be taken into account. Indeed, the establishment of *MedGrow Cannabis College* in Detroit as a legitimate specialist horticultural training provider for cannabis cultivation might be interpreted by the NWLS team as further evidence of 'normalisation'.[2]

In Australia, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey is a self-report survey conducted every three years and the most recently available (2010) indicated that 12.0 percent of all Australians over the age of fourteen reported using some kind of illicit drug in the previous year, while the figure for cannabis was 10.3 percent and ecstasy 3.0 percent, though 35.4 percent reported using cannabis in their lifetime and 39.8 percent reported using some kind of illicit drug in their lifetime (Hood et al., 2012: 17). This

shows a slight increase from 2001 when the comparable figure was 33 percent (Holt, 2005: 2). However, as in the United Kingdom regional analyses and 'micro' studies of particular populations suggest that there are strong 'pockets' of normalisation either based around region (Western Australia has significantly higher official rates of reported drug use than the country as a whole according to Hood et al., 2012), or situation—Wilson and colleagues have found strong evidence of 'normalisation' among music festival goers in Australia (2010).

SUMMARY

What broad conclusions can be drawn from this blizzard of statistics and survey data? Firstly, that if we take 'normalisation' to refer to a quantitative measure of actual use at any particular moment in time (a 'freeze-frame' cross-section of society), then in the United Kingdom, the EU, the United States and Australia drug use cannot be said to have been 'normalised' across the whole population. But, if by normalisation we mean that a large proportion of adults will have had some experience of illicit drug use at some point in their lives, it makes more sense to refer to 'normalisation'. Indeed, the US has experienced an increase in 'last month' drug use among fifty to fifty-nine year olds since 2002 from 2.7 percent to 6.3 percent (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012). The evidence also shows that significant minorities will report more frequent cannabis use, particularly among teenagers and young adults, and that while the significant increases in recreational drug use that characterized many western societies in the 1990s and early 2000s have leveled off, these patterns of use are of significantly higher magnitudes than in earlier decades. And, of course, normalisation does not only refer to behavior but attitudes. Here the situation is complicated because human beings as social actors are complicated. We can entertain both ambivalence and contradiction in our thinking without much difficulty. For example, Hathaway and colleagues in a study of social attitudes in Toronto, found that while knowledge and awareness of cannabis was widespread and in a sense 'normalised', cannabis users still reported internalizing a sense of stigma (Hathaway et al., 2011). This lends some weight to one of Shiner and Newburn's original claims that the drug user's they interviewed employed 'techniques of neutralization' when asked to explain their drug consumption, thus exhibiting a commitment to mainstream values. But on the dance and club scene, in contrast, there is evidence that the effect of sub-cultural 'insulation', generated through the closer social ties and normative structures, has promoted stronger patterns of 'normalisation' that extend beyond cannabis use to the poly drug repertoires reported in numerous studies of dance cultures (Hammersley et al, 2002; Measham et. al, 2001.; Ward, 2010, etc.).

Perhaps, the last word on the 'normalisation debate' should be left to the team who started it. The NWLS team has changed some of its own personnel but managed to retain contact with a number of the original respondents through their twenties to the age of twenty-seven years. The sample size has, not surprisingly, diminished significantly (from 529 to 217) and the project can no longer be described as 'longitudinal' because some respondents have 'jumped' in and out over the years, thus interrupting the continuity of the data (Aldridge et al., 2011: 104). A further difficulty is that the data depends upon recall over the interval of years between surveys. However, the 'snap shot' measures after five, nine and fourteen years of the survey provide some useful insights because unlike most of the self-report studies discussed above, this data set allows us to find out what the generation who lived through the height of the 90s 'decade of dance' are now doing as the they contemplate nearing age thirty. Their rates of 'lifetime' use have declined very slightly for most drugs but increased for cocaine, reflecting the national pattern noted above. There were significant declines, however, in the measures of more frequent use. At twenty-two years old, more than half had reported use of a drug in the 'past year' but at twenty-seven years old, the proportion had declined to around one-third (34.1 percent) and reported 'last month' use had declined from 31.2 percent to 19.5 percent (Aldridge et al., 2011: 108–110). Use of some kinds of drugs had dropped extremely sharply over the journey from early adolescence to late twenties. At eighteen years, for example, 24 percent of the sample reported using amphetamines in the 'last year' but this had fallen to just 2.8 percent at twenty-seven years old and the comparable figures for ecstasy had fallen from 17.4 percent to 9.4 percent. At eighteen nearly half the sample reported using cannabis in the 'last year' but this dropped to 28 percent at twenty-seven years old. Only cocaine powder increased from 4 percent at eighteen to 15.5 percent at twenty-seven, possibly reflecting both the greater spending power of young adults and the lowering street price of the drug.

This data might be interpreted as further evidence of a trend toward 'counter normalisation' and Aldridge and her colleagues acknowledge that this may, indeed, be a possibility. The evidence of recent declines in use over the 2000s and evidence of the youthful migration from illicit drugs to alcohol in the early 2000s lend some weight to this interpretation (Aldridge, 2008: 198). But there is another possibility. A lot depends upon whether the national survey data such as the CSEW is capturing a 'cohort effect' or a 'period effect' (Aldridge, 2008: 193). In other words, is the decline in reported use captured by surveys, such as the CSEW, a reflection of a period in which cultural norms have hardened against drug use? Or is the recorded decline the product of the particular age cohort who grew up during the '90s 'decade of dance' (and exceptionally high drug use), but are now aging and 'naturally' slowing down as they embrace the responsibilities of older adult life? Aldridge and her colleagues are inclined toward

this second interpretation. They argue that what may now be happening is that the survey data is capturing a return to levels of drug use comparable to those just before the impact of the '90s dance generation and they point out that even these levels were historically high. In this sense there is evidence of remarkable continuity as well as change. It remains the case that approximately one in five adolescents will report using drugs in the previous year and approximately one in four older adolescents will do the same, figures comparable to the early 1990s (Aldridge, 2008: 199). As we have seen, these are broadly the patterns that are reproduced in much of Europe, the US and Australia, too.

But Aldridge and colleagues offer a more nuanced reconsideration of the 'normalisation thesis' which develops beyond the contested interpretation of survey data. It remains the case, they point out, that patterns of drug use straddle the contours of social class, gender and ethnicity, though they do concede to critics that they rather de-emphasized the impact of social structures in their early work and that the way in which variables such as gender and class pattern drug use should be acknowledged (Aldridge et al., 2011: 223–224). Secondly, they read into recent UK government policy a stealthily hidden acceptance of 'normalisation' as a 'fait accompli' (Aldridge, 2008: 198) and thirdly they return to their original respondents to consider what picture of everyday life emerges. Most are now in employment; they have families and mortgages, they mostly lead very conventional lives (Aldridge et al., 2011: 225). They are even less 'sub-cultural' than they were as adolescents. And yet, around one-third continue to use drugs. Aldridge and colleagues interpret these patterns as comparable to patterns of 'normal' adult alcohol consumption, not excessive but fitted into opportunistic leisure moments and around the demands of work and family. As they argue, 'it is this very ordinariness of opportunistic usage that strikes us as evidence of adult normalization . . . ' (2011: 227).

A further criticism of their early work that they now acknowledge is that in underestimating the importance of social structures, such as class or gender, they also overemphasized the rationality of their subjects, who they tended to see as individual agents, calculating the balance of risk to pleasure in each possible drug experience. This chimed with particular models of social action developed in social theory during the 1990s but as Aldridge and colleagues now concede rather plays down the importance of peer culture, excitement, excess, the body, and the sheer experience of intoxication (2011: 223). This is a theme to which this book explicitly returns in the final chapter (Chapter 7). But for now it is sufficient to note that this discussion of the 'normalisation debate' has allowed the connection between the epidemiological and the cultural to be secured. It is clear that we cannot make sense of the survey data or the quantitative patterns revealing the distribution of drug use and exposure to drug 'risks' without also considering the cultural practices associated with the consumption of drugs and the extent to which they are embedded in the culture of everyday life. The

'normalisation debate' was always as much about this broader pattern of 'cultural accommodation' as it was about the interpretation of particular quantitative data sets. It is the contention of the book that this culture is also inevitably a mediated culture and that in order to make sense of popular drug cultures in the new millennium we cannot ignore the role of both 'old' and 'new' media, their part in the circulation of ideas about drugs, and their part in the regulation of intoxicative practices.

ARGUMENT, TERMINOLOGY AND CHAPTER THEMES

The argument presented in subsequent chapters assumes that intoxication is a cultural experience as much or perhaps more than it is either pharmacological or physiological in nature, following those who have developed the familiar case for a cultural or sociological interpretation of drug use (Becker, 1963; Lindesmith, 1938). It argues that the practices of intoxication familiar to particular societies are always embedded within popular culture; that people will always develop ways of talking about intoxication, representing it, singing about it, writing about it and associating it with other dimensions of social identity. These patterns of discussion, narration and representation are complex, but will also be likely to include particular social currents or discourses, some of which will be 'celebratory' but others 'disciplinary'. The pleasures and enjoyments of intoxication are frequently social, shared and 'celebrated' but at the same time communities frequently find informal, as well as formal ways to manage, contain and 'discipline' the practices of intoxication. However, it is also suggested that these popular drug cultures, containing both the 'celebratory' and the 'disciplinary', are also always mediated.

In other words, popular drug cultures emerge in local contexts but at the same time are circulated by media. In turn, patterns of media representation and circulated drug discourses make up some of the symbolic resources through which popular drug cultures are reproduced at the local level. This has been an enduring feature of the modern world, from the newspapers and pamphlets circulating in the mid-nineteenth century to the addiction narratives of early cinema at the beginning of the twentieth century, and to the more complex networks of communication sustained by new media in the twenty-first century. But there are undoubtedly some important changes and growing complexities associated with the emergence of 'new media'. The volume, acceleration and complexity of the information flows circulating drug discourses now are greatly enhanced. The later chapters of the book focus upon the implications of these developments for popular drug cultures and for mediated drugs education.

Some clarification of terms and objectives is necessary at this point. The book is not intended to be about drugs policy, regulation or debates for or against de-criminalization, although these issues will be inevitably touched

upon in passing. Neither is the book about the technicalities of formal drugs education. But it is partly about the *mass mediation* of certain kinds of 'drugs education' because these forms of mass-mediated drugs education both drew upon and contributed significantly to the reproduction of popular drugs cultures, particularly in the US during the high modern age of the mid-twentieth century. Equally, the *absence* of any mass-mediated drugs education in the United Kingdom during this period is also worthy of discussion (in Chapter 4). Throughout, the term 'drug discourse' is used sociologically rather than linguistically to refer to any pattern of language which communicates particular ideas, assumptions or ways of thinking about drugs and intoxicative practices. Invariably, these are also inextricably bound up with specific power relations. The term 'symbolic framework' is used refer to particular kinds of drug discourse that organize the representation of drugs and intoxicative practices in mainstream media by associating particular substance images with particular locations and particular social identities (Manning, 2006). Bancroft, drawing on Foucault, usefully introduces the concept of 'control regime' to refer to 'the intricate lattice of formal and informal controls and sanctions structuring the use' of particular substances (2009: 113). The concept is borrowed for this book to assist in the exploration of the ways in which formal systems of regulation intersect with the informal, normative dimensions of social control embedded within popular drug cultures—the 'disciplinary' currents referred to above. Needless to say, any flaws in the application of the concept are entirely the responsibility of this author. Finally, in the discussion of on-line comment strings developed in Chapters six and seven, the term 'drug conversations' is used to distinguish actual on-line utterances from the 'drug discourses' that may underpin their organization. This is comparable to the distinction between *parole* (speech) and *lange* (language). As we shall see those posting comments to YouTube and comparable websites, may draw on different drug discourses to articulate a particular on-line response or engage in conversation with others about drugs. Some critical debates are side-stepped with the justification that the book is quite long enough as it is. Thus, the term 'recreational drug use' is used as short hand for the use of drugs to enhance leisure experiences despite the criticisms that this implies such drug styles are problem-free (Aldridge et al., 2011: 6). The book certainly does not assume this. Similarly, given that the Internet is thirty years old, there are those who question whether new media can really be described as 'new'. Rather than engaging in this debate, the book places both the terms 'old' and 'new' media in quotation marks to acknowledge this point but retains their use, again as a useful short-hand distinction.

Finally, a summary of the chapters is provided. In the second chapter, following this introduction, the work of the 'old media' in constructing and circulating drug discourses is examined. The first half of this chapter looks at mainstream news coverage and the way in which symbolic frameworks organize the representation of drugs and intoxicative practices. These

symbolic frameworks offer distinctions between particular substances, locating them in different places (public or private spaces), and associating them with particular kinds of people rather than others. Thus, for example, in the United Kingdom's popular newspapers, ecstasy has been frequently constructed as representing a powerful threat to the 'respectable' middle-class home but volatile substance abuse, the use of inhalants and so on, is frequently associated with poverty, marginalized social groups and located in deprived public spaces, such as alleyways, parks and estates, although the available epidemiological evidence would challenge both those representations. Similarly, in the US news media powerfully associated the use of crack cocaine with racialized and demonized images of black, single-parent mothers during the early 1990s, and yet treated white middle-class consumption of cocaine powder very differently. The second half of this chapter explores the continuing reproduction of these symbolic frameworks through cinema and television drama.

Chapter 3 explores the origins of these symbolic frameworks and of wider drug discourses in the emerging popular drug cultures of the nineteenth century and the official regulatory responses, which included the development of mass-mediated drugs education to manage and discipline intoxication. This is the age in which the new technologies of mass communication, radio and cinema emerged, and in the US, these technologies were employed from an early point in the twentieth century, in tandem with the strengthening of formal regulatory controls, to disseminate specific drug discourses promoting abstinence. The chapter traces the emergence of these prohibitionist drugs discourses through the addiction narratives of early popular cinema, the era of 'reefer madness' propaganda in the 1930s, to the post-war 'mental hygiene' short films that were distributed via schools, colleges and youth groups. But in contrast to the US experience, in Britain the 'high modern age' of mass communication was characterized by a remarkable absence of mediated drugs education. Chapter 4 explores the development of popular drug cultures in Britain, the emergence of the 'British system' of drug regulation and the reasons for the complete absence of any government strategy for mediated drugs education until the last two decades of the century. Original archive material is deployed here to explain this. It traces the story up to the point in the 1980s when, very much for political reasons, the British government embraced mass-mediated drugs education. The first half of the book, thus, describes the circulation of mediated popular drug cultures and drugs education during the era in which the 'old' technologies of mass communication loomed large in people's lives. As Chapters 3 and 4 suggest, this was an era in which agents of social control, governments and policy elites assumed that they could retain control over the integrity of mediated drugs education messages, over the targeting of 'populations' and over the moment of reception. In practice, each of those assumptions was probably always rather shaky as the evidence of a striking lack of success in the use of mediated drugs education campaigns over the years confirms.

The second half of the book explores the arrival of 'new media' and the implications for the circulation of popular drug cultures and strategies of mediated drugs education. Chapter 5 begins by reviewing debates about what the arrival of 'new media' actually implies for society, social actors and culture before examining the first faltering steps taken by the British government to utilize 'new media' in drugs education. The last section of this chapter describes the proliferation of information flows concerning drugs and intoxicative practices stimulated by the creation of thousands of independent drug-related websites. These not only supply alternative sources of information, including advice on harm reduction and sites contesting formal regimes of regulation, but also sustain actual 'white', 'grey' and 'black' markets in drugs. In effect, the old established channels of official mediated drugs education are bypassed and circumscribed by the complex networks of vertical and horizontal communication that 'new media' sustain. The chapter suggests that official agencies and governments remain very wary of relinquishing 'control', although this is actually futile and obstructs the possible development of more effective ways to engage with 'new media'. Chapter 6 presents original primary research on the many thousands of 'drug videos' which are now circulating on YouTube. By undertaking a content analysis of a sample of 750 videos the chapter explores the ways in which ordinary people can now very easily represent their experiences of intoxication and circulate them to others in a way that continues to sustain and reproduce popular drug cultures. However, just as older popular drug cultures displayed a complexity of drug discourses, so also does the kind of virtual drugs culture sustained on YouTube. There are plenty of 'celebratory' videos as might be expected in which friends or sometimes strangers try to capture the fun or excitement of drug intoxication and share it with others. But YouTube also circulates clearly 'disciplinary' drug discourses, intended by those uploading, to serve as 'cautionary tales' warning others about the danger and risks of using particular kinds of drugs. Certain substances seem to lend themselves to particular kinds of discourse. There are also videos that are 'reflective' rather than either 'disciplinary' or 'celebratory' and videos that dwell upon the technologies of consumption or represent themselves as offering a service to consumers in the evaluation of different substances or different on-line stores. There are also, of course, videos produced by official drugs education agencies, many of which are remediated and sometimes edited and subverted by others.

The last chapter (Chapter 7) considers further evidence of how YouTube videos are actually received by the YouTube community. It analyses the rich variety of drug discourses that emerge in the conversations found within the YouTube comment strings posted to drug videos. But, it does this in the context of a consideration of the experience of intoxication and popular drug cultures in the post-millennial age of late capitalism. A number of researchers and commentators were greatly alarmed by the prospect of young people accessing so much non-official information about

drugs and practices of intoxication. However, the evidence in Chapter 7 suggests that such fears have so far not proved well-founded. While there is plenty of quite wild speculation and indeed abusive communication to be found among the on-line discussions of drugs, there is also a lot of critical and deliberative evaluation of information. 'New media' help to circulate a great deal of 'vernacular' harm reduction material, which was also true of earlier popular drug cultures. However, there is now a difference in the ease of access and speed of circulation. Individuals as social actors in the age of late modern capitalism are continually assessing the risks associated with everyday life, including drug-related risks, and the information flows sustained by the Internet contribute to these calculations. In this sense the arrival of 'new media' destabilizes established bodies of expertise and knowledge hierarchies, including those of doctors and drugs workers, but individuals are not necessarily isolated and alone, floundering in a sea of on-line information. On-line, just as in 'real' everyday life, they are often members of peer groups, families and wider communities; their intoxicative practices embedded within popular drug cultures. These are potential sources of both restraint and support. A 'sensible' approach to mediated drugs education for the contemporary world would acknowledge this and aim to combine the supply of appropriate harm reduction material with the aim of fostering critical media skills to assist individuals in the sifting of the 'on-line sensible' from the 'on-line misleading or dangerous'.

2 Representing Drugs and Intoxication in Popular Media

INTRODUCTION

When we think about drugs we may draw upon our own experience 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 ideas about drugs that circulate through a wider popular culture. This book is concerned with the circulation of these drug discourses in the context of the convergence of 'old' and 'new' media. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 the book explores the arrival of digital media technologies, Web 2.0 and the implications of these developments for popular drug cultures and for formal drugs education. This chapter provides something of a benchmark against which to assess these developments by reviewing the ways drugs discourses have circulated through popular 'old' media with a focus particularly upon news, film and television.

In the previous chapter, the evidence and arguments were rehearsed in the debate over 'normalisation'. As discussed, the terms of the debate shifted from a concern specifically with the use of illicit drugs among young people and their exposure to 'offer situations', towards a more generalized claim that a 'cultural accommodation' toward illicit drug use could be detected through popular culture. If there is such an acceptance of illicit drug use, some evidence that this amounts to a process of 'normalization' ought to be found in the popular media that operate as the central conduits of images, ideas and normative frameworks about drugs. Popular music and popular fiction have always offered some possibilities for 'subterranean' values and resistive voices to emerge into the mainstream, including those celebrating intoxication and illicit drug use. But the main 'old' channels of news, documentary, film and television drama were subject, during the high modern age of twentieth century 'mass communication', to more insistent regimes of regulation in relation to drug discourses. Evidence of change in these quarters would be significant.

The suggestion that mainstream news and entertainment media play an important part in the identification, definition and construction of social problems is hardly new. They have long played an important part in the

differentiation of particular patterns of intoxication and drug use between the 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate', 'benign' or 'wicked', 'safe' or fraught with 'risk'. While the 'framing' of substances such as opiates and cocaine in mainstream media has consistently emphasized danger, illegality and amorality, the frames applied to alcohol consumption, for example, have been less stable and more ambivalent, frequently celebrating the effects of intoxication rather than the risks. There is some evidence suggesting that this is now changing, at least in the case of Britain and the US.

What is agreed by most social researchers, if not journalists, is that the process through which particular social practices come to be defined as 'social problems' bears little relationship to any potential measures of 'real harm' but is intimately bound up with collective sentiments, or what society chooses to define as a problem (Blumer, 1971), and more specifically, the competitive and commercial pressures driving news production in tandem with the complex, institutionalized policy processes of 'problem formulation and dissemination' (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988: 55). In particular circumstances, these processes can rapidly escalate as 'news production seems to change to a higher gear', generating 'surprisingly high news waves on one specific story', as rival news media feed off each other's coverage to produce self-reinforcing news waves of 'media hype' (Vasterman, 2005: 508–509). These circumstances make the rational discussion of harm or risk highly problematic; forty years ago Jock Young was prompted to formulate 'Young's Law of Information on Drugs . . . Namely that the greater the public health risk (measured in number of mortalities) of a psychotropic substance the less the amount of information critical of its effects' is provided in news reporting (Young, 1973: 314). Much in the media landscape has changed since the 1970s; there are few senior editors on national news organizations now who were not at some point in their youth exposed to some of the 'offer situations' measured in drug use surveys. With the arrival of digital technologies, on-line news and social media, news platforms are now more fragmented, permitting news consumers to assemble their own 'Daily Me' from a variety of on-line sources rather than just depend upon one paper such as the United Kingdom's Daily Mail. This chapter will begin by exploring the production of drug news in the light of the 'normalisation debate' and the possibility that some patterns of news representation have to acknowledge, at least partly, the contrary drug discourses within popular culture that may celebrate but also discipline drug use and intoxication.

MAKING DRUG NEWS

Until recently the 'old' news media, particularly television and radio were the most important sources of information about drugs for the British public. According to a Health Education Authority survey, 71 percent cited 'television programmes', 61 percent 'newspapers', and 44 percent 'radio',

though interestingly 9 percent indicated that they regarded 'drug dealers' as their most important source of information (Tasker et al, 1999). However, researchers over many decades have produced a vast literature charting the ways in which news media are firstly, highly selective in their choice of news topics, and secondly, 'frame' selected stories in very particular ways. Crime stories have long been a staple of news making. This is because certain kinds of crime stories have immediate appeal in terms of some enduring news value, or criteria for selection. As Chibnall noted nearly forty years ago, potential stories that have 'immediacy', 'drama' and can be written around 'personalities' are more likely to be selected by news organizations. Common crime stories often meet these requirements. Stories which avoid complexity will appeal more strongly (Chibnall,1977: 23). While much crime is actually highly complex in origins and execution, a great deal can be reduced in the writing to a simple narrative. In re-working Chibnall's analysis for a contemporary context, Jewkes (2004: 39) points out that some news values are applied in rather different ways by different news organizations. There may be differences in approach between broadcast media, press and on-line news; within the traditional newspaper markets, up-market 'qualities', mid-market and 'popular papers' may emphasize different aspects of the same stories.

But both Jewkes and Chibnall also point to rather more complicated and political processes underpinning the selection of crime stories. Chibnall argues that crime reports are often constructed in terms of previously established 'structures of meaning', which encourage news audiences to make sense of new events in terms of 'old realities'; each new development in a complicated world is interpreted in terms of older, widely shared frameworks of understanding. Thus, journalists are able to work rapidly to 'produce *public* accounts acceptable to . . . various audiences (editors, readers, sources)' (1977: 36). Stories that can be understood in terms of existing conventions and shared assumptions, particularly those of the powerful, are more likely to be selected. Jewkes suggests that a list of 'news values for a new millennium' will also include an appetite for stories about 'children', celebrity', 'spectacle' and 'risk'; stories that are closer to home or satisfy the need for 'cultural proximity', and in the case of some news outlets, stories that are compatible with a 'conservative ideology', or in other words, stories that appear to lend weight to conservative rather than liberal views of criminal justice (2004: 40). Crime news is never simply an account of the reality of crime but a product of highly complex choices based upon professional, political and moral values of journalists.

Why begin a discussion of the representation of drugs in news by considering research on crime reporting? The answer is that news stories about drugs are frequently also crime stories; it is actually quite rare for mainstream news media to discuss drug use except in the context of crime and criminal justice (Mastroianni and Noto, 2008: 295; Blood et al., 2003: 85). Thus, the selection of drug news stories is usually through a set of

conventional assumptions which associate drugs and drugs policy with crime, enforcement and criminal justice. Just as Chibnall and Jewkes suggest, the selection of drug crime news often reflects a set of conservative assumptions about the world of drugs and drug users.

However, news texts cannot be simply reduced to the values and assumptions of those selecting the stories. Another very well established conclusion based upon decades of media research is that news making has to be understood as a form of production which involves a series of complex processes, including the gathering of 'raw material' or information, mainly from reliable suppliers or regular news sources, and then the fashioning of that 'raw material' into a commodity to be distributed, according to an organizational rhythm that dictates the pace of work (Golding and Elliott, 1978; Schlesinger, 1978; Fishman, 1980; MacGregor, 1997). This has very important implications for understanding how news stories, including crime and drug stories, come to be fashioned in the way that they are. According to these studies of newsroom organization and practices, the imperatives and pressures of organizational deadlines have a powerful impact upon the ways in which reporters and newsroom staff work and particularly how they source their stories. Daily newspapers and broadcasting organizations have always imposed daily deadlines upon their staff. With the arrival of rolling news services and on-line news, reporters face even more frequent and pressurizing deadlines. There is considerable evidence to suggest that in recent years these pressures have intensified as news organizations have cut staffing numbers and employed digital technologies to achieve greater efficiencies (Davies, 2008; Fenton, 2010; Mutter, 2012). The imperative to work to the rhythm of the news organization and meet its deadlines have the following consequences for the way in which crime and drug news is produced.

Stories are more likely to be selected if they can be constructed as sudden events or 'new news'. News organizations are much less likely to have an appetite for stories that slowly unfold over time or for stories that are difficult to report without reference to their underlying and possibly complex origins. Rather, stories that can be written as sudden, immediate or as revealing change on a daily basis are much more likely to be selected because they are compatible with the rhythm of the daily news organization. The lack of time available to hard-pressed journalists scrambling to meet deadlines reinforces this pattern: they usually do not have the time to undertake investigative journalism beyond contacting a limited number of routine sources for information about drug stories (Mastroianni and Noto, 2008: 296). This leads to an episodic picture of the world, understood as a series of discrete 'events' rather than a chain of underlying and protracted problems. In terms of drug news, much of the news media describes the world as a series of discrete criminal events—drug arrests, drug related deaths and drug incidents—rather than more sustained reporting of the possible underlying processes, which drugs workers or criminologists point to as possible explanations, or contexts, for these apparently random and unrelated 'events'.

Thus, for example solvent abuse and petrol sniffing among indigenous Australians is barely visible in the domestic news media but occasionally media interest erupts with sensational stories usually triggered by solvent-related deaths or other particular incidents (D'Abbs and Brady, 2004). As we might expect in the light of Chibnall and Jewkes analysis of news values, the Australian press are most likely to select petrol sniffing stories involving children in dramatic circumstances with headlines such as, 'Deadly Visions of the Desert Children' or 'Sniffing at Death' (2004: 254). According to D'Abbs and Brady this kind of coverage reinforced already established 'conventions' regarding the social pathology of Indigenous Australian communities, but failed to explore the enduring structures of racialized social exclusion, inequality and marginalization, which frequently underpin patterns of volatile substance abuse (VSA). VSA is, after all, a strategy of intoxication for those who lack the economic or social capital to secure opportunities for intoxication in other ways (Manning, 2006). While the relationship between economic and social marginalization and patterns of drug use is highly complex, stronger for certain substances and weaker for some 'soft' or 'recreational drugs', such underlying and enduring features of the social structure do not in themselves constitute news (Hartman and Golub, 1999: 426; Blood et al., 2003). Only when these underlying social processes and relationships produce dramatic 'events' in the form of deaths, arrests or social conflict will they usually attract news media interest. But a similar point could also be made in relation to the global supply chains that sustain the delivery of cocaine, ecstasy and other 'recreational' drugs to Britain, Europe and the US. British news media may highlight particular drug-related crimes or cocaine-related incidents as isolated 'events', but the super-violent and exploitative practices of the criminal narco-elites in Mexico and other parts of South America (Grillo, 2012) that are the first link in the drug distribution chains are enduring, underlying aspects of these stories that are rarely acknowledged in routine drug-crime reporting. Apart from being complex processes requiring extended explanation, they fail the requirement of 'proximity'; drug related deaths are not usually headline news a long way from Britain unless the body count is exceptionally high or there are other particularly unusual aspects to the story.

The process of selection then leads to an over-simplification of the complexities inherent in drug use and drug enforcement. There are often important discrepancies between the picture of drug use presented in news reporting and the available evidence from epidemiological research or official data generated by the state. A striking example of this was the emergence of the 'crack cocaine epidemic' in the US during the mid-1980s. Television and newspaper reporting presented the arrival of crack cocaine on the streets of lower–income urban districts as a highly alarming surge in drug consumption. NBC television reported that between four and five million Americans regularly used cocaine, based on a misreading of official National Institute of Drug Abuse data; a source at the Drugs Enforcement

Administration was quoted in one ABC television news bulletin as saying, 'I've been a federal agent for twenty one years but I've never seen such a drug phenomenon. Three months ago you could only buy crack in one or two areas. Ninety days later you could buy it in almost any area of the city.' In fact, during this period the official self-report survey data pointed to a slight but steady decline in cocaine use among eighteen to twenty-five year olds (Humphries, 1999: 43). Hartman and Golub (1999) found very similar discrepancies between reporting and epidemiological evidence in their study of the US press coverage of the 1980s 'crack epidemic'. In the UK both Palmer (2000) and Saunders (1998) have pointed to the discrepancy between the intense hyperbolic and exaggerated news coverage of ecstasy as a threat following the death of Leah Betts in 1995 and the evidence of actual use and risk during the 1990s. Journalists will often cheerfully admit that given the commercial pressures that bear down upon them, survey data pointing to an increase in drug use is much more likely to be regarded as 'news' than evidence of a decline or continuing plateau (Mastroianni and Noto, 2008: 296).

It is less fashionable now to undertake research which attempts to compare news reporting to alternative bench marks of 'reality', such as data produced by official institutions or agencies of the state. Following Foucault, researchers such as Reeves and Campbell reject 'objectivist' approaches, which assume there is an essential truth against which distorted news coverage of drugs can be compared (1994: 22). From this perspective, news coverage and official statistics are both merely examples of discourse embedded in particular power relations and particular ways of categorizing or understanding the world. Neither represents an objective truth, but rather drug discourses have to be understood as 'micro truths that never add up to an absolute, eternal Truth, but do speak to the shifting and uncertain commonsense knowledge that is exploited in licensing the deployment of . . . power' (1994: 32). There are undoubtedly great dangers in placing too firm a reliance upon official data produced by government bureaucracies or enforcement processes and, for that matter, self-report surveys; all are artifacts of social processes and all bear the imprint of particular power relations. At the same time, even those most insistent upon the need to embrace a social constructionist position often implicitly lean upon external data sources and statistics of some kinds when, for example, developing arguments about the construction of drug risks, as we shall see in a section below (Jenkins, 1999: 4).

THE ROLE OF SOURCES IN DRUG NEWS

Journalists depend upon news sources in the routine production of news; sources supply the raw material that is fashioned into news copy. However, the use of sources is rarely a random or haphazard process. Rather,

journalists and particularly specialist correspondents, largely operate through enduring, structured relationships with regular or routine sources of news (Sigal, 1973; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). In the past, these relationships have been regulated by sets of reciprocal obligations acknowledged by both journalists and their sources; sources would recognize an obligation to supply at least some information to assist a journalist in furnishing a story, and journalists would recognize that if the copy they produced was too negative or 'unbalanced' on too many occasions, their access to a particular source might be jeopardized. Indeed, these reciprocal exchange relationships were always structured through power, namely the ability to exercise degrees of control over flows of information. Frequently, less powerful and politically marginalized news sources were less able to exercise control over the flow of information arriving in the public domain or into the newsroom, while more powerful organizations enjoyed a much more effective capacity to either open up or shut down information flows (Manning, 2001). Corporations require employees to sign gagging clauses; government agencies can control the distribution of accreditation so that some journalists get access to 'on the record' or 'off record' briefings but others do not.

There is some evidence to suggest that these structured relationships are changing in character. On the one hand, the emergence of digital technologies, e-mail, the Internet and Web and particularly Twitter, have generated multiple new channels through which information can flow, making it harder in some circumstances for the powerful to exercise control. But on the other hand, journalists often labor under tougher work regimes and are more firmly stuck within their newsrooms, dependent upon news agency copy and 'information subsidies' (Gandy, 1982) provided by external organizations, while routine news sources are becoming more bureaucratized, more prone to hiring external public relations agencies and less willing to invest time in cultivating the informal exchange relationships that used to sustain information flows (Mawby, 2010).

This has a direct bearing upon the production of drug news. Though 'serious' papers may allocate drug stories to social policy or home correspondents, they are often handled by crime reporters and crime reporters have historically depended upon a limited number of mainly official sources for news—the police, the courts, and government agencies. Drug news bears the imprint of these relationships, frequently reflecting the frames of the powerful although not always. For example, in their study of Australian drug news in major newspapers between 2000 and 2002, Blood and colleagues found that the selection of particular kinds of substance to report frequently reflected the priorities of official agencies (heroin and cannabis in their study) but beyond this the sources most frequently quoted in the framing of stories were the police, the courts, customs officials and politicians. Families, victims, advocate groups and drug researchers did feature in some of the reporting but much less frequently (2003: 89–91). One

consequence of this was that the emphasis in many reports centered upon enforcement and policing, rather than health promotion or harm minimization. Where community perspectives were discussed they were framed in terms of the theme of contagion and the need to introduce strategies to both spatially and socially separate local communities from the threat posed by drugs and drug users. Mastroianni (2008: 297) found that journalists working in other specialist areas, such as science, reported that they were quite likely to consult researchers or other non-government experts, but crime specialists, once again, depended heavily upon the police and enforcement agencies for their stories. In their study of the construction of the crack cocaine epidemic in the US print media, Hartman and Golub found that 'academics' featured as sources in news reports but much less frequently than law enforcement sources, politicians, vox pop 'street interviews' or 'hospitals'. Thus, although a number of stories quoting 'scientific studies about crack and its impact' appeared over time, the sources most frequently quoted in reports were those who stood 'to gain the most from a drug panic' (1999: 429). As a result of this configuration of sources in the reporting a series of crack myths were generated through the coverage and left largely unchallenged without reference to the scientific research. For example, papers frequently reproduced 'myths' regarding the potency of the crack cocaine, its visibility on the street and impact on families, and its association with violence. What reports rarely did was to draw upon available research to distinguish between the impact of the drug, and the impact of poverty and structured inequalities upon the lives of those using crack cocaine. What was really making their lives chaotic—the drug or the social conditions of their lives?

Occasionally, non-official sources and the less powerful can seize the drugs news agenda. For example, parents who have lost children through drug-related deaths sometimes respond to the tragedies they suffer by mounting their own public relations campaigns. This occurred in the case of Leah Betts whose parents established the Leah Betts Trust as a campaigning organization in the UK, aiming to alert young people to the risks of ecstasy and other drugs. They agreed to release the photograph of their daughter unconscious in a hospital bed to initiate the campaign and this became an iconic image, employed in much of the immediate reporting of the case and in subsequent follow-up features (Palmer, 2000). Parents who have lost children through volatile substance abuse and 'legal highs' have developed very similar approaches.[1] However, the media strategies employed by these organizations to secure coverage and set the agenda for discussions have usually been successful to the extent that they sustain and complement the dominant frames and drug discourses circulated by mainstream news media rather than in challenging them. In other words, while they sometimes raise issues around harm minimization, in the main they are concerned to promote abstinence messages about the dangers and risks associated with particular patterns of substance misuse.

DRUGS, MORAL PANICS, POWER AND POLICY

The news media coverage of the 'crack epidemic' in the US during the 1980s and the ecstasy related death of Leah Betts in the UK in 1995 bore the hallmarks of the classic moral panic model, as first set out by Stan Cohen in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972). Cohen argued that through an interaction between news media, agencies of social control, and political elites, initial incidents of relatively minor deviancy might come to be exaggerated in news media coverage, triggering spirals of 'deviancy amplification' in which further 'deviancy' was stimulated through media coverage and further exaggerated media coverage was generated by increased deviancy. Thus, moral panics occurred when a 'condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests . . . its nature presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media' (1972: 9). Central to the dynamic of the moral panic, according to Cohen, was the process of 'symbolisation' through which 'folk devils' were constructed; particular social groups or identities came to be represented through their association with symbols of violence or pathology and served as 'visible reminders of what we should not be' (1972: 10). In the past drug users and drug dealers have served very well as 'folk devils' in news media reporting of drug issues (Young, 1973). On the face of things, the death of Leah Betts after taking ecstasy in Essex in 1995 sparked the kind of intense media coverage that conformed to the moral-panic framework with Betts represented as a victim, while those responsible for selling the ecstasy tablets and even the drug itself, constructed as 'folk devils'. In the US media coverage of crack cocaine users during the 1980s constructed the 'crack head' as a folk devil through association with a racialized and gendered discourse of poverty and moral failure. According to Humphries (1999) the black crack mother located in the inner city, who put her craving for drugs before the welfare of her children, became an enduring stereotype in media coverage, generating a series of media panics that ignored the evidence undercutting the stereotype, but instead offered the crack mother folk devil as a warning of the drug contagion that threatened to spill out of the inner cities to threaten the respectable, white suburbs. Reeves and Campbell (1994: 19) describe this as the 'cocaine narrative' through which US media told a story of the arrival of crack cocaine as a form of pollution disturbing the social equilibrium of 'normal' society but 'with the restoration of normalcy in drug news . . . an event that is only anticipated and never realized' (1994: 19).

Significantly, both studies place the US crack cocaine moral panic in the context of the rise of the New Right politics of the Reagan administration with an agenda to cut welfare spending and shrink the state. Reeves and Campbell (1994: 8) draw upon the re-working of the moral panic model developed by Hall and colleagues in *Policing the Crisis* (1978). Just as *Policing the Crisis* suggested that the British news media moral panic about rising

levels of street crime and the arrival of the 'mugger' served to legitimize a shift toward a more coercive and authoritarian state in the UK, so Reeves and Campbell argue that the interests of the American New Right, 'the drug control establishment' and news journalists coincided to generate a moral panic about crack cocaine in the 1980s, which in turn provided a rationale for the ever-increasing use of imprisonment and tough enforcement strategies in the 'War on Drugs'. The 'cocaine narrative' was crucial in:

> converting the war on drugs into a political spectacle that depicted social problems grounded on economic transformation as individual moral or behavioural problems that could be remedied by simple family values, modifying bad habits, policing mean streets, and incarcerating the fiendish 'enemies within'. (Reeves and Campbell, 1994: 3)

The value of the moral panic framework of analysis is that it underlines the undoubted political dimension of the representation of drug news; news media coverage reproduces and circulates particular drug discourses which are *political* in their nature and consequences. But from the vantage point of a decade into the new century, it is possible to pose some critical questions concerning the application of moral panic theory to drug news. Several key features have changed. There appear to have been important shifts in attitude and cultural practice among sections of the public and the media landscape has also changed very significantly, growing more complex and diverse.

The classic moral panic model makes two assumptions about a shared normative order. Firstly, it assumes that news coverage will be organized around an implicit assumption of normative consensus. Folk devils are located in news reports as operating outside a consensual order of shared moral values; their behavior is represented as shocking precisely because they 'deviate' from the normative order that implicitly organizes the reporting of crime, deviancy and drug taking (Young, 1973). Secondly, it is assumed that the power of this kind of reporting lies in an approximate correspondence between the consensual model implicitly organizing reporting and actual public attitudes (Cohen and Young, 1973a). Of course, there are always more cracks and normative fissures than an ideal consensual model acknowledges and forty years on the normative order in contemporary late modern societies looks even more fractured or differentiated, particularly in the context of public attitudes to illicit drugs. This, of course, relates to the 'normalisation thesis' (Parker et al., 1998). But if there is greater diversity in attitude and practice to drug use, is it possible for moral panics to gain traction or for contemporary potential folk devils to retain their power to shock? Several critics doubt this. McRobbie and Thornton (1995) argue that the process of producing news now draws upon a more diverse range of potential sources, including campaigning groups and commercial interests that often undercut or modify traditional moral codes; potential folk devils are now frequently drawn into the commercial mainstream, their presence

now much less shocking to the public and their capacity to help sell everything from butter to fashion items greatly enhanced. The media landscape is more complex, traditional 'old news media' have lost their monopoly control of news information flows and 'alternative' or 'sub-cultural' media now have a more secure presence in this diverse media landscape. Thornton suggests that alternative media now provide resources that allow young people to actively deconstruct and resist the construction of moral panic news frames (Thornton, 1995: 129). As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, this volume, 'new media' are important sources of alternative information about drug use and, indeed, drug availability. All this makes it less likely that moral panics inspired by fears about particular drugs or groups of drug users will really 'take off' with the kind of trajectory and velocity that characterized media coverage of drugs, young people and deviancy in the immediate post-war period.

But these points suggest that a reconsideration of the relationship between moral panic and the policy process is also required. Critcher, for example, argues that classic moral panics never necessarily reflected public opinion, but rather 'constructed it' through news media coverage, and the significance of moral panics was as much about their impact upon elite policy-making as shaping public attitudes (2003: 138). In the case of the news coverage of ecstasy during the 1990s in the UK, he argues that there was a superficial resemblance to the traditional moral panic model but a more careful inspection of the news media approaches reveals in a significant number of instances a more nuanced and pragmatic approach. There was 'a massive mobilization of the state against raves' and tabloid reporting incorporated a moral panic frame in lending support to this government crackdown (2003: 58). However the reporting of ecstasy itself was more complex, with sections of the news media acknowledging the widespread recreational use of the drug and, indeed, the absence of consensual agreement about it. According to Critcher, an additional source of complexity had its origins in the ambivalent stance of the government itself. The original moral panic framework assumed a cohesive relationship between the government, agencies of social control and news media. In 1995 the government announced a new drugs strategy, Tackling Drugs Together, which attempted to uneasily reconcile greater emphasis upon criminalization and enforcement with a limited pragmatic acceptance of harm reduction policies as a necessary response to widespread recreational drug use (2003: 63). The political and moral ambivalence in the government generated mixed messages in its dealings with news media, thus further dampening the possibility of a full-blown ecstasy moral panic, despite the surface noise of moral panic rhetoric.

Policy tensions and ambivalences continue to be reflected in the stance of successive UK governments. The decision by the New Labour home secretary, David Blunkett, to nod toward the decriminalization of cannabis by downgrading its classification from Class B to Class C in 2004, exposed

a remarkable lack of agreement among newspaper columnists and editorial writers. After all, the *News of the World* had revealed Prince Harry, a possible future British sovereign, to have used cannabis two years previously, whilst even senior members of the Conservative Party had begun to publicly recollect episodes of youthful soft drug indiscretion (Cross, 2007: 134–140). As Cross demonstrates, newspaper commentary regarding the classification of cannabis was notably divided with one 'serious' newspaper editor, Rosie Boycott of *The Independent on Sunday*, launching a campaign for full legalization, which in turn was roundly attacked by some of the tabloid papers, such as *The Sun*, while papers on the political right, such as *the Daily Mail*, redeployed many of the frames from the era of 'Reefer Madness' (see Chapter 3, this volume) to alert readers to the dangers of cannabis as a 'gateway' drug leading to addiction, madness and disaster. Two years later and in response to further evidence pointing to the risk of 'cannabis psychosis', Rosie Boycott now ex-editor of *The Independent on Sunday*, actually renounced her former liberal position in the *Daily Mail* (Cross, 2007: 146). The turbulence generated in this confused and ambivalent news media debate feeds the ambivalence at the heart of UK government policy making. Successive New Labour home secretaries refused the opportunity to rethink a more coherent and rational approach to the risks associated with drug use. Charles Clark was tempted to appease the conservative popular papers by reclassifying cannabis as a Class B drug but chose instead to commission an advertising campaign intended to underline the threat of criminal prosecution for possession. However, in 2009 a new Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, returned cannabis to Class B and promptly sacked the chairman of the government's own Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, Professor David Nutt, for questioning the rationale of drug classification and comparing the risks associated with taking ecstasy to those associated with horse riding.[2] Ambivalence and contradiction characterize both UK government policy and mainstream media discussion of recreational drug use. In these circumstances, it is unlikely that drug news reporting will generate classic moral panics or the demonization of drug use per se. However, if we explore the texture of news reporting in a little more detail it is possible to identify both the patterns of ambivalence and contradiction noted above, as well as some evidence of more stable drug discourses in circulation.

ANALYZING THE SYMBOLIC FRAMEWORKS OF DRUG NEWS

While discourses relating to practices of intoxication are as old as those practices, a language that positioned 'drugs' as a problematic category requiring formal regulation only emerged in the US, Britain and other parts of Western Europe at the turn of the twentieth century (Bancroft, 2009). Since then regulators and those subject to regulation have understood 'drugs', the

associated practices of intoxication and their effects, through particular drug discourses that circulate in and are reproduced by popular culture and formal regulatory or governmental systems. However, some drug discourses seem to have a greater stability or permanence in their assembling of particular symbolic components, and in the dimensions through which these symbols are related to each other. While all drug discourses are subject to change or mutation by the very fact that they are embedded within changing social contexts, at the same time the relative stability of the particular symbolic relationships in certain popular drug discourses suggests that they could be termed 'symbolic frameworks' to underline the nature of their assembly. The actual fabric of news reporting about drugs seems to reveal this. The dimensions of these symbolic frameworks include:

- Locations
- Behaviors and identities
- Substance images and technologies of consumption
- Causes and consequences

In much news reporting of illicit drug use these four dimensions can be found organizing the symbolic representation of drugs as substances and the cultural practices associated with them (Manning, 2007). Firstly, news reports will usually place stories of illicit drug use in particular *locations*, or spaces where different kinds of drug use are said to take place. Thus, for example, the US television news coverage of the 1980s 'crack cocaine epidemic', moved through a gear change in reporting as journalists latched on to the concept of the 'crack house' as a particular location or site of deviance and urban social pathology (Reeves and Campbell, 1994). According to Humphries, US media reporting of maternal cocaine use grew more alarmist as the *location* of reports moved from the middle class home identified in the early phases of reporting to 'America's chaotic inner cities' (1999: 15). Similarly, Blood and colleagues noted 'a drug locality frame' underpinning much reporting of drug use through particular inner city or suburban zones, which would be identified as theaters for the 'drugs war' where concentrations of drug deaths would be reported to be (2003: 93).

Secondly, these symbolic frameworks will represent or signify particular *behaviors and identities* that are associated, according to news reports, with particular kinds of drug use or substance misuse. In other words, these frameworks will associate particular drugs or substances with particular cultural practices and, in turn, to particular social groups or kinds of people. At the beginning of the 1980s during the early phase in the US media reporting of cocaine, it was associated with 'yuppies', celebrities and sports stars and interpreted as an unfortunate by-product of career success. But in subsequent phases, the use of crack cocaine was associated with the urban black poor and pathological behaviors including irresponsible and amoral mothering (Reeves and Campbell, 1994; Hartman

and Golub, 1999; Humphries, 1999). In Australia the reporting of volatile solvent abuse, 'chroming' or petrol sniffing was associated with indigenous Australian communities and read as a symptom of their social pathology (Bessant, 2003).

Thirdly, these symbolic frameworks contain a dimension which organizes *substance images*; they signify the actual substances used in particular ways with the selection of certain signifiers rather than others, together with the technologies of consumption, the equipment or drug paraphernalia employed to consume. News reports often make explicit reference to the relative power, strength or toxicity of particular substances. Otherwise, there may be revealed implicit assumptions about the quality or nature of the substance and the technologies employed. According to Hartman and Golub (1999: 425) there was no scientific evidence to suggest that 'crack cocaine' was in reality any more potent or toxic than purer forms of cocaine but the term 'crack' used in news reporting generated a series of 'pharmacological myths' about the particular power, toxicity and dangers of this kind of substance.

The anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) suggested that the concept of pollution really referred to 'matter' used 'out of place' or context. Taboos regulated where substances could or could not be placed or consumed. Manderson (1995) uses this insight to explain the fascination that much drug representation, including drug news, has with the material nature of the drugs as substances and the drug paraphernalia employed to consume them. There are rules about where and when substances such as drugs can be consumed legitimately, as in medical use or for the purposes of a scientific experiment. Illicit drug use breaks these rules. Similarly, there are rules governing, for example, the use of syringes, glue or 'bath salts' and substances sold as 'legal highs'. Their inappropriate use can be understood as transgressive acts that powerfully resonate in popular culture. Rules regarding appropriate or inappropriate use of particular substances or technologies often also relate to particular social identities. Thus, the consumption of opiates within the Victorian bourgeois home was tolerated providing it was in the form of laudanum. But the use of opium as a substance to be smoked using a pipe in an opium den was understood entirely differently (Musto, 1999; Knipe, 1995). The snorting of cocaine as a powder by middle-class, white, drug users is 'constructed' in news very differently to the smoking of crack rocks by black, urban, working class youths (Anderson, 1995: 365; Sterk-Elifson, 1996).

Seedy images of crack rocks, used syringes or bags smeared with glue may be deployed in reporting to conjure responses of revulsion among readers and viewers but in his study of the US news coverage of 'designer drugs' Jenkins argues that 'clean' substances and technologies associated with 'science' could also,

> terrify precisely because they are manufactured by scientific processes, thus drawing fears concerning the fearsome potential of unchecked

> experiment . . . [They are] uniquely sinister because they are products of human ingenuity. (1999: 6, 9)

Finally, a dimension of the frameworks will include symbols that suggest for readers or audiences particular *causes and consequences* of illicit drug use or substance misuse. In other words, like most news reports there is an implicit narrative constructed through the assembling of symbolic components in the reporting of drugs and substance misuse. As Reeves and Campbell (1994) note, drugs news usually involves a 'narrative'. Both explicitly or implicitly stories usually include explanations for the beginning or the 'cause' of a particular 'drug problem' or 'drug incident' and there is usually also a strong focus upon 'consequences', too. Early stories in the 'cocaine narrative' would begin with the arrival of cocaine as a disruptive 'pollutant' destabilizing the equilibrium of the family home, the city brokers office, or the sports team (1994: 19). Later as reporting focused more upon crack cocaine use within black working class communities, the 'disease' model was implied through reference to an 'epidemic' (1994: 40). However, narratives are not always 'resolved', though sometimes media coverage offers stories of redemption. The early phase of the 'cocaine epidemic' reporting sometimes featured 'recovering' cocaine users who had heroically 'beaten' their psychological addiction, but these happy outcomes were far less likely to be reported with regard to the black 'crack mothers' who featured prominently in the subsequent phase of media coverage (Humphries, 1999: 15).

Having explored each dimension of these symbolic frameworks we can see how the configuration of particular signs along each dimension produces distinct frameworks for 'understanding' particular patterns of drug and substance use at particular times.

SOCIAL PATHOLOGY

Certain kinds of drug are frequently represented in news reporting through a symbolic framework that locates its consumption in terms of 'social pathology'. If there is a drug 'taste hierarchy' these are the substances located at the bottom: opiates, crystal meth, crack cocaine and solvents, among others. For example, in a study comparing UK newspaper coverage of volatile substance abuse (VSA) with ecstasy (Manning, 2006), the *locations* for reports about VSA typically included images of dilapidated environments, such as alleys, parks, rubbish strewn public spaces, garages or cellars. Occasionally, newspapers in the UK might include reports of glue sniffing 'street children' in other parts of the world, located in the sewers of Rio or in the abandoned cellars of Moscow.[3] *Substance images* are usually predictable. VSA is often presented in terms of the 'classic' glue-sniffing image, even though other substances such as gas, petrol, or hairspray are more likely to be used in recent years. Nevertheless, the symbolic visual impact of a face smeared with glue

is hard for picture editors to resist. The *Daily Mirror* story above included pictures of Russian homeless children living in 'a stinking, disease-infested cellar . . . where the stench of glue and excrement was near over-powering', accompanied by pictures of children with dirt smeared across their clothes and glue smeared around their mouths. Within the social pathology framework, substances are usually represented as powerful and toxic if they are not 'grubby' and 'dirty' as in the case of glue. During the 1980s, for example, the power, addictiveness, impurities and toxicity of crack cocaine were understood to make it significantly more dangerous than its pure counterpart ingested by sections of the professional middle class (Humphries, 1999; Reeves and Campbell, 1994). Heroin, too, is understood in news reports as instantly addictive and dangerous (Watts, 2003).

The *behaviors and identities* are congruent with the locations. VSA is frequently presented as a symptom of pathology (Manning, 2006; Bessant, 2003; D'Abbs and Brady, 2003). Within this symbolic framework drug users are presented as chaotic, amoral and criminal or located within a social underclass divorced from mainstream values. British national newspapers, for example, briefly reported the troubles of a young, homeless solvent abuser, allegedly responsible for a series of burglaries in Newcastle, describing him as 'Rat Boy . . . roaming the lift shafts and stair wells . . . he has terrorised for years . . . Glue sniffing, smoking drugs, truancy, stealing from everyone including his own family, are all achievements of this boy who still cannot read.'[4] Australian news reports of 'chroming' (petrol sniffing) framed the behavior in very similar terms, suggesting that the young people involved were 'abandoned children', quite literally the 'other',—an interpretation secured with headlines such as 'The Children of Another World' (Bessant, 2003: 57) or 'A Generation Stolen by the Fumes' (D'Abbs and Brady, 2004: 254). They are framed as the embodiment of social pathology, products of family breakdown, parental neglect or simple amorality. Heroin users have traditionally been represented in very similar terms (Watts, 2003) and, of course, the representation of crack cocaine users discussed above also conforms to this pattern of news representation. Likewise, similar frames are frequently applied to crystal meth users who are also located in the context of social disorganization, chaotic lives and social failure, but also frequently with visual images of 'before' and 'after' becoming crystal meth users. For example, *The Sunday Sport*, an English paper, which does not enjoy a particularly high reputation with regard to the veracity of its reporting, ran a story under the headline, 'Don't Take Crystal Meth—This Woman Does and She's Only 23', next to a photograph of a befuddled, haggard woman, with the appearance of somebody decades older.[5] A small picture insert underlines the 'change' by depicting the woman as a healthy and 'normal' young woman with the annotated comment, 'What a Change: Deborah Aged 18'.

This is an example of a 'crystal meth genre', where fact and fiction fuse together with the assistance of Photoshop. Similar, graphic demonstrations

of the difference between individuals 'before' and 'after' using crystal meth have proliferated across the world thanks to YouTube and social media, which is discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6 of this volume. Surveys of 'risk perceptions' in the US now suggest that the framing of crystal meth in this way powerfully resonates in the thinking of drug users and the public at large (Johnston et al., 2012: 13) In this instance, there is interplay between 'old' news media sites and 'new' media to construct a narrative in which weak willed individuals succumb to the power of crystal meth as a highly addictive substance. Implied here, then, is a narrative that points to the *causes* and the *consequences* of these patterns of drug use. The consequences are manifest in the graphic descriptions of deterioration in health and appearance, as well as the charting of the various expressions of social pathology in family breakdown and chaotic childhoods. But significantly the *causes* are rarely related to a social dimension of analysis. Rather, in tune with the shift away from interventionist modes of government, the abandonment of welfare politics and the embracing of neo-liberal rationalities with regard to crime and social policy (Lee, 2007; Rose, 1996), within the symbolic framework of social pathology, the *causes* of these kinds of drug use are usually located in the moral inadequacies of the individual or the family, not in relationship to structured inequalities, the distribution of material and cultural resources or political marginalization.

THE THREAT TO THE INNOCENT

An alternative symbolic framework can be detected organizing the news reporting of certain other drugs. Here drug users are presented as victims not sociopaths and drugs become potential threats to the innocent and their respectable families. The reporting of the death of Leah Betts who died after taking ecstasy in Basildon, Essex, in 1995 provides the best known example of this symbolic framework, but it is continually reproduced in the reporting of drugs such as ecstasy, ketamine, methedrone, and 'legal highs'. Leah Betts was portrayed as a drug novice, an 'innocent girl' from a happy, prosperous family (Palmer, 2000; Wykes, 2001) in sharp contrast to the circumstances of those VSA and crystal meth users framed by social pathology. More recently, Louise Cattell suffered a ketamine related death in 2010, fifteen years after the death of Leah Betts, but a very similar framework was applied in British national newspaper reporting. Thus, in *The Daily Telegraph* she was described as, 'a clever, articulate, bohemian and gregarious young woman—the daughter of solidly middle-class parents who sent both their children to public school . . . '.[6] Although Louise died in a flat in Hackney, mention of her parents 'elegant home' in Belsize Park 'scattered with photographs of their daughter' underlines the respectability of this victim's background. In this symbolic framework, the *identities and the behaviors* of victims and parents are thoroughly respectable but the nature of the *substance* is powerful in a

way that might threaten *any* such respectable, middle class family. Just as in the case of Leah Betts or Hester Stewart, whose parents established The Angelus Foundation when she died after taking methodrone, the mother of Louise is reported in the Telegraph to be campaigning to raise public awareness of the dangers of ketamine. Hester Stewart was also described as 'a promising medical student', 'an outstanding student whose ambition was to become a surgeon', 'a dream of a daughter', close to her family who died after attending an award ceremony for cheerleaders.[7]

The *cause* implied by this kind of framework is not social pathology or moral weakness in the drug user but the power of the drug and often, also, the moral culpability of 'dealers' or reckless friends who supply the drug to the 'innocent'. Such is the power of these drugs that all it takes is just one tablet to bring disaster, as in *The Sun*'s report about 'pretty Anita' under the headline 'Dead After Taking Just One Tablet of Ecstasy', next to a picture of the girl and grieving parents.[8] The *consequences* are constructed through the damage done to the respectable family as a unit, and the denial of young promise, usually measured by potential within the education system. During a phase of particularly intense news interest in ecstasy, British newspapers reported a story about 'Jade—the Youngest Victim of Ecstasy', a ten-year-old who died after swallowing a pill she found at a friend's house, confirming that even the most innocent could be victimized.[9] According to some reports this was a particularly strong 'Ferrari' form of the drug, exceptionally powerful and potent, although later it emerged that 'Ferrari' simply referred to the logo on each pill.[10] In many of these reports, just as in the reporting of Leah Betts, there is a call to find the drug supplier or 'dealer' as the individualized *cause* of the disaster. In the case of Jade, for example, Jane Moore writing in *The Sun* demanded that action be taken against those 'drug takers who feel no shame' and allow children to be exposed to drug risks.[11]

The 'threat to the innocent' framework seems to be applied in news reporting of 'party drugs' in other parts of the world, too. Homans, for example, finds that the Australian press covered the death of Anna Wood as 'a high school tragedy' in which a promising young girl's future was destroyed by ecstasy. Her photograph on the front page of the papers 'provided a permanent construct of innocence' (2003: 39), while the reports identified the owners of the club where the death occurred as the 'greedy' villains of the story, and one local politician is quoted as saying that the headlines made him realize, 'just how close our homes and communities are to drug related deaths'.

RECREATIONAL DRUG USE AND 'THE CHEMICAL GENERATION'

Nearly five decades on from the 1960s, those senior journalists and editors exercising ultimate control within news organizations today have, themselves,

grown up through a period in which the presence of drugs in schools, colleges and universities has been common. While according to Cohen and Young (1973) drug use was placed firmly outside the moral consensus in the immediate post-war era in most newspaper commentary, now in the twenty-first century it is hardly surprising to find some degree of moral equivocation and ambivalence in news discussions, as noted by Cross (2007) above. This relates to a rather different symbolic framework that now surfaces in some reporting and opinion pieces. The analysis of the two symbolic frameworks discussed so far does not suggest much evidence of 'normalisation' in news reporting. However, the ambivalence that Cross finds in the approach of some newspapers, and perhaps broadcasting organizations, too, opens a space for other symbolic frameworks to emerge. Other researchers have noted that during the last decade, there is at least some recognition that with the rise of dance and club cultures, drug use is now part of routine recreational patterns for quite large numbers of younger age groups (Critcher, 2003: 52; Hammersley et al., 2002: 112–114). The recent intense news media interest in the drug and alcohol habits of celebrities may demonize particular individuals but nevertheless further consolidates the impression that recreational drug use is widespread (Shaw et al., 2010).

The *Observer* first began to refer to the 'chemical generation' in a magazine feature that used a report about 'dance drugs' and fatalities to open up a much wider ranging discussion about weekend routines for young people in which 'thousands' of 'reasonable and respectable young adults' use drugs for the weekend they design for themselves—a reference to the notion of 'designer drugs' or drugs customized to the leisure requirements of young consumers.[12] Here is some evidence of the process of 'normalisation', as 'cultural accommodation' referred to by Parker and colleagues (1998). The *substance images* that underpin the *Observer* report, for example, suggest a technological efficiency, a techno-strategy for 'designing' weekend experiences, rather than the toxic and dangerous substances conjured by the previous frameworks. Indeed, *The Daily Telegraph* published a feature written by a qualified doctor who happened upon a legal high sold as plant food whilst shopping in Oxford Street. In 'I took Methedrone and Liked It', Doctor Max Pemberton provided *Telegraph* readers with a blow by blow account of his first experience with the drug before concluding that whilst he had a headache by the end of the night and would not necessarily endorse its use, nevertheless the drug had given him 'a lovely feeling and I can completely understand why people would use it'.[13] But the tendencies toward a normalisation of recreational drug use in some news reporting can only apply to certain substances. The substance images associated with VSA, opiates and crystal meth, among others, are not accommodated within a symbolic framework that describes 'recreational drugs' for 'normal' young people.

Clearly, the *identities and behaviors* in this symbolic framework are very different too. Here are 'normal' young people, neither victims nor sociopaths, but rather successful professionals with a need to manage their leisure time

effectively. While there is recognition of some potential risks, there is no suggestion of either a threat to the family and home, or reference to deprived, marginalized public spaces. Rather, *locations* involve the clubs and dance venues of the night time economy. Within this framework, the annual news reports based upon the publication of self-report surveys and the British Crime Survey function to 'normalise' drug use rather than provide further ammunition for moral outrage. *The Guardian* in 2005, for example, summarized the publication of the British Crime Survey with the headline 'Survey shows 11m people have taken drugs: 4m admit taking class A substances', and placed the report next to a picture of a handful of brightly colored, cheerful looking ecstasy tablets.[14] There is a potential tension between the construction of *identities* in this frame, 'normal' and successful young people, and the *behaviors* which relate to illegal activity, potentially subject to quite severe enforcement. But the approach of some stories, particularly in the 'quality' papers, sometimes reflects a pragmatic assessment of the risks of being prosecuted. The *Observer* cheerfully reported that a recent study suggested that methedrone was more popular since it had been criminalized.[15]

CRIMINALS AND DRUG SMUGGLERS

For news organizations located toward the popular end of the market, stories about drugs often have to also be stories about crime and criminals before they become newsworthy. In the comparison of ecstasy reporting and VSA stories (Manning, 2006), while VSA news items associated this pattern of substance misuse with vandalism, burglary and other crimes signifying social pathology, a significant number of ecstasy stories placed the drug in the context of professional, organized crime and drug trafficking. In these there was the suggestion of a globalized *location* for the drug with reports of police or customs officers discovering consignments of ecstasy imported from China, India, Russia, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Ibiza. In these reports, as a *substance* ecstasy is understood as potent and dangerous rather than as a leisure technology. There is a fascination with particular kinds of criminal *identity and behavior*—gangland criminals, drug smugglers, and in one case an 'Ecstasy Gang Supergrass'.[16]

The news value of a story that combines drugs with international, organized crime has a currency for every kind of news organization, not just the popular tabloid papers. Even the high minded *Guardian* placed the conviction of Britain's 'Godfather', as the lead story on its front page in 2007, setting out in detail the violent career of Terry Adams leader of 'the most feared criminal gang in the British underworld' who had been so successful in his career of drug trafficking and extortion that:

> By his mid-30s, Adams was in possession of such a large fortune that he was able to turn his back on frontline criminal activity and retire to

> his luxurious and numerous homes in London and Cyprus. . . . As well as his homes in London, he had a yacht and a flat in Cyprus, used first class air travel and sent his daughter to private school. On her birthday he presented her with a Mercedes sports car.[17]

Reports of this kind usually follow court trials and convictions and provide news organizations with opportunities to draw moral lessons by stressing the length of prison sentences and the other enforcement *consequences* of drug trafficking through fines and confiscations. However, the time devoted to detailing the profits and lavish lifestyles associated with these criminal behaviors sometimes betrays a suppressed recognition of the appeal of the 'drug dealer' fantasy, also reproduced in popular film, in which international drug trafficking can appear to be a rather glamorous short cut to wealth and escape from the dead end job. Thus, for example, the reporting of 'The Milkman—international cocaine smuggler who always delivered', and who rose from the borstal to run 'Britain's most successful drugs trafficking operation'.[18] The news reports stressed his upward mobility from an impoverished upbringing in Dublin and Kilburn, to an affluent lifestyle based around a large house in Surrey, a villa in Cadiz, a flat in 'Chelsea's luxurious King's Quay development', a box at Ascot racecourse and the opportunities he enjoyed to mix with celebrities, travel the world and even dope race horses along with cocaine customers. Even reports about the activities of the narco gangs in Mexico, Columbia and other parts of South America, where the violence employed to secure and maintain drug franchises is extreme (Grillo, 2012), can sometimes tend toward the glamorization of these drug behaviors, rather under-playing their reliance upon systematic violence and exploitation of communities, already suffering high degrees of economic and political marginalization. Thus, for example, when Sandra Avila Beltran, supposedly head of public relations for one of Mexico's leading drug barons, was charged with a series of drug trafficking offences, the UK news media still described her as 'The Queen of the Pacific . . . glamorous alleged smuggler [who] enthrals the media'.[19]

The violence that professional criminals and drug traffickers employ to manage their business is also almost always stressed, of course, but the detailing of the profits accrued through these occupations can sometimes introduce a note of moral equivocation—something that can also be detected in the narrative and symbolic construction of cinema and television drama, as discussed later in this chapter.

NEWS DRUGS AND RISK

The symbolic frameworks underpinning drug news offer us a way of understanding by placing particular drugs in particular contexts. They also offer us a calculus of risk through the way in which *substances* are represented

and their *consequences* described. When patterns of drug use are represented as a contagion that threatens a community (Blood et al., 2003) or an 'epidemic' that seeps across a nation (Reeves and Campbell, 1994), we are being invited to embrace a framework of heightened and intensified risk. The role of the news media in the construction of 'risk' has long been a feature of analysis for media researchers (Tulloch and Zinn, 2011; Mairal, 2011; Kitzenger, 1999; Lupton, 1999). The disparity between news media constructions of risk and available epidemiological understanding is particularly pronounced in relation to illicit drug and substance use, as is the calculation of differentiated risk between substances. As we know, for many decades the risks associated with licit drugs such as tobacco or alcohol were only infrequently discussed in news reporting (Young, 1973), though there is a greater recognition now. At the same time, the arrival of each new illicit chemical compound from cannabis 'skunk', ketamine, methedrone, and GBL is greeted in news reporting with discussion of whether or not it poses a new or greater risk to health, intelligence, educational achievement or youth morality.[20] As Critcher notes, the risks associated with dance drugs appear to be greater because their use involves a double transgression of both norms relating to the chemically free body and norms relating to the dangers of physical abandonment (2003: 60–62).

The disparity between the mediated construction of risk developed through news reporting and the interpretation of epidemiological and physiological evidence offered by researchers and policy advisors inevitably creates political tensions given that few politicians in office are brave enough to consistently challenge the understandings developed through the popular news media. When the chairman of the United Kingdom government's own Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs called for a reappraisal of drug risks, the creation of a new 'harm index' that would acknowledge alcohol and tobacco as posing greater risks than cannabis, LSD and ecstasy, he lasted only a few more weeks in post before being sacked by the Home Secretary.[21] In these circumstances it is difficult to anticipate a time when the irrationalities inherent in the UK government's current classification of illicit drugs are likely to be addressed. The danger of the mediated political environment created by this kind of coverage is that strategies that might address harm or risk minimization are difficult to articulate or become compromised in implementation (Blood et al., 2003; Watts, 2003; Cross, 2007). Drug clinics or needle exchange schemes are jeopardized; drugs outreach workers lose funding or political support; 'substance myths', misinformation and 'drugs un-education' persists (Tebbutt, 2003; Hartman and Golub, 1999; Saunders, 1998). However, the reproduction of these symbolic frameworks should not be understood as a mechanistic or irreversible cultural process: the reconstruction of alcohol in recent years as posing a more serious drug threat is evidence of different possibilities as cultural practices and drug discourses change (Nicholls, 2011). In popular media beyond news, there is evidence of a wider range of perspectives and understandings available to audiences.

DRUGS IN CINEMA

News media provide a continual flow of commentary and information about contemporary events but they are not the only sources of mediated narrative that offer to us interpretative resources. Drama as well as news can offer ideas, frameworks for understanding or discourses that we can draw upon to make sense of our own experience and those of others. In the early years of the twentieth century popular cinema was an important arena through which popular drug discourses were circulated and reproduced.

> Since the early 1900s representations of illegal drug use and trafficking have been central themes in Hollywood and independent films . . . Before and since the criminalization of specific drugs such as opium, cocaine, and heroin, and later marijuana, film makers have contributed to discourses about drugs and the people who use, sell, and produce them. (Boyd, 2010: 4)

Given this strategic importance, it is hardly surprising that a variety of agencies have sought to exert influence or control over the way in which cinema represented drugs, their consumers and producers. The US government has a record of investing many millions of dollars in seeking to legitimate its 'war on drugs' through popular media (Boyd, 2002: 399); the next chapter of this book will explore the ways in which enforcement agencies, moral entrepreneurs and campaigning organizations sought to co-opt film production in the cause of drug prohibition during the middle decades of the twentieth century. As Bancroft suggests, 'every substance in common use has its control regime, the intricate lattice of formal and informal controls and sanctions' (2009: 113) and film, like other popular media, both expresses and contributes to these regimes of control through the reproduction of particular drug discourses. In relation to the cultural practices associated with drugs these are the ways through which we learn to 'govern' our selves (Foucault, 1979). Drugs have been a source of ideas and narrative for filmmakers since the very beginning of cinema, so much so that that is possible to speak of the drug film as a 'genre' (Boyd, 2010: 6). Like other forms of popular culture, cinema provides opportunities for the circulation of discourses that serve to 'discipline' intoxication but also discourses that 'celebrate' it. Which discourses flourish at particular moments in the history of cinema depends upon the relationship between cinema and wider political and cultural forces.

If the boundaries between news and drama as interpretative resources are never formally segregated when we 'make sense' of the world, it is also the case that there is significant overlap between them in the way that themes are developed and represented. The dimensions of the symbolic frameworks that sustain and underpin news reporting of drugs, drug users and enforcement, can also be detected in the cinematic construction

of drugs. The depiction of *locations*, *identities and behaviors*, *substance images and technologies*, narrative *causes and consequences* still provide the keys through which audiences are invited to make sense of drug films.

EARLY CINEMA

Drugs were present at the birth of cinema. Before filmmakers learned to make narrative, a cinema of spectacle existed in which to simply film and reproduce imageswas considered by audiences entertainment in itself. W. K. Laurie Dickson, working on behalf of Thomas Edison, produced a thirty-second film, *The Chinese Opium Den*, for the kinetoscopes that were multiplying in the penny arcades of the 1890s in the US and Europe (Starks, 1982: 13). This was probably the very first drug film and it placed opium as a substance in a very particular location and associated it with a particular ethnic identity. In cinema from the very beginning drug use was constructed within symbolic frameworks that racialized consumption and associated a variety of risks with the presence of the alien 'other'.

Edison's first visual drugs project proved so successful that it encouraged dozens of subsequent 'opium films' to be made in the US and Europe, including *Un Horrible Cauchemar* (A Horrible Nightmare) produced by Zecca in France in 1901, *The Visions of an Opium Smoker* produced by R. W. Paul in Britain in 1905, and *The Opium Smoker's Dream* produced by Gaumont in 1905. Drawing upon Coleridge and De Quincey, the device of the 'opium dream' allowed these early filmmakers to introduce elaborate fantasy sequences and show off their early skills in trick photography. By 1909 Dickens' own use of the Chinese Opium Den in his final, unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was adapted for cinema by the British director Arthur Gilbert and later turned into a five-reel epic by Shubert for the American market in 1914 (Starks, 1982: 13–15). Cinema raided popular culture, particularly popular fiction, not only for narratives but also, of course, for modes of symbolic representation.

For film to be meaningful to its new audiences it had to develop themes that were both popular and familiar. The association of drug substances with particular ethnic communities resonated with audiences because these ideas were already well-established in popular cultural discourse, as evidenced in the stories of Dickens, Sax Rohmer (author of the Fu Manchu thrillers), and, of course, Conan Doyle. As discussed in the next chapter, without formal regulation and control until 1914 in the US and 1926 in the UK, the use of substances such as opium and cocaine were not necessarily regarded as either immoral or criminal. Cocaine was marketed as a tonic; the cocaine dependence acquired by Sherlock Holmes in the Conan Doyle stories was constructed as an eccentricity rather than a sign of moral weakness. Indeed, it was explicitly represented as a signature habit in several early film adaptations of the Holmes stories. The absence of formal

regulation also afforded an opportunity for filmmakers to represent drug use as a source of comedy rather than moral opprobrium. For example, the extraordinary *Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (1916), starring Douglas Fairbanks as a Holmes-like detective, 'Coke Ennyday', unable to undertake any detective work without resort to the use of one of several syringes hanging from his coat, underlined the extent to which film could reproduce both 'celebratory' and 'disciplinary' discourses simultaneously. Coke Ennyday's drug habits are presented as a source of fun, but at the same time the plot revolves around the continuing theme of opium dens, foreign drug smugglers, and it employs a highly racialized representation to demarcate the 'good' drug users from the 'bad' Oriental smugglers. Cocaine and other substances continued to be a source of film comedy for a further couple of decades, despite the expansion of formal drug regulation in both the US and UK—Laurel and Hardy had fun with the misuse of nitrous oxide in *Leave 'Em Laughing* (1928) (Starks, 1982: 26) and Chaplin constructed a classic moment of cocaine-comedy with the famous 'nose powder' prison scene in *Modern Times*, as late as 1936.

THE ADDICTION NARRATIVE IN CINEMA

However, as described in the following chapter in more detail, a combination of disciplinary forces intersected in the 1920s to create a new political climate for drug regulation in the US. Particular individuals developed public careers on the strength of their vociferous opposition to drugs; the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, only established in 1930, operated as much as a prohibitionist public relations machine as an enforcement agency, and the various churches in the US all lent their weight to the moral campaign against drugs. Early cinema was co-opted as part of this moral movement and a series of dark dramas were produced for mainstream audiences including *The Devil's Needle* (1916), *The Truant Soul* (1916), *Broken Blossoms* (1919), *When Dawn Came* (1920), *The Worldly Madonna* (1922) and *Human Wreckage* (1923). All these films associate drug use with moral ruination of one kind or another. In the *Truant Soul* and *When Dawn Came* doctors are tempted to self-medicate at the risk of destroying their careers and their families. In *Human Wreckage* it is a lawyer who faces disaster through morphine addiction. In Griffith's rather more nuanced *Broken Blossoms*, the plot revolves around the 'Yellow Man' who seeks relief from his troubles in a Limehouse opium den where it is made clear that Chinese men undergo moral corruption, but that white women are their potential prey. The 'Yellow Man' is portrayed more sympathetically because he rejects the drunken violence of the white male working class of the East End. He tries to save Lily from her violent father, but the film refuses a happy ending and condemns both to suffer unfortunate deaths, ultimately consolidating an association between opium, the Chinese 'other' and moral decrepitude.

Drugs as a weapon in the hands of the cunning or dangerous criminal became a convenient plot device in dozens of US and UK thrillers during the first three decades of the century. Sometimes in early British films,[22] the exotic danger of drugs was underlined by a femme fatale who might trick and drug a dashing male hero, as in *The Female Swindler* (1916) or *Queen of the Wicked* (1916) in which a dancer drugs her husband and cheerfully frames somebody else for the murder. The Sax Rohmer stories, of course, represented a prototype for dozens of British thrillers based around criminal masterminds and drug smuggling gangs from the original *The Yellow Claw* (1920) through to *The Flying Squad* (1932) and *Moonstone* (1934). So the interest in the relationship between drugs and international crime can be traced to the earliest phase of mainstream filmmaking.

In the UK, by 1926, following a struggle within and between the Home Office and the Ministry of Health, the 'British system' became established and sustained a policy consensus in which enforcement measures were tempered by a strong emphasis upon the medical treatment of 'addicts', delivered with significant degrees of professional autonomy by doctors (Berridge, 1999). In the US, however, discourses of disease were strongly contested by those campaigning organizations and moral entrepreneurs demanding criminal enforcement and prohibition. In contrast to Britain where addiction was widely understood as 'disease', in the US there was a much more pronounced struggle that contrasted the idea of 'slavery from within' with a discourse of human will or moral choice (Valverde, 1997). This was reflected in cinema and in the emergence of early examples of what Boyd has termed 'the addiction narrative' (2008). In D. W. Griffith's *For His Son* (1912), a father unintentionally fosters a cocaine addiction in his son by inventing and marketing 'Dopokoke', a cocaine tonic. Here cocaine is represented as powerful, dangerous and highly addictive, leading eventually to the son's death. In 1923, *Human Wreckage* (directed by John Griffith Wray) underlined the dangers of morphine addiction, accompanied by *The Drug Traffic* and *The Greatest Menace*, also both released in 1923 (Starks, 1982: 49). *Narcotic* (1934, directed by Dwain Esper) paved the way for subsequent 'Reefer Madness' exploitation films (discussed in the next chapter) and traced the descent of a promising white middle–class medical student into heroin addiction and suicide once he has been tempted to try smoking opium by his oriental roommate at college. In 1935's *Cocaine Fiends*, director William A. O'Connor weaved together a story of addiction, jazz, sexual exploitation and personal disaster, in which a white, respectable girl is seduced by a drug dealer, turns to prostitution and is inadvertently responsible for fostering her brother's cocaine addiction. In each of these examples, a substance so powerful it erodes the human will, represents a danger to the white middle-class family, members of which face disaster as their addiction threatens to remove them forever from the safe location of the middle-class home and community, and to entrap them in zones populated by 'the other'—oriental opium users, working-class

prostitutes, or migrant workers. Marijuana, too, was depicted as toxic and highly addictive, even bringing about the downfall of the most masculine of heroes, the cowboy, as in *High on the Range* (1929) (Starks, 1982: 32). But the framing of cocaine was less consistent. With its legacy as a tonic, there was a glamorous aura attached to it, magnified by the news reporting of the various film stars who were arrested in possession of it or died taking it in both the US and UK (Shapiro, 2002; Sweet, 2005: 49). As Shapiro notes, cocaine could simultaneously be represented in 1935 as Chaplin's 'nose powder', a benign source of humor, and as a menacing gateway drug beckoning victims toward destruction. Thus news media and entertainment media worked together in circulating and mutually reinforcing symbolic frameworks that represented illicit drug use but not necessarily in a consistent or systematic fashion.

Each well publicized drug scandal brought an additional spurt in the attendances at cinema but also brought problems for mainstream cinema in terms of calls for tougher regulation of the industry. In both the UK and the US the response was to establish regimes of self-regulation. In Hollywood, the Hays Code (the Motion Picture Production Code) grew ever stricter after its introduction in 1922 and by 1934 the code finally ruled out the depiction of *any* drug use and *any* suggestion of an associated intermingling of ethnic groups in the consumption of drugs. Even animated representations of the effects of laughing gas, as in a notorious *Betty Boop* cartoon (1934), were ruled out. This discouraged the circulation of films based upon the classic 'addiction narrative' through mainstream Hollywood cinema chains. As with most regulatory regimes, the exertion of control in particular cultural spaces created opportunities in others; the films of the 'Reefer Madness' era were all produced on low, independent studio budgets, marketed as 'educational' but released on the un-regulated exploitation circuit with highly salacious advertising. In the UK, the newly established British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) was equally exercised about the cinematic representation of drug use, apparently exerting regulatory influence in the production of the drug crime thriller *Cocaine* (director Graham Cutts) as early as 1922 (Sweet, 2005: 50). Allusions to drug use were still sometimes slipped under the censor's nose: Cab Colloway and His Cotton Club Band could still perform the song *Reefer Man* in the background to a scene in *International House* (1933) (Boyd, 2010: 8), but passing references or song lyrics represented the limits of what was possible.

In mainstream cinema drugs reappeared as the regulatory regime was gradually relaxed. Some early US post-war thrillers retained the criminal drug user as a central plot device as in *Borderline* (1949), *The Company She Keeps* (1950) and *Last Installment* (1959). However, the experiences of drug users could not become the central concern of film narratives until the regulatory regime relaxed further. This gradually happened as cinema audiences showed an appetite for films that took a 'serious' approach to 'social issues' and film directors began to probe the borders of regulatory

tolerance. Otto Preminger's *The Man with a Golden Arm* (1954) is widely regarded as the cinematic landmark in which the experience of the drug user reappears in mainstream cinema as the central concern of plot and narrative. The film was released originally without MPPC approval and thus forced the hand of the regulator (Starks, 1982: 56). According to Boyd (2008: 54) despite its liberal intentions it still constructs heroin use through the frame of the 'criminal addict'. At the start of the film, the main protagonist, Frankie, returns to an urban, white, working-class community, having served a six-month sentence for drug offences. As it is implied that he has received medical treatment whilst in prison, the film reminds the audience that the public debate in the US between punishment and treatment models was beginning to move in favor of the latter. Frankie peers through the window of his local bar to see his former friends, including a drunken man who is being taunted for his alcoholism. The film suggest there are parallels between addiction to drink and addiction to drugs, an important statement to make given that the Alcoholics Anonymous program was gaining legitimacy during the early 1950s. However, Frankie is immediately tempted by his former 'pusher', a character the audience is invited to read as 'Italian' in look, well-dressed and clearly prospering from his 'wicked' exploitation of the addicts he fosters. In the course of the film, Frankie's marriage collapses, but through the help of another 'good woman', he undergoes what is represented as a terrifying, physical process of withdrawal, one which requires him to be quite literally locked up and imprisoned by his new girlfriend Molly because, it is implied, the power of the drug is greater than the human will. By the end of the film, Frankie has beaten the disease and his reward is to look forward to a new respectable life, united with Molly, and away from the urban ghetto. As a drug heroin is constructed as a powerful *substance*, one that defeats the will but continues to be associated with undesirable 'others', in this case ethnic Italian pushers, and other white working class users. If the *location* is the poor, urban neighborhood, escape is to be found away from the ghetto and through the reconstitution of the respectable (and middle class) family.

By the end of the 1950s, 'addicts began popping up in films with amazing regularity' (Starks, 1982: 81). *Monkey on My Back* (1957), *A Hateful of Rain* (1957), *I Want to Live* (1958) and *Sanctuary* (1961) all employed the 'addiction narrative' to drive plots around the horrors of opiate use, the extreme difficulties of 'treatment' and the sordidness of addiction. However, Boyd (2008) suggests that in subsequent decades it is possible to detect four trajectories in drug cinema, each one encouraging filmmakers to break with the addiction narrative in certain respects, but also to retain important elements in certain instances. Firstly, Boyd identifies the independent cinema of the 1960s as a source of films that turn away from the addiction narrative and place drug use in the context of counter-cultural lifestyles. Warhol's films such as *Chelsea Girls* (1966) and *Trash* (1970) and Roger Corman's *The Trip* (1967) are examples here. Secondly, there are films that

develop partial 'ruptures in the addiction narrative' (Boyd, 2008: 93) by both deconstructing and simultaneously reproducing the addiction narrative. *Trainspotting* directed by Danny Boyle (1996) is a prime example for Boyd here. Thirdly, in the decade following the 1960s, mainstream cinema reestablished the connection between drugs and serious crime through films like the *French Connection* (director William Friedkin) and through these films the narrative of the drug dealer is established as someone who lives and probably dies in the urban ghetto. There are possibly hundreds of mainstream films that have developed this kind of narrative in the decades since 1971 including *French Connection II* (1975), *Scarface* (1983), and *Boyz N' the Hood* (1991). Finally, a fourth trajectory either explicitly or implicitly offers a critique of the US strategy of waging a 'war on drugs'. According to Boyd, not only the stoner genre, including the original Cheech and Chong movie *Up in Smoke* (1978), and the *Harold and Kumar* movies, but also rather more sly comedies like *Saving Grace* (2000) and even tragedies like *American Beauty* (1999) all question the extent to which drug use can be regarded as a criminal behavior requiring ever more draconian enforcement measures. Significantly, the concept of the 'respectable' and 'harmless' drug dealer introduced in *Saving Grace*, who is prompted to deal through straightened circumstances and without resort to violence, is a theme that is now adapted for contemporary television sitcoms.

CONTEMPORARY DRUG CINEMA AND ITS SYMBOLIC FRAMEWORKS

Boyd's typology of contemporary drug cinema suggests that there are complex and contradictory drug discourses in circulation through cinema. We can see that they have their roots both in a wider popular drug culture and more specifically in the systems of representation that organized cinema's treatment of drugs in its earliest history. To what extent can the symbolic frameworks that organize news reporting of drugs also be found within contemporary cinema representation? In fact, there is considerable overlap which is hardly surprising given that in order to survive, news media have to be both information providers and sources of entertainment. Accordingly, journalists frequently draw upon popular images and themes found in entertainment media in order to construct their news reports.

Some films that simultaneously embrace and rupture the addiction narrative, construct a world of drug use that organizes symbolic elements through versions of the *social pathology* framework. Trainspotting, for example, is *located* in a poor, deprived and grubby working class district of Edinburgh, reflecting the experience of the 'heroin epidemic' which swept through the UK as the Thatcher government embraced deindustrialization. While the audience is invited to sympathize with the characters as heroin users, it is also confronted with their criminal, violent and dysfunctional

identities and *behaviors*, which trigger a series of distressing *consequences* including extreme parental neglect, resulting in the death of a baby. However, the humor in the film undercuts the addiction narrative and satirizes the methadone treatment strategies employed by official agencies, which are described by Renton, the leading protagonist, as 'state sponsored addiction'. But, on the other hand, the attempts Renton makes to undergo withdrawal actually consolidate the addiction narrative, reproducing very much the same representation of the power of the drug and the struggle of the will that was offered in Premingers' *Man with a Golden Arm*. In other words, heroin is still understood as powerful, determining *substance*, its danger encoded in the symbolism of the needle.

Heroin is not the only *substance* to be placed within this kind of *social pathology* framework. For example, Laura Dern played a dysfunctional glue sniffer in *Citizen Ruth* (director Anthony Payne, 1996), marginalized and chaotic but who struggles to resist a court imposed termination. In *The Solent Sea* (director D. J. Caruso, 2002), the physical and social *consequences* of crystal meth addiction are explored through the character of a villain, Pooh-bear, who embodies social pathology in his addictive lifestyle, marginalized surroundings, drug dealing, violence and petty criminal behavior, not to mention his collapsed nose, a consequence of his drug habit. Following the reconnection of drugs and professional crime in *The French Connection*, many mainstream films have associated racialized *identities*, usually black, Mexican or Puerto Rican, with the urban ghetto as an expression of social pathology. Boyd (2008) points to *Boys N the Hood* but there are numerous examples from *Colours* (directors Duenas and Fuster, 1988), *Clockers* (director Lee, 1993), *A Bronx Tale* (director De Niro, 1993), *Fresh* (director Yakin, 1994), *Paid in Full* (director Stone, 2002), through to *American Gangster* (director Ridley Scott, 2007). In each of these, drug use is presented in the context of organized gang crime within the urban ghetto as a physically demarcated *location* characterized by social pathology, hopelessness, poverty and family breakdown.

In some films, though, professional crime and drug smuggling are given a certain glamorization, although mainstream Hollywood often remains reluctant to allow drug crime to be ultimately 'seen to pay'. In films like *Blow* (director Demme, 2001) and *Layer Cake* (director Vaugh, 2004) it is possible to detect a fascination with the lifestyle and 'freedom' that international drug trafficking might provide. In these films drug crime is briefly re-located away from the urban ghetto to sunnier or more prosperous environs; Johnny Depp and Daniel Craig as leading men bring 'masculine glamour' to the task of smuggling drugs for huge profit; and the audience in each case is invited to let their moral scruples dissolve as they begin to identify with these characters, although in each case the protagonists are required to pay a heavy price for their crimes by the end. There are then strong parallels with the construction of news reports, which frame drug crime in terms of the *Criminals and Drug Smugglers* framework discussed

above. While drug crime is condemned in news reporting and commentary there is also a fascination with the lifestyle or *behaviors* it can support and the *identities* of the top criminals if they are apprehended. However, films like *Traffic* (director Soderbergh, 2000) revive the suggestion of the *Threat to the Innocent* that first appeared in the early addiction cinema of the 1920s and 1930s. Once again, the white middle-class family can be threatened because drugs can penetrate its moral defenses. A conservative judge, appointed to the role of national 'drugs tsar', finds to his dismay that his own daughter has developed a serous drug problem. In contrast to the safe, white suburb, as Boyd argues, the film suggests 'the inner city in the United States is depicted as a racialized space where a White girl's . . . downfall and degradation are facilitated by Black men and crack . . . in contrast to White, Western civilized space' (Boyd, 2008: 137). As Boyd suggests, in contrast to the original British Channel 4 television drama, this version of *Traffic* empties its approach of any reference to the political and economic circumstances that made drug crime a compelling choice and presents an over-simplified picture in which stark moral choices are presented to the audience (Boyd, 2002).

Finally, it is not difficult to identify some films that reproduce the symbolic framework found in some news reporting of 'normalised' *recreational drug use and the 'chemical generation'*. To begin with there are films that make the idea of 'normalised' recreational drug use a central theme, such as *24 Hour Party People* (director Winterbottom, 2002), *Human Traffic* (director Kerrigan, 1999) or *Enter the Void* (director Noe, 2009), but what is remarkable is the extent to which recreational drug use has become a 'normalised' backdrop for films about quite different things. For example, even in the very early 1980s in *Poltergeist* (director Hooper, 1982), the action revolves around the haunting of a respectable middle-class family home, but an early establishing scene depicts the parents smoking pot in bed once the children have gone to bed. This is simply part of the domestic routine and no dramatic consequences follow from this straightforward representation of recreational drug use. *Substances* are important here. Cannabis, ecstasy and other hallucinogens are normalised in numerous films; 'hard' or 'addictive' drugs, substances associated in popular culture with social pathology are usually not. But in films like *The Forty-Year-Old Virgin* (director Apatow, 2005), *Knocked Up* (director Apatow, 2007) or even horror films like *Donkey Punch* (director Blackburn, 2008), extensive use of recreational drugs is presented as 'background scenery', not the central concern of the film.

DRUGS AND TELEVISION

Traditional television claimed the attention of audiences in two ways. It offered entertainment through the construction of stories delivered as

drama or comedy, but it also offered to open a window upon a wider world through its news reporting, documentary and current affairs programming. With the arrival of MTV at the beginning of the 1980s and the proliferation of specialized music channels in the 1990s, television generated a new appeal through the construction of the pop video as fantasy spectacle. Evidence suggests that for young people growing up during the second half of the twentieth century, television was the main source of information about drugs, more important even than friends and school (Denham Wright and Pearl, 2000).

This chapter has already discussed the production of drug news at length. The values and pressures shaping the reporting of illicit drug news are frequently also operating in the production of current affairs and television documentary though their form sometimes offers more space for the voices of drug users. In a sense the history of the treatment of drug issues in television current affairs can be interpreted as one index of societal change. One of the first current affairs programs in Britain to address the growth of heroin use was an edition of ITV's *This Week* in 1963, with a follow-up program in 1966.[23] In 1967 ITV's *World in Action* reported on the growing black market in imported illicit drugs and a year later looked at the difficulties 'hippies' experienced in giving drugs up and the problem of tranquilizer addiction.[24] Illicit drug use was gradually emerging on the UK television producer's radar. It was frequently framed as a 'social problem' to cause concern, though by the late 1960s some liberal, dissenting voices were sometimes given opportunities to demonstrate sympathy with counter-cultural claims about the potential of drugs to serve as technologies of liberation.[25] In contrast in the US the war on drugs agenda exercised a powerful influence over the ways in which television current affairs approached the topic. Framing illicit drug use as a contagion, plague or societal wide threat was a common approach, particularly following the intervention of President Nixon in announcing the war on drugs in 1968,[26] though Starks notes some US factual television that allowed the 'junkie' a voice in some documentary formats (1982: 195–196).

Through the 1970s and 1980s current affairs television continued to focus primarily upon opiates and 'hard drugs' framed as a continuing 'social problem', particularly with the arrival of the 'heroin epidemic' in British urban spaces during the 1980s.[27] One of the first programs to ask questions about decriminalization was an edition of the BBC's *Heart of the Matter* in 1989.[28] However, by the 1990s the more frequent use of the studio discussion format opened a wider space for dissenting voices in both US and UK television. After three decades of recreational drug use and the cultural impact of the Ibiza ecstasy experience, it would have been remarkable if television had entirely ignored or suppressed these voices, though some of the formats through which they emerged were slightly bizarre, including a studio discussion on the efficacy of ecstasy 'judged' by Anne Widdicombe, the former belligerently right wing English Conservative MP.[29] With the

emerging epidemiological evidence of widespread use, the emergence of the voices of recreational drug users, who in most other respects, appeared perfectly normal people, and signs that the UK government itself was contemplating possible policy shifts towards liberalization in regulation, television current affairs in the late 1990s and early 2000s provided a space for more sustained critical questioning of the UK drug laws. The pop videos of MTV and the music channels had, of course, frequently been doing exactly this since the early 1980s. Some programs reported on the extent of drug use in dance clubs, prisons or just 'everyday life.'[30] More radically, some programs opened up debates about the very effectiveness or desirability of drug laws and the rationality of the drug classification system established in the UK under the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act.[31] The emerging debate also included discussion of calls for a recalibration of the calculus of risk associated with different substances, which now included alcohol.[32] At this point, even the voices from within the police were given opportunities to express their reservations about the existing systems of regulation. Factual broadcasting had opened up to become a space in which a plurality of contested positions and drug discourses could emerge and be acknowledged, including the voices of those using drugs as recreational technologies, and those offering dissenting views from within social control agencies and political elites, alongside more traditional enforcement perspectives.

A similar trajectory can be traced in television drama. Drug use began to intrude within the plots of drama serials and series in the early 1960s. In the US in 1961 the popular television series *Route 66* featured a plot about a young heroin addict.[33] In 1964 a British ITV drama series, *The Hidden Truth* included a plot involving a student drug user who has to be 'shocked' out of his 'habit' through the authoritative intervention of the series' leading male protagonist, Professor Lazard.[34] The action adventure series *The Prisoner*, which ran in a peak viewing slot in 1967 and 1968, included several subplots hinging on the power of hallucinatory drugs. By the 1980s drug plots began to be featured in the main television soaps and children's dramas, famously in *Grange Hill* which involved collaboration with official drugs agencies, but even in the much derided ITV soap *Crossroads*.[35] By the late 1980s drug plots or subplots were common in dozens of drama series from the medical dramas, such as *Casualty* and *ER*, the numerous police thrillers from the UK and US, and the occasional serious drama, such as *Death of a Son*, which offered a dramatized account of the real story of a mother's struggle to convict a drug dealer 'responsible' for her son's death.[36]

However, something shifted in the normative boundaries of television drama toward the end of the last century. Up to this point television drama might offer a sympathetic understanding of the drug user but nevertheless still construct such a character as 'the other'; their difference not necessarily rooted in race, class or other dimensions of social identity, but certainly in terms of their drug habit. From the mid-1990s onward, drug use began

to be understood in television drama as part of the fabric of everyday life, a backdrop against which the more important business of plots quite unrelated to drug use would play out. In Channel 4's *Shameless*, the routine consumption of a variety of drugs is simply part of life on the Chatsworth estate in Manchester where the story is based; in *Skins*, also on Channel 4, young people party, explore relationships and deal with the problems that the adult world presents, but all against a backdrop of frequent drug use, which does become a problem for particular characters, but for others is simply part of the routine. Even more 'mainstream' US shows such as *Desperate Housewives*, *Sex and the City*, and *Ugly Betty* permitted fleeting glimpses of normalized, non-pathological soft drug use. But the most striking evidence that might prompt claims regarding television drama's contribution to a cultural normalisation or accommodation with illicit drug use is to be found in US shows like *Nurse Jackie*, *The Wire*, *Weeds*, *Breaking Bad* and the UK's *Ideal*.

It is worth exploring these shows in a little more depth, partly to consider the extent to which they reproduce the symbolic frameworks to be found in news reporting, and partly in order to identify the perimeters of the normative shifts that the shows signify. In the first season of *Nurse Jackie*,[37] audiences were invited to identify with a nurse, played by Edie Falco, who had her own serious drug habit, being inclined to self-medicate via unauthorized access to the hospital pharmacy. Here, as in *Breaking Bad* below, illicit drug use is employed as a device through which a moral career is explored. Jackie is in many respects a 'good person'; she is shown to be doing 'good' by providing good nursing care in most episodes and frequently intervenes to bend the rules in favor of those without power or a 'voice' in the hospital system, whilst also occasionally deliberately working against the interests of those she considers 'undeserving'. She is also somebody that might be described as 'normal'; she has a professional job that she holds down despite the drug use, she is a mother and wife, and she has close friendships with other 'normal' characters. And yet, she conceals her drug problems from colleagues and family, steals drugs from the hospital pharmacy, fraudulently alters hospital records to conceal her thefts, and embarks in an on/off relationship with the pharmacist, prompted, the audience is invited to suspect, as much by his drug stocks as his personality or good looks. Tension and humor are generated through Nurse Jackie's increasingly desperate attempts to evade the consequences of bad moral choices and manage her addiction. Here is a picture of somebody using pain killers, anti-depressants and other 'serious drugs' routinely and yet managing mostly to function efficiently, hold down a responsible, professional job and participate in a 'normal' family. Nurse Jackie 'normalises' her drug habit but only through an enormous effort of will and the audience is encouraged to identify a personal pathology at the center of her life. The *location* for *Nurse Jackie* may be the clinic and the professional home; for most part, the *identities* that drive the narrative are white, middle-class

professionals. But the *substances* that Jackie craves are clearly portrayed as potent, and potentially disruptive of normal, middle-class life rather than a routine feature of it. *Nurse Jackie* reminds us that the pharmaceutical technologies developed to relieve pain and sooth the modern psyche have potentially very destructive consequences.

In the award winning *Breaking Bad* the main protagonist is another white, middle-class professional, also dangerously attracted to drugs, but for rather different reasons.[38] Walter White is a white, middle-class, middle-aged, high school chemistry teacher, so poorly paid that he has to take a second job at a local tire and exhaust garage. His situation encapsulates the plight of the public sector professional in the age of neo-liberal late modernity. He has an education, a command over knowledge, and professional skills but within the public sector labor market this cultural capital does not amount to sufficient economic capital to secure a future for his family. To make matters worse, Walt's son is suffering from cerebral palsy and in the first episode Walt is diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. His brother-in-law is a police officer in the drugs squad. After hearing how much money was made by local dealers who cook and distribute crystal meth, Walt sees a way in which he can provide for his family after he has gone. By deploying his knowledge of chemistry in developing his own crystal meth business, Walt can convert his cultural capital into economic value in the Albuquerque, New Mexico, crystal meth market. He partners up with Jesse Pinkman, a former pupil at his school and sets up a mobile crystal meth lab in a trailer to produce as he says, a 'chemically pure and stable product that will perform as advertised'.[39] At this stage we are tempted to understand crystal meth cooking as the kind of 'victimless' and enterprising drug crime that offers a 'fantasy' route to the American dream of security and wealth, rather as films like *Layer Cake* hint that cocaine trafficking might offer a more glamorous and better rewarded alternative to mundane work in the office or factory. In conversation with his brother-in-law, Walt seems to justify this view, suggesting that the line between legal and illegal enterprise, licit and illicit drugs, is simply 'arbitrary'.[40] This is the closest the show comes to deconstructing the social construction of drug regulation.

Walt's success in producing such high-grade and pure crystals, quickly introduces him to the world of the professional drug dealers who, it is clear, are dangerous, violent and morally 'bad'. And yet Walt's initial success in confronting the danger these characters represent may again tempt the audience to identify with his new lifestyle. As in news reports and some films, the potential attractiveness of a lifestyle that seems to promise a fast track route to wealth is never made explicit but it is present as an implied suggestion. Particularly, as in this television drama more than any other, there is a fascination with the drug as a *substance* and in the early scenes in the first episode, there are a number of close up shots that emphasize the purity of crystals and the beauty that chemistry as a science can create. Jesse declares in surprise that such pure meth makes Walt 'an artist', but

Walt insists he is a scientist, applying precise technical knowledge rather than artistic creativity.

However, *Breaking Bad* wants to resists the possibility of glamorization, although it does not hide the potential for crystal meth to offer intense pleasure. Anna Gunn who plays Skyler, Walt's wife, claims, 'I do not believe it glamorises crystal meth at all. I believe it shows it in its absolute truthful form,' while Bryan Cranston who plays Walt comments that, 'the long term is that this is an evil awful drug and it creates a huge amount of damage to society.'[41] In fact, the show's writer Vince Gilligan chose crystal meth because it would underline the gravity of the moral choices made by Walt, precisely because of what the substance signifies as a drug that brings chaos and misery:

> One of the worst things I could have him [Walt] do would be to cook crystal meth. Crystal methamphetamine is a very potent drug. It just wreaks havoc.[42]

And after the opening scenes in which the audience is tempted to see crystal meth as a solution to Walt's problems, the show begins to undercut the glamorization, both through the narrative and the *substance images*. By the end of the first episode, the audience understands that cooking involves dealing with highly toxic, deadly, nauseous gas. Walt deliberately gases two drug gang members in the trailer: the lab becomes a gas chamber. As he panics and drives the trailer out across the desert, dirty chemical fluids swill around on the floor of the van, while Walt has to keep his gas mask on to prevent the fumes overpowering him. It is clear that working with crystal meth is a dirty, grubby, and toxic occupation. Just to emphasize this, in a later episode one drug dealer's body is dissolved in an acid bath, but only partially before the glutinous remains, still within the partially melted bath, crash through the floor of the bathroom to arrive as a chemical mess in the hall of Jesse Pinkman's house. Thus, the show offers a moral calculus and locates crystal meth in a drug taste hierarchy. Cranston says:

> If it was marijuana we were dealing with, no one really cares . . . but the fact that it's this very heavy scourge-of-society type drug means there is far more at stake. It also makes much more difficult for Walter to be able to compromise his ethics. (Quoted in Anthony, 2012: 14)

Over the next five seasons, Walt does become increasingly trapped by the moral choices he makes; he has to lie and cheat, commit murder, betray friends and family. By season five, we find his choices have become self-defeating; he made bad moral choices to provide for his family, but his family is disintegrating, he has lost their respect and his wife demands a divorce. Like in *Nurse Jackie* the 'solution' that drugs appear to offer is actually a dangerous route to moral corruption.

There is a moral calculus and drug taste hierarchy underpinning all television drug drama and comedy. The more attractive (both in personality and physique) the leading characters the less likely that they deal in 'hard' drugs. *Breaking Bad* appears to be an exception in that the audience is invited to side with Walt in his early struggles, but by the fifth season he has become a monster. In *Ideal* and *Weeds*, on the other hand, each show offers the audience a drug dealer with whom it is invited to have sympathy throughout. Though they have obvious weaknesses, these are outweighed by other positive qualities. In the BBC show *Ideal*[43], the main character is a Salford drug dealer, Moz, a lovable slob who earns his living selling only 'hash and weed'(Carter, 2007). In the very first episode of the first season, a scene establishes Moz's position in relation to the drug taste hierarchy, as he patiently explains to one of his regular customers that he does not sell E's, LSD, MDNA, ketamine, whizz, or coke: 'no . . . blow—hash and weed. That's it. That's all I sell.'[44] In other words, Moz is a more morally 'acceptable' dealer because cannabis can be represented as occupying a position closer to the 'morally acceptable' in relation to the calculus of the drugs taste hierarchy. The implicit assumption underpinning the premise of the show is that selling cannabis is a 'victim-less crime' in a way that cooking up crystal meth is not.

Ideal conforms to the main conventions of situation comedy in that the action takes place almost exclusively in one domestic setting, the dirty and horribly untidy flat that Moz occupies. There is a set of regular characters who take turns to arrive in the flat, either to purchase or deliver supplies of cannabis and marijuana. As in the traditional domestic situation comedy, part of the comic dynamic is driven through the tensions that arise in Moz's relationship with his partner, and partly through misunderstandings, or tensions, involving other regular characters including PC, a Manchester policeman who supplies Moz with much of his drug stock through the seizures made by the local force; Jenny, a child minder who consistently forgets the name and gender of her minded children; Psycho Paul, who is a rival dealer; and the sinister Cartoon Head, who brings a suggestion of growing menace to the series. In the second episode, another traditional sitcom device, borrowed from farce, is utilized as PC is made to hide in the toilet, while a succession of characters arrive in the flat to make their purchases from Moz. Moz is desperate to prevent it becoming known that his main supplier is a police officer. But each time PC is about to slip from the toilet to the front door another customer arrives and he has to dash back to his hiding place where he continues to smoke cannabis to occupy the time.

As in traditional sitcoms there are some running gags that help to consolidate audience understanding of the leading characters. In the second episode, Jenny has negligently allowed her child to eat the cannabis she bought from Moz the previous day. She explains to Moz that, 'the thing about child minding is that you're on duty 24 hours a day', to which Moz replies with more than a hint of irony, 'the thing is Jen, you make it look

so easy'.[45] While this conversation takes place, Jen is smoking a bong while her minded child plays on the floor and edges ever closer to the poison that Moz has put down to deal with a rat.

On the one hand, *Ideal* is clearly pointing to the ubiquity of cannabis and marijuana. In the final episode of the first season, a secondary school teacher arrives for a smoke during her lunch break. Moz observes that so many of her students are also regular customers that he could take her class register for her. The situation becomes more comic as she directly encounters one of her students at Moz's flat which results in much mutual embarrassment.[46] To this extent the show draws a picture of routine and normalised recreational soft drug use. In the very first scene of the first episode, Moz wakes up to face the day, stumbles out of bed and offers to share the routine early morning tasks with his girlfriend: 'Fancy a brew [tea]? Right you make the brew and I'll make a bong.'[47] The consumption of cannabis is very much placed in the foreground with bongs and spliffs frequently placed in the center of the action, as characters sit on the sofa in the center of the flat. Moz likes to see himself as a businessman, frequently emphasizing that he has to maintain the disciplines of business enterprise in not giving his wares away for free or offering credit to those without appropriate credit histories.

But actually the show refuses to fully embrace a frame of normalisation. The writing of Moz as a character invites the audience to sympathize with his qualities as a 'lovable slob' but, at the same time, it is precisely these qualities which introduce strong hints of pathology and dysfunction. As he gets out of bed, he treads in last nights macaroni cheese, left on the floor as he crashed out. The flat provides a *location* that suggests chaos and mess, not order or normality. His *identity* is that of the slob and his *behavior* very much belongs to the category of slothful stoner. He is only energetic as he plays his decks or sets up his first bong but once this is consumed, he returns to a default stasis, stoned and immobile. As his girlfriend remarks: 'I've seen coma victims with more get up and go.'[48] In the first episode we learn that Moz is actually struggling in both his public and private life: his lethargy renders him incapable of running his 'business' efficiently and his girlfriend is seeing another man. In fact, there is much to pity in Moz. And beyond this, as in *Breaking Bad* the first episode of *Ideal* also suggests an intractable relationship between even soft drug dealing and more violent crime. Psycho Paul, the rival dealer from two blocks away, threatens Moz whilst brandishing a screwdriver, the arrival Cartoon Head suggests the potential for even more serious violence and by the final episode the of the first series this potential is very much fulfilled as a comic misunderstanding leads to a blood spattered murder in Moz's flat.[49]

In *Weeds* we find a comparable trajectory in the narrative ark, as Nancy Botwin, a widowed soccer mom, struggles to preserve her affluent life in a sunny, exclusively white San Diego suburb.[50] Nancy is a young and attractive thirty something. Most of her friends are similarly attractive, including

the marijuana smokers. However, as in *Breaking Bad* and *Ideal*, through dealing Nancy is drawn toward a world of organized crime and violence. *Weeds* ran over eight seasons between 2005 and 2012. By season four, Nancy and her family were locked in highly problematic relations with Mexican narco gangs, in season five she had abandoned suburbia entirely, and by season six was on the run, as in a road movie and heading for prison, pursued by the police. By season eight, Nancy had married and lost another two husbands, become involved with a fellow prisoner and one of her sons had committed murder. Lavoie reads *Weeds* as 'counter hegemonic' in that the show destabilizes dominant, hegemonic values of whiteness, femininity, middle-class culture and the respectable suburban ideal (2011: 912). In the first season, the writers use the device of the respectable, white, soccer-mom drug dealer to explore and expose the hypocrisy of white suburbia, its emptiness and underlying nastiness. The feuding among soccer moms below the surface of the school PTA, the obsession with health and diet, and obsessive control of children's lives, is exposed as Nancy manages to conceal the source of her income whilst opening up new markets among the respectable white middle class, including local politicians and the police. But Nancy, too, is guilty of hypocrisy in that she struggles to preserve outward appearances whilst inwardly resenting the normative constraints of white suburbia. As Josh, a young dealer, shouts: 'You're a hypocrite. "Keep off drugs" cries the pot selling mum.'[51]

The show is certainly 'counter hegemonic' in these respects, and, as Lavoie suggests, an example of what can be done to subvert the constraints of mainstream television entertainment, in the spaces opened up in recent years by cable and subscription channels. There is a conscious strategy on the part of the writers to deconstruct the gendered, racialized frameworks that organized the symbolic framing of marijuana in the popular drug cultures of earlier decades. This is achieved through the introduction of Heylia James and her family who act as marijuana wholesalers supplying Nancy with her retail stock. The James family inject strong elements of black American identity in language and manner in ways that reference the construction of the racialized 'other' in so many earlier cultural constructions of the drug dealer, but Nancy's dealings with them mainly take place around their welcoming kitchen table, upon which a huge pile of marijuana is usually placed. The domestic setting; their humour, drug dealing experience, wisdom and good heartedness undercut and subvert the 'othering' elements of traditional popular drugs culture. Stereotypes and cultural assumptions are challenged in the text while the show also acknowledged the extent to which popular drug cultures do actually bear the imprint of significant social contours and identities. As Lavoie suggests:

> Indeed, *Weeds* operates at a much more subversive level than would be afforded by a rote drugs-lead-to-people's demise rhetorical narrative. Instead, it employs a pastichic grab-bag of postmodern

> problematizations of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and beliefs about marijuana, a melange of tensions and contradictions which paradoxically suggests that marijuana is everywhere and yet remains mostly invisible, that marijuana affects all aspects of society and yet sometimes follows raced and classed patterns, and that marijuana represents both the organic rejuvenation of the soul and the counter-hegemonic resistance to tyranny and oppression. (2011: 915)

But as in the case of *Breaking Bad* and *Ideal* there are important normative constraints too. Once again, a drug taste hierarchy and moral calculus operate to secure the sympathy of the audience. In the very first episode, Nancy violently warns a young dealer: 'Don't deal to kids and stay away from my customer base.' Like Moz, Nancy will only sell marijuana. And she eschews selling to children. Her activities are limited to a 'customer base' of affluent, white middle-class professionals, who can afford their habit and are unlikely to experience the chaos and social disruption associated with the use of other, 'harder' drugs among poorer families and communities with fewer resources. In the early seasons, the audience is invited to regard this as victimless crime. And Nancy refuses the label drug dealer: 'I'm not a dealer. I'm a mother who happens to distribute illegal products through a sham bakery.'[52] However, as in *Ideal* the early episodes hint at the potential for social pathology as the audience is given glimpses of the violence used by drug dealers located only slightly higher up the distribution chain. The show elaborates the argument by questioning mainstream understanding of appropriate and inappropriate drug use; the dominant drug taste hierarchies and moral calculus. Thus, in the first season the show underlines what physical and emotional damage chemotherapy does to Nancy's best friend and on hearing that doctors are proposing to prescribe anti-depressants for Nancy's youngest son, her brother-in-law insists 'drugs are not the answer.' Nancy retorts, 'this . . . from the king of all mind altering substances?' to which her brother-in-law replies, 'Illegal drugs! Not this prescription, anti-depressant, fry your brains, zombie shit. Weed makes you happy and hungry and financially solvent.'[53]

In this first season, then, the show juxtaposes the potential for damage associated with medical models of drug use and affirms through the experience of both white middle-class suburbia and the James family as drug wholesalers, the pleasures of marijuana use. And yet, as noted above, this potential for pleasure has to be contained and circumscribed through definition as 'victimless crime' in the early seasons, but subsequently through a much firmer association between weed, violent crime, and family dysfunction.

None of these television dramas achieved popular mainstream success through ratings in the way popular entertainment on television during earlier eras might have done. Even *Weeds* which in many respects is the most 'accessible' of these shows barely achieved audiences on US cable above the

one million mark; *Breaking Bad* achieved consistently lower ratings and only secured one season on a national network in the UK; *Ideal* largely remained on the BBC's 'youth' channel (BBC 3). It would be a mistake to overemphasize their impact. And yet, each picked up a variety of industry awards; each was widely acclaimed; and each is now continuously re-circulated through YouTube, video file sharing, web streaming and social media.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have looked at that representation of illicit drug use through traditional factual and fictionalized media. As Richard Sparks suggests, 'it is not fanciful to argue that the "realism" of fiction and the dramatization of news are connected matters' (1992: 24). Journalists use the principles of narrative to write their stories and frequently draw upon the language and symbolism of popular drama to construct their interpretative frameworks. Drama in film and television often looks to 'the news' and 'current affairs', not only for contemporary themes through which to develop narrative but also for ideas about identities, cultural practices, and language. There are commonalities in the representation of illicit drug use in the news and within cinema and television drama. This is because both news and drama draw upon the drug discourses that circulate within popular culture and through the 'regimes of regulation and control' (Bancroft, 2009: 113) within which intoxicative substances are embedded. The features of some of the most important drug discourses surface through the reporting of drug news and in factual programming about drugs, in the form of symbolic frameworks that assemble together particular signifiers of identity, behavior, location and substance image. Taken together these signifiers often suggest implied or explicit assumptions about the causes and consequences of drug use.

These symbolic frameworks clearly do not translate in a mechanistic fashion to the drama screen. Drama does not depend upon and is not determined by factual media in this way. But news, current affairs and drama will draw from a common popular drugs culture and it is possible to see how important signifiers of identity, behavior, location and substance image are found in drama as well as news. They position drug sellers and users in particular ways, offer distinctions between kinds of drug users, their behavior, the substances they use and the moral conclusions we are invited to draw as audiences. According to Bauman (1992) one of the features of a movement from modernity to postmodernity, is that 'certainty' in policy, political values and normative frameworks is no longer so essential for the state to maintain stability and social order. Rather, the seductive power of market driven consumerism is strong enough to supply the necessary social glue, despite growing diversity in identity and ambivalence in beliefs. The uneven emergence of elements of particular symbolic frameworks in contemporary

cinema and television drug drama testifies to such diversity, uncertainty and ambivalence and provides a sharp contrast to the certainties that were encoded in the dominant symbolic frameworks that organized the representation of illicit drugs for large parts of the twentieth century. That is the theme to be explored in the next two chapters, which trace the emergence of popular drug cultures and their intimate relationship with 'regimes of regulation and control', through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Here, in contemporary news and popular drama some of the old certainties have been eroded. While much news reporting and screen drama continues to frame 'hard' drug use in terms of 'social pathology', and even some recreational drug use is still framed in terms of 'a threat to the innocent', there are important hesitations and ambivalences that reflect the erosion of certainty that Bauman points to. In contemporary cinema and television drama, the addiction narrative that underpinned the representation of drugs in mainstream cinema through much of the twentieth century is now frequently destabilized. The notion of marijuana as a 'gateway' drug leading to physical addiction and moral disaster is explicitly challenged in film and television. Even within crime drama there is a kind of normalisation to be detected, not based upon a libertarian 'celebration' of intoxication but rather a pragmatic and pessimistic acknowledgement that drug dealing is one of the more important sources of enterprise in the neo-liberal urban economy. *The Wire* (director Simon, 2002–2008), for example, charted in meticulous detail just how central drug dealing was to Baltimore; the lack of choices for young people growing up in the projects other than drugs, the elaborate organizational business structures and distribution chains, and the extent to which drug trafficking was embedded with policing and politics within the city.

In contemporary television dramas like *Ideal* and *Weeds* we find signifiers that point to a normalisation of recreational drug use but these signifiers do not secure that symbolic framework in any kind of certainty. Rather, there are inherent ambivalences in both texts; both reference the 'celebration' of intoxication and the commonplace of some drug use in contemporary popular culture, but at the same time rest implicitly upon drug hierarchies that continue to suggest 'absolute' moral distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' drugs, lovable, attractive drug dealers and dangerous, violent criminals. In both these shows, as well as *Breaking Bad*, a new kind of 'slippery slope' is suggested, not the old gateway model of the addiction narrative but rather the danger of moral compromise and entanglement in violent relationships, a loss of control over moral life and destiny. Contemporary film contains many of the same ambivalences. A possible criticism of Bauman's distinction between the modern and the postmodern is that he underestimates the extent to which popular culture always offered a site of resistance or dissent, even within societies in which the state sought certainty and control. We know that a subterranean popular culture continued to celebrate intoxication even at the height of the period of regulatory

mobilization against drugs and intoxication in the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the normative ambivalences of much contemporary drug drama in cinema and television do speak to his account of the dissolution of some of the central features of an earlier modern world in which 'experts', including doctors, scientists, and drug workers could command authority and offer certainty. The final chapter of this book examines what this means for individuals contemplating drugs and practices of intoxication in the late modern or postmodern world. Before this, the book examines the 'high modern age' of drugs regulation, mass mediated drugs education and the arrival of 'new media'.

3 The Mediated Regulation of Intoxication in the Age of 'Old' Media

The US Experience from '*Reefer Madness*' to 'Just Say No'

INTRODUCTION

This chapter turns to consider the history of mediated drugs education. A lengthy discussion of the full variety of drugs education strategies including school based and peer to peer is beyond its scope. Rather, it is the mediation of drugs education material via what is now termed 'old media', but during the 'high modern age' was often called 'mass communication systems', mainly film and television, that are the concern here. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this volume explore the impact that the arrival of new media have had upon drugs education and the circulation of drug discourses. Here we look at what happened when 'old media' was harnessed for the purposes of drugs education with a particular focus upon the US. In the next chapter, some important contrasts are made with the history of mass-mediated drugs education in Britain.

In the preceding chapter we saw that important elements in popular drug culture are the symbolic frameworks within which drugs are located and represented through mainstream media. These symbolic frameworks can be understood as very particular kinds of discourse, emerging at specific historical moments in particular societies, but offering ways of understanding patterns of intoxication that can be reproduced through subsequent periods of social change. Particular patterns of substance use, and particular substance images, come to be associated with particular social identities, particular populations, particular spatial locations and particular technologies of consumption. This chapter turns to consider the history of mediated drugs education, but there is not a rigid divide between the symbolic frameworks of popular drug cultures and the discourses of formal mediated drugs education. Rather, for much of the last century, mediated drugs education drew upon the same symbolic frameworks in the construction of the messages intended to 'educate' about drug use. Just as in the last chapter it was suggested that elements in popular drugs cultures served to discipline, regulate and 'educate' populations about drug use and patterns of intoxication (as well as celebrate it), in this chapter it is suggested that those producing formal drugs education often drew upon these symbolic frameworks in constructing mediated drugs education material.

A central argument then is that mediated drugs education goes hand in hand with the emergence of the institutional regulation of drug production, distribution and consumption. The first section of the chapter will briefly trace the development of formal systems of regulation in the US, and through international agreements in the early decades of the twentieth century. At the same time the campaigning groups agitating for regulatory reform to address the dangers of illicit drug use in both the UK and the US generated propaganda materials to win public support and 'educate' policy makers. Those who seek to maintain a distinction between drugs education and campaigning propaganda might struggle to sustain their position when the discourses of mediated drugs education produced during the early and mid-twentieth century are considered. Indeed, mediated drugs education is rarely, if ever, solely concerned with informing particular 'target populations' about the consequences of illicit drug use. Mediated drugs education frequently serves a number of purposes beyond the dissemination of 'information': to reassure the public that political elites are taking action, to assist government drugs agencies in securing particular definitions of a 'drugs problem', or in influencing decisions about public resources, or to legitimate government interventions and patterns of enforcement. Beyond this some critics suggest that particular forms of drug regulation serve as 'lightening rods', which permit social fears about particular communities or ethnic groups to be expressed through racialized discourses of drugs regulation (Musto, 1999). If this is true of drugs regulation, very much the same can be said of mediated drugs education, too.

THE ORIGINS OF DRUG REGULATION IN BRITAIN AND THE US

According to Bancroft, 'every psychoactive substance in common use has its own control regime, the intricate lattice of formal and informal controls and sanctions structuring its use'; those producing, distributing or consuming drugs engage with these 'regimes of regulation and control' at differing points in each control network (2009: 113). Governments may try to control drug use through the enactment of law but alongside such formal controls, there are multiple networks of informal norms setting out the prescriptive frameworks embedded in popular drug cultures, regulating aspects of production, distribution and consumption. This is a useful way of understanding the relationship between drug regulation and drug education. Drug education strategies seek to strengthen informal normative frameworks whilst legitimating formal, legal sanctions. At the same time, the elements or discourses in popular culture which 'celebrate' hedonistic intoxication often undercut or contest these 'regimes of control'. As a consequence, such regimes of drug control or regulation are never fixed permanently and there is always the potential for destabilization or change. This chapter traces some of those patterns of enforcement, regulation and

change as they are intimately bound up with the history of mediated drug regulation in the UK and US.

The use of particular substances for the purposes of intoxication is a feature of almost every society in every period of history since settled agricultural communities first emerged. In Britain and the US up to the middle of the nineteenth century, alcohol was probably the primary means of achieving intoxication for most of the population across all social classes. However, opium use was quite common as a remedy for particular ailments and less commonly opium would be eaten or smoked as an intoxicant (Berridge, 1999). In Britain before the enactment of the 1868 Pharmacy Act, opium, morphine and cannabis were commonly available over the counter at grocers' shops and herbalists while rural communities might brew their own 'poppy head tea' (Berridge, 1989: 23). Berridge estimates that on the basis of poisonings reported to the coroner, opiate consumption was significantly higher during the 1860s than during the 'heroin epidemic' of the 1980s (1989: 24). Laudanum, an opium tincture, was widely consumed as a medicinal remedy for physical and nervous conditions. Morphine was produced as a derivative of opium at the beginning of the nineteenth century and was used more widely by doctors after the invention of the hypodermic syringe in 1843 (Boyd, 2008: 12). Up to this point there was not a clear cultural distinction between 'medical' and 'non-medical' or 'recreational use'. Marijuana was also consumed in a variety of medicines and herbal treatments and, of course, hemp had a variety of industrial uses. Cocaine, first synthesised from the coca plant in 1855, was widely promoted as a tonic in the ensuing decades and was used as one of the original active ingredients in the production of Coca Cola and other soft drinks in the 1880s and 1890s.

Bancroft (2009) suggests that networks or regimes of drug control exist across multiple dimensions of power, including the economic, political and cultural. The history of the emergence of formal drug regulation in the UK and the US confirms this as we find global economic and political interests intersecting with localized regimes of imperial control to produce the national and international regulatory frameworks that emerged in the early twentieth century. But once again, it is the play of underlying symbolic frameworks, which associate particular identities or kinds of people with particular substances in particular locations, that is so important in determining exactly how these regimes of control were applied in local contexts and to whom in particular they were directed. It is the use of particular substances by particular *kinds* of people in particular settings that triggers the drive to extend regulation. In Britain, for example, alcohol regulation was accelerated by concerns about working class drunkenness and the 'gin craze' among the urban poor during the eighteenth century. The regulation of opium and cannabis in Britain was a matter of government taxation on the activities of imperial trading companies such as the East India Company until cultural anxieties about the kinds of people using these drugs, namely

Chinese migrant workers, fueled by the Opium Wars of 1839–1843 and 1856–1860, provided the necessary political resources for those campaigning for greater regulation of distribution and consumption (Blake, 2007).

But even this is a simplification. As Bancroft suggests 'regimes of control' are created through the exercise of complex interests. Throughout the history of drugs regulation it is possible to detect the play of particular professional strategies that intersect with the symbolic frameworks that underpin drug discourses. Pharmacists in Britain were able to exploit early political anxieties about opiate intoxication to lobby for the Pharmacy Act of 1868, which established a class of persons, professionally qualified to distribute registered drugs and poisons, effectively granting pharmacists a legal monopoly on the supply of opiates. In subsequent decades doctors engaged in a comparable professional struggle to shift the understanding of drug use from an unfortunate habit to a firmer definition as a medical problem, thus justifying the extension of their professional control to this 'social disease' (Berridge, 1989: 25).

In the US campaigns for drug regulation and, more ambitiously, prohibition really accelerated in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, but very similar symbolic frameworks can be detected underpinning these 'educative' drug discourses. Opium use was common as a therapeutic tool during and after the American Civil War. Cocaine became a very common ingredient in tonics and soda drinks during the 1880s and 1890s. But just as in Britain, misgivings about such patterns of drug use fused the 'knowledge' of medical science with social anxieties about particular social identities and particular populations. Violence perpetrated by blacks on whites was attributed to 'cocainomania', opium smoking was associated with the arrival of Chinese migrant labor and cannabis use with Negroes (Musto, 1999: 8–11). The pressure for reform was partly driven by religious leaders, such as the Right Reverend Charles Bent, and partly by secular figures, such as the campaigner and journalist Samuel Hopkins Adams who used the press to target scandals arising from the unregulated sale of pharmaceuticals. In 1882 a key, popular publication for the prohibitionist movement *The Tobacco Problem* written by Margaret Woods Lawrence (pen name Meta Lander) was published, eventually running to six editions before the turn of the century. This book integrated religious and medical arguments because 'science is the expression of God's will and his work in the universe' (Lawrence, 1882:1) but bracketed opium addiction with tobacco. By the fifth edition, the focus of concern was extended to the use of all narcotics for medical purposes because in the consumption of prescribed narcotics, drugs intended to 'serve' in treatment actually create more profound difficulties as 'the servant becomes not only a master but a tyrant' (Lawrence, 1897). As in Britain, a number of pressure groups emerged, such as The Anti-Narcotic Society of the Pacific Coast founded by Doctor Vanderbeck in 1891, while the American medical profession began to deploy the language of medicalization referring to 'narcomania' (Kerr,

2002), or 'morphinism' (Carter, 2002) in scientific publications such as the *Journal of Inebriety*. During the same era the International Reform Bureau, representing a coalition of missionary, church and political groups located in the US colonies in Southeast Asia, extended the campaign against opium trading to the edges of the US empire (Tyrell, 2008).

However, there were also powerful interests lobbying to construct a framework of narcotic regulation, which served their commercial interests. By the turn of the twentieth century the American Pharmaceutical Association recognized that prohibitionist campaigns had built significant momentum, but that this also presented an opportunity for the association to steer regulation in a direction that consolidated the professional and commercial interests of its members. The association established a Committee on the Acquirement of the Drug Habit in 1902 to investigate the problem and make recommendations, which eventually led to the production of a 'model law' dealing with the regulation of habit forming drugs to be promoted through state legislatures across the US (Musto, 1999: 18–20). Significantly, these proposals promoted full prohibition in relation to the patterns of narcotic use from which pharmacists were least likely to profit, such as opium smoking, but in relation to other substances and technologies of consumption, called for pharmacists and physicians to be granted regulated monopoly control of narcotic distribution. The reward for lobbying came first in the 1906 Columba Pharmacy Act and two years later in the sections relating to narcotics of the Pure Food and Drug Act passed by Congress in 1908.

Once again, as Bancroft (2009) suggests, the 'regimes of control' operating here reflect a lattice work of economic interests, medical and moral discourses, and social prejudice. However, the crucial point for the purposes of this chapter is that while religious leaders, social campaigners and professional interests intersected through the campaigns for prohibition or regulation, their ideas, arguments and 'evidence' circulated through reports in newspapers, medical journals and in the political arenas at state and federal level. These arguments drew upon the symbolic frameworks which organized the understanding of drug use in popular culture, but also lent them the legitimacy accorded to expert or professional knowledge. Once again, as in Britain, the early campaigns for drug regulation were also in effect early campaigns of mediated drugs education.

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY REGULATION IN THE US

Chapter 2 of this volume describes the ways in which drug consumption was represented in popular film during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The association of illicit drug use with these sexualized and racialized symbolic frameworks provides the context for the development the formal structures of drug regulation in the first half of the twentieth

century. Early silent films such as *For His Son* (1912), which featured cocaine addiction, or *Broken Blossoms* (1919), with a story line about a white woman rendered sexually vulnerable in an opium den (Boyd, 2010), together with the construction of Chinese opium users as evil characters in the popular fiction of Sax Rohmer or Conan Doyle (Blake, 2007), reproduced the popular symbolic frameworks that sat alongside professional and medical opinion in the development of official drug policy. News reporting further reinforced these popular ideas, because reports of drug related crimes and deaths were usually organized in terms of very similar frameworks. Thus, headlines reporting 'White Girls Hypnotised by Yellow Men' (Blackman, 2004: 21) and news stories about high profile drug-related deaths such as those of Edith and Ida Yeoland in 1901 (Berridge, 1999: 239) or actress Billie Carleton in 1918 (Kohn, 1992: 105) all consolidated in the US and Britain the association between drug consumption, particular gendered and racialized identities, and particular patterns of risk.

The US began to lobby for the development of an international framework of drug regulation as its own imperial ambitions extended to the Philippines and it was compelled to consider the 'opium problem' of the Far East. Through the Shanghai Commission of 1909 the US and the United Kingdom sought to secure tighter controls over drug trafficking and in 1912 The Hague Convention, sponsored by the US, called for a formal system of international drug regulation prohibiting the trafficking and non-medical use of cocaine and opiates. While some of the signatories, including Britain, dragged their heels somewhat, the US enacted the 1914 Harrison Act to ratify The Hague Convention thus securing the first comprehensive system of formal drugs regulation in the US. In the US, formal drugs regulation has historically placed much less emphasis upon medical definitions of the problem and much more emphasis upon criminal enforcement driven by moral sanction. This is important in understanding the differences between the forms of mediated drugs education to be found in each country.

US MEDIATED DRUGS EDUCATION AND *REEFER MADNESS*: 1923 TO 1945

A central argument in this chapter is that drugs regulation and mediated drugs education are intimately associated. In the US during the 1920s and 1930s this was manifest in four ways. Firstly, the pressure groups and reforming organizations calling for further drug regulation continued to generate prohibitionist propaganda which sought to 'educate' the public and policy makers about the dangers of narcotics. Secondly, the new agencies given responsibility for enforcing drug regulation also deployed 'educative' public relations strategies alongside enforcement activities. Thirdly, both pressure groups and enforcement agencies were comfortable in embracing and lending legitimacy to particular patterns of drug representation reproduced

through the new twentieth century 'mass communications industries', particularly cinema, radio and popular magazine publishing. Fourthly, in the production of the most notorious 'mediated drugs education' resources of the period there was a blurring in media form and definition. Were the films of the *Reefer Madness*–era drugs education films or poorly produced drama for the exploitation circuit?

Thus, the mediated drugs education of this period constructed its discourse by drawing upon some of the symbolic resources, or discursive elements, to be found in the symbolic frameworks underpinning popular drugs culture. In effect mediated drugs education was stimulated by the political, economic and cultural struggles around the emerging frameworks of drugs regulation in the US. Mediated drugs education reflected these struggles in the particular kinds of symbolic representation it constructed in its drugs education messages.

This is a period in which it was generally assumed that the emerging technologies of 'mass communication' were powerful and offered tremendous potential for both social good or social harm. Even social scientists during this era embraced the common assumption that these communication technologies could mold public opinion. The triumph of dictators in Europe and domestic demagogues in US politics appeared to confirm this. Writing during this era the American sociologist Louis Wirth believed that 'in mass communication systems we have unlocked a new social force of yet incalculable magnitude' (1948: 12). While he recognized the dangers of this new force, he also wrote enthusiastically about its potential to educate and unify 'mass audiences'; the classic model of one-directional linear communication during the high modernist age, the early and middle years of the twentieth century. Belief in this model was shared by social scientists and state administrators, not to mention narcotics agencies and the media industries themselves. If used for social good, it was widely assumed, these new technologies of communication could be employed by technocratic or political elites at the center to beam out educational messages to mass audiences located throughout 'mass society'. Mass media were potential tools for mobilizing opinion and engineering social good.

One of the leading prohibitionists of this period was Richmond P. Hobson, a man who entirely embraced the modernist understanding of the power of mass communication but combined this with a remarkably sophisticated grasp of corporate public relations and pressure group politics. Hobson's approach was not characterized by a strong fidelity with regard to epidemiological or pharmacological evidence, but it did demonstrate a notable drive and energy. He established The International Narcotic Education Association in 1923, the World Conference on Narcotic Education in 1926, and the World Narcotic Defence Association in 1927 (Musto, 1999: 190). Each one of these organizations played a role in producing anti-narcotic propaganda, particularly targeting news media, and they were designed to mobilize the American public in the campaign against not simply opium and cocaine,

but all narcotics. Hobson designated a week in February 1927 as Narcotic Education Week which became an annual event throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1928 he used airtime donated by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to warn that the symptoms of narcotic addiction are 'breaking out all over our country', with the consequence that 'most of the daylight robberies, daring holdups, cruel murders and similar crimes of violence are known to be committed chiefly by drug addicts who constitute the primary cause of our alarming crime wave' (cited in Musto, 1999: 191).

Hobson was not the only moral force to grapple with this frightening new threat. On the West Coast the White Cross International Anti-Narcotic Society, an organization that had grown out of the concerns of American businessmen trading in the Far East, adopted very similar media strategies (Musto, 1999: 192). The society was incorporated in 1922 and only wound-up in February 1963. During its existence it sponsored a number of films including *Human Wreckage* (1923), one of the first main feature films to double as both entertainment and drugs education. *Human Wreckage* sets the moral and symbolic template for the subsequent 'reefer movies' of the 1930s but the focus here is upon morphine. Produced by Dorothy Davenport, whose husband had died following a period of morphine addiction, the plot portrays the moral and physical threat to the white, middle-class family posed by narcotics. A respectable lawyer succumbs to morphine addiction following treatment for a nervous breakdown. The contagion within the home spreads as his wife also succumbs, leading to moral degradation, family break-up and the erosion of the pillars of society. The narrative is reinforced with contributions from 'real' experts including Los Angeles police chiefs and civic leaders, a tactic employed time and again in subsequent drugs education films of this kind. The moral conclusion to be drawn is secured powerfully with the introduction of the 'classic shooting up scene' which 'fetishizes' the needle in drug films (Boyd, 2008: 39), as a young, white woman injects her own upper arm in front of mother and baby. Thus, both the physical harm and moral hazards of narcotics are dramatically underlined using a symbolic framework that represents morphine as a powerful substance, so toxic it can penetrate the middle-class home, and threaten a particular kind of social identity, the white, middle-class woman.

Evidence suggests that there was some limited interest in drug issues among the mainstream news media in the early 1920s, but not a consistently strong appetite. This was partly because the use of opium, morphine, and other narcotics such as marijuana was increasing at only a very gradual pace (Schafer, 1972). But this situation changed and news media appetites greatly heightened through the activity of the prohibitionist lobby. The *New York Times* noted marijuana as the 'latest habit-forming drug' in 1923 with the expression of only mild concern, but by 1927 the *Chicago Tribune* was mounting a sustained campaign to support the proposal before the Illinois state legislature to extend narcotic control to marijuana (Schafer, 1972). State by state the prohibitionist lobbying began to yield results

with possession of marijuana being criminalized in California (1915), Iowa (1921), Nevada (1923), Washington (1923), Arkansas (1923), Nebraska (1927) and Wyoming (1929). Throughout this time the enactment of drug regulation went hand in hand with the production of mediated 'drugs education' to lobby for reform and secure legitimacy for enforcement.

The Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) was established in 1930. From the very start the FBN fulfilled a public relations function as well as an enforcement role because its creation was intended to separate and distance narcotic regulation from the unpopular regulatory regime of alcohol prohibition, as well as promote narcotics enforcement at federal and international levels (Musto, 1999: 207). H. J. Anslinger was appointed as first Commissioner of Narcotics and head of the agency. Although a career diplomat and civil servant, Anslinger was enthusiastic in his adoption of the media strategies used by the campaigning prohibitionists in the service of this new state bureaucracy. He cooperated with journalists and put his own name to dozens of newspaper reports and magazine articles about the danger of marijuana, undertook speaking tours, and published two of his own books (Boyd, 2010: 9). He even acted in one post-war anti-drugs film, *To The Ends of the Earth*, produced in 1948 (Starks, 1982: 55). Anslinger is the original prototype for Howard Becker's famous concept of the 'moral entrepreneur' who employs media skills to generate public moral outrage as a means to secure economic or political resources (Becker, 1963). He worked particularly closely with Courtney Ryley Cooper, a colorful character who had worked as a circus performer and traveling entertainer before reinventing himself as a writer and publicist. Anslinger and Cooper's combined craft produced a series of 'sordid cautionary tales' (Boyd, 2010: 9) offered as objective reports about the dangers of marijuana; each with a set of stock characters including a 'respectable' victim, an evil drug 'pedlar', and an appalling consequence for those who fell prey to the menace of the drug. These stories were published in newspapers and magazines across the US. For example, their article entitled 'Marijuana—Assassin of Youth' published in the *American Magazine* in July 1937 begins:

> THE sprawled body of a young girl lay crushed on the sidewalk the other day after a plunge from the fifth story of a Chicago apartment house. Everyone called it suicide, but actually it was murder. The killer was a narcotic known to America as marijuana, and to history as hashish. It is a narcotic used in the form of cigarettes, comparatively new to the United States and as dangerous as a coiled rattlesnake. (Cooper and Anslinger, 1937)

In fact Anslinger and Cooper had borrowed the title of this article from the 35 mm feature film of the same name produced in 1935. Anslinger had been involved in its production and also cooperated in the production of two other classic 'reefer madness' feature films during this decade: *Marihuana,*

the Weed with Roots in Hell (1936) and, perhaps, the most notorious of the genre, *Reefer Madness* also produced in (1936). These films made spurious claims to legitimacy as 'educational' films, as underlined by the original title of *Reefer Madness* which was 'Tell Your Children'. But any representation of drugs on film was banned under the Motion Picture Production Code, established by the Hollywood film industry in 1930. The code banned the representation of drug use on screen 'because of its evil consequences', adding further that the existence of drug trafficking should not be brought to the attention of audiences (quoted in Starks, 1982: 55). However, these films were hardly dry exercises in disseminating drugs information to the public. The committee responsible for administering the industry code objected to these films not only because of their subject matter but also to the salacious and highly sexualized content. *Marihuana, the Weed with Roots in Hell*, for example, was refused a Certificate of Approval because it contravened a section of the code, forbidding 'excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures' (quoted in Starks, 1982: 55).

The refusal of access to the main cinema distribution chains did not prevent the widespread circulation of these films. They emerged on the unregulated 'exploitation' circuit with salacious marketing hinting at their 'pleasures' rather than their sound drugs education. Dwain Esper had already got a track record in using the veneer of 'education' to market films about sex, drugs or both. He imported a League of Nations sponsored Egyptian anti-opium film, *Sinister Menace* in 1931 and distributed it on the exploitation circuit (Starks, 1982: 192), and was later responsible for 'family education' shorts such as *How to Undress in Front of your Husband* (1937) and *How to Take a Bath* (1937). But in 1934 he had also produced *Narcotic*, a low budget film which once again claimed to present a fictionalized account of 'real events' and dealt with the downfall of a respectable white doctor who was tempted by his opium smoking companion, an actor made to 'look' oriental (Boyd, 2008: 40). The trajectory is inevitably downward, from promising community doctor to morally degraded quack who commits suicide at the end of the film. In the course of the story the audience is given a very strong picture of the damage that opiate addiction does to the family within the middle-class home. Clearly here in the opposition between Caucasian and Oriental identities, the film is drawing from the reservoir of symbolism that Anglo-American popular drug culture offered for the construction of the symbolic frameworks underpinning drug representations. A year after *Narcotic*, Dwain Esper produced another drug exploitation movie, *Cocaine Fiends* (1935). Nick, a drug peddler, persuades a respectable white girl, Jane, to run away to the city with him after she has begun to use cocaine for 'headaches'. Hopelessly addicted, she sinks further and further into a life of degradation, poverty and sexual exploitation. A similar fate awaits her brother, Eddie, who arrives in the city to look for his sister and finds her in an opium den. In both *Narcotic* and *Cocaine Fiends* narcotics are represented as powerful threats to the stability of the

family, corrosive of middle-class culture and morality. Female drug users face grim fates because narcotic use opens them to sexual exploitation. The association between particular kinds of drugs, particular technologies of consumption and particular social identities is reproduced once again. We can see in both these movies many of the symbolic elements employed in the construction of the subsequent 'reefer madness' films. Both *Narcotic* and *Cocaine Fiends* made claims to educate the public but were actually released on the popular exploitation circuit. Each drew from the popular drug discourses which associated the threat of opium with the threat of an oriental 'other', and both offered an elision of this threat with ideas of white female sexual exploitation. Thus, popular cultural representations of drug consumption and discourses of drugs education blur together in ways that strengthen the argument for further regulation.

The 'reefer madness' movies share very similar narratives, moral messages, and underlying symbolic frameworks.. In these films, marijuana is presented as a *substance* that is powerful and toxic: it has the capacity not only to weaken the body physically but to erode the individual's moral capacity. The main *locations* in these narratives are the respectable American small town and the middle-class family home. In terms of *social identities*, white women are presented as potential victims, prey to unscrupulous male drug dealers and their female partners. In *Marihuana, the Weed with Roots in Hell*, the accent suggests that the dealer and his brother may be Italian, thus signifying a sinister hint of 'the other' (Boyd, 2008: 50). Musto argues that much of the political momentum for drugs regulation was generated by a subtle harnessing of concerns about drugs to fears about the arrival of 'others', such as Mexican or Chinese migrant workers (1999: 221). The process of victimization takes the form of moral as well as physical degradation as female victims become easy prey for male sexual predators, or are driven toward extremes of mental illness by their drug habit. Smoking reefer cigarettes is the 'gateway' for an inevitable drug career that will lead to other patterns of addiction including the use of the iconic syringe as a *technology of consumption.* But these symbolic frameworks are combined with a powerful endorsement of the authorities, either 'scientific' (signified by the doctor), or figures of the criminal justice system, such as judges or police officers, who are at one in identifying the 'objective' dangers of marijuana.

At the beginning of *Assassin of Youth* (directed by Elmer Clifton), the newspaper headlines scream 'Marijuana Deals Death' and 'Marijuana Crazed Youth Kills' reporting a marijuana-related road accident. A junior reporter, Art Brighton, is dispatched by his editor to investigate the extent of the marijuana problem in a small town where the death occurred. He soon meets an apparently middle-class couple, actually the respectable faces of a criminal drugs racket, which organizes marijuana parties in order to hook and then exploit the sons and daughters of the middle-class neighborhood. One scene underlines the narcotic impact of the drug as the dancing

at a marijuana party grows wilder and the women more abandoned raising their dress hems in a manner highly erotically charged for the times. An innocent and respectable girl, Joan, becomes the sexual object of a marijuana seduction while her sister smokes a reefer and is filled with violent, knife wielding rage. It requires the family doctor to explain that this is yet another example of the psychopathic behavior caused by marijuana. Joan very nearly loses an inheritance as well as her reputation before being rescued by Art Brighton.

In *Marihuana, the Weed with Roots in Hell* (directed by Dwain Esper) a voice-over at the beginning explains that the marijuana problem in America is getting progressively worse; the drug 'destroys the conscience' and encourages extremes of violence and sexual license. The film follows the downfall of Verna, another young, white woman from a middle-class home, who is exploited by Tony, the local pedlar of marijuana. Verna falls through a 'gateway' toward heroin addiction, the syringe, unmarried pregnancy and organized crime, but not before participating in a teenage swimming party where the marijuana intoxicated girls shockingly swim naked.

In *Reefer Madness* (directed by Louis Gasnier) the film opens with a statement that the film is intended to 'startle' the audience in order to 'sufficiently emphasize the frightful toll of the new drug menace which is destroying the youth of America in alarmingly increasing numbers'. While the scenes and incidents are fictionalized, it is explained that the story is based upon real scientific research. The effects of marijuana begin with violent uncontrollable laughter but quickly lead to dangerous hallucinations, emotional disturbances, and fortunately for distributors on the exploitation movie circuit, 'the loss of all power to resist physical emotions'.

The attempt to 'startle' the audience with the 'facts' anticipates the strategy of 'fear arousal', which underpinned many of the drugs education and 'social guidance' short films produced in the post-war period. The plot differs only in minor detail from the other two classic 'reefer movies'. Again, *Reefer Madness* is set in a respectable small town. At the marijuana parties organized by the pedlars to hook new victims we see 'uncontrollable laughter', followed by 'emotional disturbances' and plenty of evidence of 'the loss of all power to resist physical emotions', as couples embrace and in one case disappear to a bedroom. Once again, an innocent, white, middle-class girl falls prey to the marijuana dealers, Jack and Mae. She arrives in search of her brother who has already become a marijuana victim, but after smoking her first reefer cigarette she narrowly escapes sexual assault and is then involved in a series of increasingly violent episodes which lead to two murders. At key points in the film plot devices allow a voice of authority to fully secure the definition of marijuana as a grave and growing threat to respectable America. The film starts with a Dr. Carroll giving a talk to parents at a Parent Teacher Association meeting entitled 'Tell Your Children' in which he warns of the scientific evidence that marijuana is a growing menace. The plot then

unfolds as one of the 'true stories' he tells to parents. Just in case audiences have not quite got the message, he reappears at the mid-point of the movie in a scene in which he consults the local office of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics to seek their advice about the problem. The officer from the FBN patiently explains to Dr. Carroll that as marijuana grows wild in practically every state in the US there is an urgent need for an inter-state framework of regulation, which neatly makes the case for the Marijuana Tax Act, subsequently passed in 1937. The agent of the FBN says that in 1930 the number of cases on file could be placed in a small folder but just six years later they amount to several filing cabinets full, which he demonstrates by opening the drawer of a filing cabinet.

While it is not clear to what extent this series of films in the mid-1930s actually did influence American public opinion let alone 'educate' drug users, it certainly helped to create a political space for the enactment of the final piece of pre-war US federal drugs legislation, the 1937 Marihuana Tax Act, which extended governmental regulation beyond opiates and cocaine to cannabis. It also contributed to the propaganda battle the FBN was waging against clinic-based treatment, or the 'maintenance' model for addiction that was developing in certain states such as Louisiana. H. J. Anslinger was determined to prevent this American equivalent of the 'British system' from taking root and engaged in an energetic campaign to undermine the case for a medical model of addiction (Musto, 1999: 174). Enforcement rather than treatment was required. The drug exploitation movies of the 1930s were certainly helpful in promoting an interpretation that stressed the moral weakness of drug victims and the moral wickedness of 'pedlars' rather than medical causes while, at the same time, offering a heroic role for the agencies of enforcement. As Valverde suggests the discursive struggle to secure the concept of 'free will' is central to the history of the moral regulation of intoxication (Valverde, 1997).

THE GOLDEN AGE OF SOCIAL GUIDANCE: 1945 TO 1980

Once the Marihuana Tax Act was passed the FBN invested less energy in supporting the producers of more extreme anti-narcotic propaganda. There was less incentive to convince the polity or the public of the gravity of the situation. Rather, the agency needed to be seen to be managing the problem (Musto, 1999: 228). In the US in 1945, after World War II, mediated drugs education was reinvigorated by a new alliance of moral and media entrepreneurs. Just as the FBN had cooperated with exploitation movie producers like Dwain Esper, writer-opportunists such as Cooper, and moral campaigners like Hobson, in the post-war era a new 'regime of control' (Bancroft, 2009) based upon a lattice work of regulatory relationships developed involving the FBN, local state police, corporations and commercial short-film makers.

US policy makers and commentators feared that one of the consequences of US involvement in World War II might be a problem of anomie, or normlessness, among the young, exacerbated by the erosion of the usual normative order in war time and the return of troops brutalized by their experiences of fighting. In particular, there was a concern that the damage done to the social fabric during the war years, the Depression, and the apparent threats to American values posed by disparate forces, from communism to 1950s youth cultures, meant that new interventions were required to ensure the appropriate transition of American teenagers into adulthood. The commentary for *Youth in Crisis* (1943), which was distributed through American schools toward the end of the war explains that the film:

> . . . depicts what is happening to our young people because of the excitement of war; the mental and nervous instability of some of our draft-rejected young men, and teenage flouting of parental authority . . . Freed from parental authority, youngsters are venturing into new and unwholesome worlds. Experiments with new sensations [cut to shots of kids smoking dope] are tempting more and more teenaged youngsters along dangerous paths. (Quoted in Smith, 1999: 236)

This was the rationale for the 'mental hygiene' classroom film intended to provide 'social guidance' on everything from appearance and manners, to 'fitting in' in with friends, sex education, acknowledging the wisdom of parents, and drugs education. The short film had been used as a teaching and training tool during the war. Now, it could be harnessed as part of 'a peculiarly American, profit-making approach to social engineering' (Smith, 1999: 14) in which commercial companies produced short films, sometimes sponsored by the pre-war prohibitionist organizations, to provide 'social guidance' for the young in an attempt to ensure their 'mental hygiene'.

Like the drug films of the 1930s, many of these anti-drug 'social guidance' films are now preserved on YouTube and on-line film archives as sources of great amusement for contemporary audiences, but their underlying symbolic frameworks are not so different from those that inform the kinds of anti-drug Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and drugs education materials that circulate in the US today. In addition the elements used to construct these symbolic frameworks can be found in the drug films of earlier decades. A key *location* once again is the middle-class home or respectable neighborhood. Most of the 'social guidance' films made in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s focus upon 'innocent' middle class *identities*, preventing young people with promising futures and much to lose from 'going off the rails'. Other characters may include the vulnerable or psychologically maladjusted, the teenage peer group and the drug pedlar. The association of the drug threat with different social identities or 'others' is again suggested and during the Cold War this could include external

foreign powers. In Sid Davis's classic *The Terrible Truth* (1951) we are told that, 'some say the reds are promoting drug traffic to undermine national morale'. Few distinctions are made in terms of *substance images*: all narcotics are powerful, dangerous and likely to lead to addiction. For this reason, the only solution to the drugs problem is complete abstinence.

The lattice work of organizations underpinning this 'control regime' included the FBN and other enforcement agencies like the Los Angeles Police, but also the Narcotic Educational Foundation of America and the Anti-Narcotics League, which both continued their campaigns from the pre-war era. The new organizations within the post-war 'control regime' were commercial companies who produced short films for profit, such as Sid Davis Productions, Coronet Films and Centron, together with larger corporations who sponsored short education films either for commercial profit or public relations purposes, such as the Lockheed Corporation and Encylopedia Britannica Films. The concept of a 'regime of control' in this context is not intended to imply a deliberately coordinated and orchestrated approach among these agencies, but rather simply the point that they drew upon a common set of drug discourses and symbolic elements in the construction of the mediated drugs education they produced. And it should be remembered that the media strategies of the pre-war era continued and provided a wider cultural context within which these 'shorts' were located. Thus, H. J. Anslinger at the FBN continued to exploit media opportunities to propagandize in his capacity as 'expert advisor' on feature films such as *High School Confidential* (1958), which conflated marijuana, heroin, rock and roll, jazz, and juvenile delinquency in one powerful cautionary cocktail (Boyd, 2008: 115). One of the first post-war anti-drugs feature films was actually *Wild Weed* (1949), which tried to capitalize on the publicity surrounding the arrest of the film star Robert Mitchum for possession of marijuana. Lila Leeds, who was arrested with Mitchum, played the female lead who in film, rather than real life, learns the error of her ways. The film began with the prologue:

> This harmless looking cigarette is cloaked in many innocent disguises. But light the match, inhale the smoke, and it becomes an invitation to your own murder. This killer and the man who sells it has no respect for anybody. His victim is any lost soul. (Quoted in Starks, 1982: 104)

The film was produced by Kroger Babb who was also involved in 'social guidance' films. It was later rereleased as *Lila Leeds and Her Expose of the Marijuana Racket*, further blurring the distinction between exploitation entertainment and public education.

The earliest social guidance short films concerning drugs contained absolutely no moral ambivalence; nor did they permit the drug user to have a voice other than to validate the moral framing of the picture. Sid Davis Productions specialized in producing shorts in what could be described as

the popular 'tabloid' end of the market. One of Sid Davis's first social guidance films, *The Dangerous Stranger* (1950) was inspired by a real molestation case in his own neighborhood. The following year, *The Terrible Truth* (1951), featured a real juvenile court judge, Judge William McKesson, trying to figure out why there are so many 'marijuana addicts', in just under ten minutes running time. He visits 'Phyllis' who tells him about her experiences as a heroin addict. As we have seen, part of the explanation is found in the intentions of foreign 'reds' to weaken the nation's morale. The idea that foreign agents—whether Japanese militarists, Iranian nationalists, Cuban revolutionaries, Soviet, Chinese, or North Vietnamese communists—were trafficking narcotics to weaken America was a popular theme throughout the post-war period among populist politicians and commentators (Epstein, 1977: 81).

Ten years later, Sid Davis was still employing the same basic narrative in *Seduction of the Innocent* (1961), which tells the story of 'Jeanette' in just nine minutes. Jeanette was a respectable girl with prospects but she began hanging around 'the wild crowd'. Tempted by some of the bad elements in the 'wild crowd' to take 'bennies', 'uppers' and 'other pills', she inevitably develops a taste for marijuana which leads in turn to heroin addiction and prostitution. As Smith comments, 'this is one of the wildest fear films ever made' (1999: 200). With her face covered in sores, Jeanette is pictured writhing in agony on the floor of her cell, 'a slave by choice' to her habit without hope, 'lost to society, she'll continue her hopeless degrading existence until she escapes in death'. Sid Davis Productions frequently employed 'real' officials to lend authority to its films, but instead of dealing with doctors or those offering 'treatment', he instead chose to work with those at the 'sharp end' of the enforcement situations, such as juvenile court judges or representatives of the local Inglewood, Los Angeles Police Department.

The early Encyclopedia Britannica films offered comparable pictures of what narcotic use was like, but with a greater emphasis upon 'information' rather than the visceral 'shock treatment' delivered by Sid Davis. For example, in the twenty-two-minute short *Drug Addiction* (1950), produced by Hal Kopel for Encyclopedia Britannica, there is a similar focus upon the hazards of narcotics, the 'inevitable' descent toward addiction, and the misery of treatment, but additional sections provide a rather unlikely scholarly account of the origins of opium. Similarly, in *Alcohol and the Human Body* (1949) there is as much concern with the chemistry of alcohol within the human body as with the hazard of alcoholism. While the tone of these is a little more high minded than the Sid Davis tabloid approach, there is also a hint of a more liberal political perspective. Whereas in Sid Davis shorts drug problems are contingent upon individual moral choices for which the culpable individual inevitably pays a high price, in *Drug Addiction* there is a suggestion that there is a communal responsibility alongside the need for strong enforcement measures. It closes with a more optimistic prospect of treatment and recovery, providing there is 'intensive effort from all

community forces', such as church, neighbors, and so on, to help reintegrate the recovered addict.

A steady stream of short, social guidance films emerged in the early post-war period dealing with the dangers of drugs and alcohol, including *What About Drinking?* (Centron, 1954) and the more pessimistic *What About Alcoholism?* (Centron, 1956); *H: the Story of a Teen-Age Drug Addict* (Young America Films, 1951); *The Narcotics Story* (Police Science Productions, 1958) and *I Took the High Road* (Narcotics Education Incorporated, 1960). Individuals and organizations familiar from the pre-war era also contributed to the social guidance shorts industry. Hobson's Narcotic Education Foundation of America sponsored *Subject: Narcotics* (1951) while H. J. Anslinger partly scripted *Drug Addiction—A Medical Hazard* (Starks, 1982: 193). These mostly shared the same underlying assumptions about the undifferentiated dangers of all *substances* from marijuana to heroin and focused upon the threat that these drugs posed for respectable young people with promising futures. They usually pointed to the gateway through which marijuana smokers would descend toward addiction to opiates and all invoked the authorities, either police, medical experts, judges or teachers, to supply the endorsement that validated the narrative. As in the 1930s these discourses of drugs 'education' were accompanied by a tightening of formal regulation,each lending legitimacy to the other. First the 1951 Boggs Act introduced minimum mandatory sentences for trafficking, a measure 'long desired' by Commissioner Anslinger (Musto, 2002: 276), and then in 1956 the Narcotic Control Act permitted the death penalty for those dealing heroin to minors.

The same drug narratives could not survive unchanged through the 1960s as drug use grew more widespread and youth cultures become more openly critical of political and educational institutions. Anslinger retired in 1962 and a little more space opened in policy debates for those advocating the 'liberal' treatment approaches rooted in medical rather than moral discourses. The President's Advisory Commission on Narcotic and Drugs Abuse was established in 1963 and its report cautiously opened the door to federal treatment programs, as well as new enforcement recommendations (President's Advisory Commission, 1963). At the end of the decade the National Commission on Marijuana Drug Abuse, which reported in 1972 also called for a more pragmatic approach that distinguished the risks associated with particular substances (Schafer, 1972). And the availability of a wider range of *substances* including LSD and psychedelic drugs posed new challenges for the makers of drugs education short films.

Some, like Sid Davis merely substituted new drugs into the same old narratives, as in *LSD Trip or Trap?* (1968), *Keep Off the Grass* (1969) or *Curious Alice* (1968) in which Alice wanders through a dangerous 'wonderland' of psychedelic drugs, alcohol and amphetamines. In *LSD Trip or Trap?* Sid Davis again draws on the assistance of the Inglewood Police Department to tell the story of Bob, the only survivor in a car crashed by

his best friend Chuck, who lost control after taking LSD. Similarly, the Lockheed Corporation sponsored four 'case study' shorts in 1969 dealing with LSD, barbiturates, amphetamines and heroin. These used a photostrip and voice-over format to tell four stories of the young and respectable, succumbing to temptation with disastrous consequences. Thus, in *LSD: A Case Study* (1969) the main character experiences a rather comically exaggerated 'bad trip' in which a hot dog turns into first a screaming face and secondly a 'terrifying' troll. The idea of the drug induced hallucination seems to have captured the imagination of drugs education film producers during the late 1960s, but their creativity was always constrained by very low budgets. In *Trip to Where* (1968), a US Navy sponsored short, a sailor called Bill takes acid on leave, is terrified by his own reflection, tries to leap from a window and is relieved of his duties following some unfortunate experiences with his ship's radar system. The navy doctor tells him sternly that 'LSD seems to interfere with ambition, reaching one's goals in life and with being a responsible person' (Starks, 1982: 218).

However, some of the drugs education films produced during the late 1960s and early 1970s are a little more ambivalent in the way they frame drug use. In some cases, the voice of the drug user is permitted to be heard more; the narrative is slightly more nuanced with less emphasis upon the stock explanations involving unscrupulous drug pedlars, and their innocent but psychologically flawed prey. The *Mindbenders* (1969) included interviews that gave a voice to young drug users, as well as medical experts; *The Flipside* (1969) signaled in its title an intention to grasp an alternative perspective focused upon the backgrounds of young drug users, their problems and the reasons they gave for using drugs; and *A Crutch for all Seasons* (1969) featured three addicts talking about their experiences in their own words. But perhaps most startling is *The Chemical Tomb* (1969, Alan Kishbaugh Productions), which took a surprisingly radical approach, portraying young drug users as social innovators. Opening shots show young adults, rather than vulnerable teenagers, sitting on a sofa in a rather 'artistic' and 'cool' setting, sharing a joint. The voiceover begins:

> This is the now generation. The age of bobby socks and ice cream sodas is gone, these people no longer feel constrained by the social rules of the past, they are better read and more concerned about all people, all cultures. An older generation could learn about the fresh thinking from them

The presence of drugs in this family setting (at one point a young child and mother can be seen) does not seem to necessarily threaten the family; it suggests that drug users may have creativity and leadership potential, rather than profound moral weaknesses. But by the end of the film we are encouraged to believe that the drug habits of this new, forward-thinking generation may actually become an impediment that frustrates

their innovative potential. Drugs are a barrier to progressive social change. In *Replay* (1970), an eight-minute short produced by the McGraw Hill Corporation, it is gently suggested that the older generation holds some prejudices about the younger generation, though the final conclusion is still a clear anti-drugs message. This kind of much more nuanced and subtle anti-drugs message was rare in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but would have been impossible in previous decades.

The flicker of a more liberal or progressive flame in the history of American mediated drugs education did not last. President Nixon declared 'war on drugs' as part of a new government program at the beginning of the 1970s. Nixon was alarmed by the rising crime rates in urban centers, including Washington, D. C., and was persuaded that much of this was drugs related (Epstein, 1977: 77). While the rhetoric of the 'war on drugs' was employed by the Reagan administration a decade later to legitimate a drugs strategy that strongly prioritized enforcement, Nixon's program did support the use of the treatment model on a limited basis in dealing with heroin addiction alongside tougher policing and enforcement strategies at a local level, greater resourcing of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (which had been created by merging the FBN with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare), and an aggressive attack on the international supply routes (Musto, 1999: 248). However, the rhetoric of a war on drugs powerfully engaged with the dominant drug discourse and symbolic frameworks that the social guidance films had been reproducing through the post-war period. This left little room for liberal sentiment, let alone any movement away from the simple abstinence message.

The 'golden age' of social guidance short films came to a close for a very simple reason: television in combination with the VCR offered a more convenient communication technology and the Federal Communications Commission required television stations to carry Public Service Announcements (PSAs) which provided new spaces for anti-drug messages. During the 1970s, the format of the social guidance short film migrated to the small screen. This happened not only through the use of PSAs, but also in more ambitious attempts to harness television formats for drugs education purposes. For example, the national ABC channel ran a series of *After School Specials* that sometimes dealt with drugs issues, but the narrative structures bore striking similarities to the social guidance films of earlier years. In an episode entitled 'Stoned', Jack a highly motivated school student, falls in with the 'fast crowd', smokes cannabis and jeopardizes his future.[1] Abstinence is the only strategy to avoid ruining a promising future. Local television networks carried similar messages, but with lower production values. For example, *The Community Television Foundation of South Florida* produced 'Drugs Are Like That' in which two small children play with a Lego set and discuss drugs.[2] One compares taking drugs to a baby sucking on a teat for comfort, which is juxtaposed with shots of a man drowning. When the Lego construction breaks, one child says 'all I did

was try one little thing . . . drugs are like that'. Although the epidemiological evidence confirmed that heroin and 'hard' drug use was growing much more rapidly in urban areas, particularly black communities, these drugs messages continued to represent middle-class, white children as the potential victims. The medium might change, but the symbolic frameworks did not, at least not at this point.

'JUST SAY NO': 1980 TO 2010

With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the emergence of the HIV epidemic in the mid-1980s, the rhetoric of American political drugs discourse grew more illiberal and made it even less possible for harm reduction messages to be encoded, even though at a federal and local level drugs projects were inevitably developing harm minimization strategies as a pragmatic means of managing the rise in both drug use and HIV (Campbell and Shaw, 2008: 690). Thus, a tension between the practice of drugs agency strategies at the local level, which had begun to emerge in the 1970s and the exclusively abstinence-based mediated drugs education circulated through the mainstream media grew more pronounced. Nancy Reagan is credited with coining the phrase 'Just Say No' in 1982, but it simply reaffirmed and lent a new political charge to the dominant discourse of mediated US drugs education that had first been constructed five decades earlier. The Encyclopedia Britannica Education Corporation provided continuity here in that it produced one of the first films to mobilize the new Reagan rhetoric in *Why Say No To Drugs* (directed by Chuck Olin, 1986), but by the middle of the 1980s popular media offered opportunities to circulate this abstinence message simultaneously through a variety of outlets. 'Just Say No' became an enduring theme reproduced through pop songs like Toya Jackson's hit single in 1987, Nancy Reagan's numerous television chat show appearances, television comedies such as *Diff'rent Strokes*[3] and the notoriously unconvincing 1982 anti-drugs television drama *Desperate Lives*.[4] The general abstinence message continued to be reproduced through Partnerships for a Drug Free America–sponsored television PSAs, including 'If You Are Using Pot You Are Not Using Your Brain', 'Saying No To Alcohol and Drugs', and 'Getting High on Life'.[5] The use of cartoon characters in anti-drug messages implied a recognition that drug use was now a risk among significantly younger age groups. In the early 1990s the use of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in a series of anti-drug PSAs with the slogan 'Say No to Drugs Say Yes to Pizza' confirmed this, but also acknowledged that it was not only the white, middle-class family that was at risk from the threat of drugs; the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles worked as a signifier for a more diverse range of ethnicities and class positions.

Through the 1990s and into the new millennium the emphasis upon abstinence over harm reduction retained a hegemonic grip upon American

mediated drugs education. Particular elements within the symbolic frameworks underpinning these messages changed: the racialized constructions grew more nuanced and by the late 1990s 'innocent victimhood' was no longer exclusively represented through white, middle-class identities. But even the most contemporary abstinence strategies assumed a moral universe in which 'wicked dealers' tempted the innocent: there had to be persons to whom the 'no' of *Just Say No* was addressed. For example, in *That's Illegal*,[6] a 1990s PSA, a young teenager called Mike tours the various rooms at a party saying no to a variety of drug offers on the grounds that drugs are illegal. The old assumptions about the undifferentiated toxic power of all illicit substances were also retained from the earlier symbolic frameworks.

However, one significant change occurred in the growing involvement of the US national departments of state in the production of mediated drugs education. In the period between 1930 and 1969 much of the mediated drugs education had been produced by the coalition of enterprising commercial and voluntary bodies discussed above with the sporadic assistance of Anslinger and the FBN. However, in 1969 *The Mindbenders* was produced by a commercial company, Vision Associates, but sponsored by the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare. and the Food and Drug Administration. Subsequently these departments and more recently, the Office of National Drug Control have quite frequently cooperated with commercial and not-for-profit organizations in sponsoring PSAs and other mediated drugs education. The Federal Safe and Drug Free Schools Act, passed in 1986, allowed public funds to be directed to local projects, including mediated drugs education. Drugs education subsequently developed along two distinct trajectories; one strategy focused exclusively upon school-based work and the development of drugs education within the curriculum, while a second approach took a broader focus upon the social environment, involving agencies beyond the school, neighborhood organizations and, in some cases, the mass media (Eisen, 2002: 188). School based projects such as DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) and SFA (Skills for Adolescence) placed the emphasis upon resistance training. However, some research evaluating the success of projects targeting young cigarette smokers suggested that strategies combining media with school-based work were more effective than projects delivered only within school (Flynn et al., 1994) and this strategy was applied in a study to assess the impact of anti-drug PSAs and classroom education among young people exhibiting particular personality traits, such as sensation seeking (Donohew et al., 2002).

The most ambitious government driven mass-mediated project in recent years has been the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (NYAMC) which was sanctioned in 1998 by Senate and Congress and managed by the Office of National Drug Control with a budget of almost one billion dollars (Hornik et al., 2008: 22–29). The initiative represented the 'most ambitious intervention program and certainly one of the most massive and expensive drug abuse prevention efforts' (Crano and Burgoon, 2002: 3) attempted in

the US because it involved the application of social marketing techniques to develop a multimedia strategy integrating television and radio advertising with magazine and Internet content to target young people aged between twelve and eighteen, and also their parents. Significantly, for the purposes of this book it represented a new approach in 'recognising that the Internet is one of the fastest-growing mediums through which to reach our primary target group' (McCaffrey, 1999). It also represented the most ambitious partnership of government, commercial and voluntary resources: funding for advertising was organized on a pro-bono basis involving the government, The Partnership for a Drug-Free America and commercial broadcasting channels, which allowed the purchase of slots in primetime, rather than the traditional off-peak PSA slots. However, the content of the advertisements demonstrated remarkable continuity with past. The same 'fear arousal' and 'shock' strategies were employed, even for ads dealing with marijuana, with suggested consequences of drug use including gun violence, rape, and self-mutilation.

The NYAMC was clearly more successful in reaching wider audiences than previous campaigns. One evaluation suggested that 94 percent of the young people sampled reported seeing at least one of the anti-drug ads in the previous month and 54 percent reported seeing ads on a weekly basis (Hornik et al., 2008: 22–32). But did the campaign actually work? The inherent difficulties in evaluating mass-mediated drugs education will be more fully discussed in the next chapter, but the NYAMC raised great hopes among some drugs workers and social psychologists who applauded the complexity and sophistication of the design. Early on Crano even claimed that 'there is little doubt that the Campaign has made an impact on knowledge and attitudes' (Crano and Burgoon, 2002: 5), though he conceded that whether or not enhanced knowledge resulted in changes in behavior remained to be seen. However, the most recent evaluations are less optimistic. Hornik and colleagues found that after the first round of campaigning those young people reporting most exposure to the advertisements were actually slightly less resistant to the temptation of marijuana; after the second round, anti-drug social norms were slightly but significantly weakened; and following round three, exposure to the advertisements actually predicted 'marijuana initiation' (2008: 22–29). L. Scheier and J. Grenard (2010) offer a slightly more upbeat conclusion—in their evaluation they found strong 'brand awareness' for the campaign among younger age groups and that awareness of campaign advertisement and radio messages was maintained into older adolescence. However, for the younger groups 'brand awareness' accelerated at the same time as growing use of drugs. Among older groups 'brand awareness' was associated with declines in binge drinking and tobacco use, but not with marijuana. Whether or not these changes can be attributed to the campaign alone or a mix of other possible variables, including simply transitioning through adolescence is, of course, difficult to determine with any degree of certainty.

The US Congress Committee on Appropriations chose to cut the funding for the NYAMC in 2012.[7]

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN SUMMARY

What can be learned from examining the American experience of mediated drugs education from 1923 to the turn of the new century? The first conclusion is that there is not a simple or unproblematic relationship between the production of mediated drugs education and the extent of actual drug problems in society or rates of use. The point that there is little or no relationship between the circulation of political and media definitions of social problems and 'objective' indicators of such problems is well established, as we have seen (Blumer, 1971; Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988; Vasterman, 2005). Likewise the development of US drugs regulation and enforcement strategies was never simply just a response to a growing 'drugs problem' but rather was more intimately bound up with discourses of social anxiety relating to class, ethnicity, gender and age (Musto, 1999: 294). American strategies to employ mass communication systems to disseminate drugs education messages were not simply responses to growing drug use, but actually much more complicated political interventions. During the era of the 'reefer madness' films of the 1930s evidence of real increases in the consumption of opiates, cocaine or marijuana was patchy and concentrated among very particular communities (Musto, 1999: 220). Rates of increase in use were certainly not of magnitudes to warrant the excessive rhetoric of the reefer films. Again, in the early post-war period the moral enterprise invested in the production of the drug-related social guidance films clearly preceded rather than responded to the growth in narcotic use, which certainly did begin in the late 1950s.

A second conclusion to be drawn is that there was often a significant social distance between the target audience constructed in the texts of these films and the social groups for whom such messages might be most relevant. Respectable white, middle-class families and their young were not the most 'at risk' group during this period. Following from this, a third point is that often the actual function of mediated drugs education was not to 'educate' vulnerable groups but to legitimate the deepening strategies of formal regulation and surveillance. In fact, we can understand the production of mass-mediated drugs education at this time in terms of the intersection of particular political, moral and economic interests. The energies of prohibitionist campaigning organizations such as The Anti-Narcotic League or World Narcotic Defence League combined with the more prosaic commercial interests of movie companies on the exploitation circuit or 'the educational film' market. These in turn engaged with the political strategies of H. J. Anslinger, the FBN and other political institutions. This intersection of energies, interests and discourses formed a series of 'regimes of control'

(Bancroft, 2009: 114), modified by particular circumstances during each decade, but nevertheless sufficiently stable to regulate the circulation of ideas about drugs and the kinds of people who took them. A further point can be made here. Some of the mediated drugs education of this period was also a product of a very particular contest; a struggle between competing discourses of treatment and enforcement. Anslinger was a determined and ruthless opponent of medical treatment models, particularly the small number of narcotic treatment clinics that began to be established before World War II, and their policy champion, the sociologist Alfred Lindesmith. Anslinger was determined to sway public opinion against both the clinics and Lindesmith, in the face of the epidemiological evidence which lent weight to the latter's argument (Galliher et al., 1998; McWilliams, 1990). Mediated drugs education was a useful tool in Anslinger's attempt to secure a particular 'regime of truth' (Foucault quoted in Rabinow, 1991).

The discussion of the American experience at this time also underlines the intimate relationship between popular culture and regulation. Just as disciplinary discourses in popular culture informally regulate patterns of intoxication, so we can see in the Reefer films of the 1930s and the social guidance shorts of the post-war era, a continual recycling and re-presentation of elements of the symbolic frameworks underpinning the construction of drugs and intoxication in popular mediated culture. Formal drugs education drew upon the popular cultural stereotypes and associations between social identities and particular kinds of drug use in attempting to make these abstinence messages resonate among audiences.

A drugs discourse based around ideas of abstinence and enforcement rather than treatment or harm minimization is likely to leave less room for the voices of those actually consuming drugs. During the 1930s and the early post-war period, the popular cultural stereotypes of 'dealers', 'victims', the 'crazed addict', and the dangerous 'other' served as substitutes for the voices of real drug users or more measured serious discussion of their experiences. Musto (1999) suggests that between 1965 and 1985 to a degree the American public grew more tolerant of drugs and the government was more willing to countenance treatment alongside enforcement strategies. Significantly, it is during this period, as we have seen in examples such as *The Mindbenders* and *The Flipside* that mass-mediated drugs education does open some space for these voices and experiences to be represented. But there is something in the alignment of assumptions underpinning linear models of mass communication that encourages a closed rather than discursive text: the producers of mass-mediated drugs education during this period usually assumed that the most effective use of mass communication technologies like cinema, radio and television depended upon the dissemination of one simple, singular and absolute message, not a discursive contested plurality of ideas. Right up to the most recent period during the 1990s and beginning of the new century, the model of communication underpinning even the more complex and sophisticated projects such as the

National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign assumed a traditional linearity, employing the language of 'persuasion' and 'applied communication' (Crano and Burgoon, 2002: 6) in the search for the one communicative strategy that would 'work' in altering behavior.

Finally, an important feature of this period was the limited role played by the central state in the determination of strategy with regard to mass-mediated drugs education. Leaving aside the particular strategies and struggles of the FBN, other US national departments of state were not active in shaping the direction or intensity of mass-mediated drugs education for much of the period between 1923 and the 1980s. Certainly the FCC ensured that the commercial broadcasting networks carried PSAs but it was really only with President Nixon's declaration of War on Drugs, accelerated by Nancy Reagan's intervention, that central government took an active interest in shaping the kind of message encoded in mass-mediated drugs education. As we shall see in the next chapter this is in contrast to the British experience.

The important question as to whether or not mass-mediated drugs education ever actually 'worked' in shaping behaviors or attitudes will be deferred for the next chapter. However, there are two points which should be made here. Firstly, if the purpose of mass-mediated drugs education was not to 'educate' potential drug users, but rather to legitimate particular strategies of regulation, enforcement, or surveillance then they did have a measure of success. Certainly, commentators such as Musto (1999) and Becker (1963) point to significant changes in public opinion and growing public support for regulation and enforcement as evidence of this kind of 'success'. But there is a second point which might be offered as a counter to the first. Throughout the decades just discussed there is a volume of evidence of resistance and contestation in the circulation of particular drug discourses through American popular culture. In popular movies, for example, there are humorous rather than terrifying representations of serious hard drug use. As we saw in the previous chapter, popular film continued to find humor in drug episodes from 'Coke Ennyday' in the *Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (1916) to Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times* (1936), while Cab Colloway and his Cotton Club Band in *International House* (1933) provided a musical a tribute to the effects of marijuana in a song called 'Reefer Man' (Boyd, 2010: 7–8), and there were numerous 'celebrations' of marijuana and other substances in popular jazz songs of the 1920s and 1930s. In other words, cinema audiences and jazz fans in the 'age of reefer madness' were often embracing the humor in drugs and practices of intoxication, rather than the host of fears propagated in the 'reefer films'. Four decades later the War on Drugs was hotly contested by groups such as Students for a Sensible Drugs Policy (SSDP), founded in 1998 and just one example of the variety of libertarian and pro-decriminalization groups actively contesting the abstinence and enforcement messages of contemporary mass-mediated drugs education.[8] The 'stoner movies' offer a more humorous way of undercutting mass-mediated drugs education from *Up in*

Smoke (1978) and *The Big Lebowski* (1998) to the more recent *Harold and Kumar* series. In short, the popular culture that offers many of the symbolic resources deployed in the construction of mass-mediated drugs education discourses, also offers a variety of sites of resistance and subversion; alternative drug discourses may 'celebrate' rather than condemn intoxication, and alternative symbolic frameworks may challenge the assumptions made about the toxicity of substances and the identities of the kinds of people taking them.

4 Drugs Regulation and Mediated Drugs Education in Britain

INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces the history of mass-mediated drugs education, and its relationship with formal drug regulation within Britain up to 1997. The next chapter picks up the discussion at the point at which 'new media' are first deployed in drugs education by the New Labour government. This chapter draws some important contrasts with the experience of the US described in the previous chapter. In the US mass-mediated drugs education emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century but in Britain there was a surprising delay. However there are common features. In Britain, as in the US there was an intimate relationship between formal drug regulation and the particular forms of mass-mediated drugs education that eventually emerged in the early 1980s. In Britain, as in the US there was an overlap between the drug discourses circulating in popular culture and those that characterised mass-mediated drug education; particular British examples of mediated drugs education drew upon the same underlying symbolic frameworks that are reproduced in popular culture, just as in the US.

However, there are also key differences that help to explain why there was such a delay in the emergence of mass-mediated drugs education in Britain compared to the US. In the US, as we have seen, a discourse of enforcement largely dominated both national policy and media debates; the FBN successfully campaigned against medical and treatment models during the 1930s, 40s and 50s; particular kinds of moralizing rather than medical discourses were driven energetically by prohibitionist and anti-drug campaigning organizations. In Britain, during the second half of the nineteenth century, organizations calling for reform and regulation generated campaigning materials that could be regarded as early mediated drugs education, but following the report of the Rolleston Committee in 1926 a medical treatment model, 'the British system', took root. This permitted less room in which moralizing and enforcement discourses could circulate; the campaigning organizations that had energetically driven the circulation of particular drug discourses, as in the US, now played a less significant role during the middle decades of the twentieth century, leaving central

government and the departments of state as the main arbiters of policy debates. In short, for the period between 1926 and the mid-1960s a consensus existed in support of the 'British system' and there was an absence of energized debate around illicit drug use and regulation. Only when this consensus began to break up did the framework for drug regulation begin to shift and forms of mass-mediated drugs education begin to emerge.

THE EMERGENCE OF DRUG REGULATION IN BRITAIN

The period of the 1830s and 1840s saw a series of reforms enacted to regulate the workplace and introduce the beginnings of a framework for public health in Britain. The common consumption of drugs such as opiates among urban, working-class communities began to be identified as an administrative and political problem during this period. What is important at this stage is the emergence of a number of campaigning organizations, or pressure groups, that sought to model the success of the anti-slavery societies in lobbying for social reform. At the regional level, organizations such as the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association supported a series of public lectures on 'The Injurious Influence of Certain Narcotics Upon Human Life—both Infant and Adult' during the 1850s and 1860s, while at a national level the Ladies Sanitary Association produced penny tracts along similar lines but with even more dramatic themes, such as 'The Massacre of the Innocents', and The National Association for the Promotion of Social Science published survey evidence on the extent of narcotic treatments for children's complaints (Berridge and Edwards, 1981: 70).

These campaigns represent some of the first attempts to 'educate' the public about the risks of drug consumption using mediated resources in the form of public lectures, pamphlets and posters and it is significant that just as in later periods of mass-mediated drugs education, there is a particular kind of social identity that features strongly in the symbolic construction of campaigning texts, in this case the negligent working-class family. But the strongest 'educative' currents for formal regulation of drug use came in the wake of the two Opium Wars of 1839–1843 and 1856–1860. The use of military force by the British government to compel China to open its domestic markets to imports from the British Empire, particularly opium, stirred domestic political opposition in and outside parliament. Much of the extra-parliamentary pressure was generated by reform-minded and wealthy Quakers who objected both to the 'moral evils' associated with opium use and the military interventionism that made its distribution in China possible (Blake, 2007:30). W. S. Fry of the Anti-Opium Society published a pamphlet, 'Facts and Evidence Relating to the Opium Trade' as early as 1840 (Berridge, 1999: 175) but campaigning intended to 'educate' the public and influence parliament really accelerated with the foundation

of the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade (later just the Society) in 1874, which was funded largely by wealthy Quakers.

According to Berridge, The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade (SSOT) was 'very much a pressure group of the classic Victorian type', using a variety of campaigning tools to promote its message, but importantly through its particular framing of the problem, 'the link between moral opposition to opium in the Far East and the medical ideology of opium use at home was forged' (1999: 179). In other words, the SSOT played an important role in securing the definition of opiate use as a medical problem, which was, of course, largely welcomed by the medical profession in Britain because it confirmed its role as the custodian of appropriate treatments for this 'illness'. However, alongside the discourse of medicalization, and liberal economic arguments about the damage the opium trade did to other British business interests, there also remained a moral dimension to the SSOT's campaigns. Moral arguments in drug discourse usually construct a particular social group, or identity, as the 'object' of concern. The SSOT was an organization whose membership was made up by a metropolitan middle class and whose object of concern was a particular pattern of drug use among the working class (Berridge, 1999: 190). The prescription of laudanum to middle-class families as a medical treatment exercised the SSOT much less.

The question of addiction was keenly debated. Was casual or moderate opium consumption possible without the 'disease' of addiction being the inevitable consequence? The meshing of medical and moral arguments that has characterized a great deal of mediated drugs education through its history clearly emerged in the campaigning discourse of the SSOT. It condemned working–class opium consumption because it feared the moral consequences of 'recreational', as distinct from medical use and it deployed the 'medical evidence' provided by doctors to insist that occasional recreational use was simply not possible without the 'inevitable' result being the 'disease' of addiction. On the other hand, the consumption of laudanum under medical supervision within the bourgeois home represented a tolerable risk associated with treatment. In this way, the crucial distinction between legitimate medical use and illegitimate recreational drug use was established (Berridge, 1999: 192).

The political fortunes of the SSOT ebbed and flowed. It had sufficient political influence at Westminster to persuade the government to approve the establishment of the 1891 Royal Commission on Opium. This did not lead immediately to a tightening of regulation and the SSOT campaign lost momentum during the remaining years of the nineteenth century. However, its campaign discourse represents one of the earliest significant patterns of mediated drugs education in Britain because it sought to 'educate' public and policy makers about the dangers of opiate use and in doing so it drew upon discourses already circulating through popular culture to construct a particular symbolic framework for understanding this kind of intoxication.

This symbolic framework focused upon the dangerous potency of the substance, whilst drawing distinctions between particular kinds of consumption, so that eating (and later smoking) opium was regarded as transgressive whilst drinking (laudanum), was tolerated. It identified particular spaces in which this drug use was problematic (the working class community), and others where it was not (the middle-class home). It associated particular social identities or populations (working-class, recreational opium users or 'exotic' opium smokers in India and the Far East) with problematic consumption, and others (British middle-class 'patients') with a legitimate right to use.

Concerns about cannabis and cocaine during this period were characterized by similar discourses that fused moral and medical arguments. Cannabis or hemp consumption was a traditional source of recreational intoxication and medicinal use in India and had been the subject of investigation by the Governor General in 1872–1873. Political and administrative concerns about cannabis were aroused again when the Royal Commission on Opium turned its attention to India (Blake, 2007: 32). So long as hemp remained an important commodity to be traded there was a significant economic incentive for the Chief Commissioners of the Raj in India to be persuaded by the evidence that cannabis was not a danger though a number of medical experts insisted that it was, both to physical and mental health. But as Blake notes, 'despite the official position, British popular culture and medical discourses alike became increasingly hostile to narcotics' during the late nineteenth century (2007: 36). Fears of the 'oriental other' fused with concerns about the potency of drugs, and the danger of addiction in the symbolic frameworks circulated through mediated popular culture, for example, in Dickens's last unfinished novel *Edwin Drood*, Conan Doyle's popular Sherlock Holmes stories, and very early cinema (Thomas Edison's *Opium Den* produced in 1894). However, in contrast to opium other substances did not become the object for a campaigning pressure group until the next phase in the development of international drugs regulation in the early twentieth century.

It took the outbreak of World War I and the discovery of a wartime cocaine 'epidemic' among soldiers on leave in London's West End (Berridge, 1999: 249) for Britain to follow the US in implementing the 1912 Hague Convention. In 1916 Harrods was still selling packets of morphine jelly as suitable presents to send to soldiers at the front, but in July of that year the Defence of the Realm Act was enacted, including a clause criminalizing the possession of cocaine. Doctors and pharmacists were exempted.

After the war the 1920 Dangerous Drugs Act extended these controls to a wider range of narcotics despite sustained departmental in-fighting between the Home Office and the Ministry of Health. At stake was the question of whether to develop a British drugs policy based upon the logic of a moral discourse and the imperative of law enforcement or, alternatively, to base drugs policy upon an understanding of drug use as a 'medical

condition' which required the prioritization of treatment over criminalization. The Home Office was determined to define drug policy as a law enforcement issue and in the early 1920s sought to exert a stronger grip upon the professional practice of doctors and pharmacists. However, the British Medical Association (BMA) resisted with the tacit support of the Ministry of Health. The 1924 Rolleston Committee was established to further consider drug policy and in its final report it concluded that drug addiction 'must be regarded as a manifestation of disease and not as a mere form of vicious indulgence' (cited in Berridge, 1999: 275). The subsequent 1926 Dangerous Drugs Act established the 'British system' of drug control in which unsanctioned possession of dangerous drugs (at that stage cocaine and opiates) became a criminal offense, but doctors were granted professional autonomy in the identification and treatment of addicts. As Berridge comments, 'in reality this was more complex than a straightforward defeat for the Home Office' (1999: 273) but the final balance between criminalization and treatment was strongly weighted toward the latter. Cannabis possession was criminalized within the same framework through the 1928 Dangerous Drugs Act but as Bennett and Holloway comment,

> Despite a few amendments to the legislation, which introduced a wider range of drug types under legislative control and strengthened various aspects of the control process, the next 40 years or so remained relatively quiet in terms of the progress of criminalization. In fact, the dominant method of regulation was medical. (2005: 22)

These 'amendments' included a reworking of the Dangerous Drugs Act in 1932 to enshrine in law the distinction between legitimate 'medical and scientific' use of drugs and illegitimate recreational use and the creation of the Home Office Drugs Branch in 1934 to monitor the practice of doctors and pharmacists. These amendments to the 'control regime' were not of sufficient magnitude in themselves to stimulate much political controversy or open up debates about public awareness or the need for drugs education.

'THE BRITISH SYSTEM' OF DRUGS CONTROL AND THE ABSENCE OF DRUGS EDUCATION: 1926 TO 1965

Where as the film *Human Wreckage* (1923) signals the beginning of the era of mass-mediated drugs messages in the US, in Britain there appears to be no evidence of a sustained mediated campaign until the beginning of the 1970s, almost fifty years later, and the first central government sponsored film about substance abuse was not produced until 1983. This is surprising on two counts. Firstly, as we have seen, during these middle decades of the century US moral and commercial entrepreneurs worked in tandem to produce a steady stream of anti-drug propaganda films, which might

have generated a response in Britain. Secondly, the emergence of the British documentary film movement of the interwar period is regarded as one of the most important developments in the history of British cinema. In particular the work of the General Post Office Film Unit during the 1930s and 1940s, incorporated within the Ministry of Information as the Crown Film Unit at the beginning of World War II, is much celebrated. After the war, the tradition of government sponsored film production continued within the Central Office of Information (COI). The Ministry of Information even had a fleet of vans to enable mobile film screenings to occur in towns, villages and workplaces across the country; over 60,000 screenings of COI films occurred in this way.[1] Thus, an appropriate infrastructure of public film production existed, but throughout these decades drug use in Britain appears not to have been regarded as a sufficiently pressing topic to prompt a strategy of mass-mediated drugs education. The COI produced a bewildering range of public information films warning of the hazards of everything from crossing the road to sneezing; it produced a series of short films for the Ministry of Health to promote the new National Health Service in 1948 and provide guidance on most aspects of maintaining good health, including strong advice to modify or stop smoking.[2] But illicit drug use was entirely ignored. It cannot have been regarded as a hazard of sufficient magnitude by the departments of state that routinely commissioned COI short films. Rather when drugs did appear in the kinds of short films produced by documentary units they were usually framed through a discourse of technological optimism as evidence of the power of science to transform lives in a post-war Britain. Several of the larger pharmaceutical companies commissioned short films circulating these kinds of drugs discourses.[3]

A central argument of this book is that 'drugs education' occurs through a complex interplay of discourses, some associated with government or official drugs agencies, but others circulated through particular kinds of popular culture. British popular culture certainly reproduced through the popular genre of film thrillers, newspaper coverage, and cheap fiction the familiar symbolic frameworks that constructed drug use in particular ways and associated it with particular physical, moral and social hazards. British cinema demonstrated a continuing appetite for drug narratives in its productions, such as *The Female Swindler* (1916), *The Yellow Claw* (1920), *The Flying Squad* (1932), *Moonstone* (1934), and *Corridor of Blood* (1958). Popular newspapers continued to seize upon scandalous stories of celebrity drug use throughout the interwar period (Kohn, 1992) and popular fiction fully exploited the genre of 'dope noir' (Gertz, 2008). Thus, disciplinary drug discourses certainly continued to circulate through popular culture sustained by the symbolic frameworks discussed in Chapter 2 of this volume. But this makes the absence of formal mass-mediated drugs education all the more puzzling.

There are three possible explanations and each carries some weight. The first and most obvious point concerns actual rates of illicit drug use in

Britain. Although the popular press enjoyed fueling public anxieties about drugs, it seems clear that during the 1920s and 1930s officially recorded opiate and cocaine use actually declined and use of these and other drugs only began to significantly increase during the late 1950s (Berridge, 1999: 267; Yates, 2002: 114). But as we have seen in the previous chapter the American experience during the 1930s suggests that there does not need to be any evidence of a real increase in drug use for moral entrepreneurs or government agencies to energetically circulate drug discourses in public arenas. In Britain, however, the official interpretation of available data suggested a contained and stable problem of small proportions. Equally importantly, it was assumed the problem was *socially* contained, within small, localized pockets, or drug subcultures of intellectuals and bohemians (Kohn, 1992; Berridge, 1999: 223). Policy makers and civil servants within the key departments of state, the Ministry of Health and the Home Office, appear to have shared this view of the size and characteristics of the drug using population, which did not suggest that *any* kind of drugs education was required, let alone a form of mass-mediated education.

Some critics suggest 'the emphasis upon treatment over criminalization was only practicable while real numbers remained low' (Bennett and Holloway, 2005: 22), and that rather than successfully containing the problem the 'British system' could only work when numbers of drug users were relatively low. This was probably true but so long as the 'British system' appeared to be coping, government policy makers were not under any pressure to contemplate strategies that reached beyond the clinic, such as the development of mediated drugs education. Secondly, in contrast to the US and Britain in the late Victorian era, moral entrepreneurs and organizations campaigning against drug use appear not to have gained much traction in public or policy arenas, though during the 1950s one doctor launched his own campaign to publicize the dangers of 'insanity-producing drugs' with some support from the Society for the Study of Addiction (Melechi, 1997, cited in Blackman, 2004). But in the main there was an absence of external political pressure upon policy makers within the government to reconsider the status quo. So long as the medical treatment model, the 'British system', represented the default position for policy making, problems of drug use were constituted in terms of a discourse of 'disease' rather than the human will (Valverde, 1997). Clearly, if the problem was posed in these terms it made little sense to contemplate investing resources in mass-mediated drugs education that exhorts individuals to use their wills to resist temptation. As described below, mass-mediated drugs education began to emerge as political and official adherence to the disease model began to wane.

However, there is also a third element in the explanation of the delay in the emergence of mass-mediated drugs education and this relates to the assumptions that civil servants and policy makers made about the power of the mass media. The linear models of mass communication, which held sway during the 'high modern age' and were discussed in the previous

chapter, were clearly embraced by British government officials. It was this that explained their reluctance to consider mass-media drug campaigns even when evidence of growing drug use began to accumulate during the 1960s. As we shall see, rather than regarding 'powerful mass media' as a potential tool to engineer social change and mold attitudes, the approach particular American agencies embraced with enthusiasm, during the 1960s and early 1970s, British civil servants were apprehensive of the dangers that such powerful media might pose. Mass-mediated drugs education might encourage rather than dissuade drug consumption; it might alert the public to the existence of the problem, and might actually heighten appetites among the impressionable young.

In fact, after World War II,during the 1950s, illicit drug use did begin to increase in tandem with a growing public awareness of this development as a potential problem. During the 1950s the discourses circulating in popular cultures, particularly those associated with young people, began to give illicit drug use a greater public visibility. In turn, the circulation of these discourses accelerated further through popular newspaper representations of the arrival migrants from the Caribbean and American popular jazz and rock roll musicians (Yates, 2002: 114). The symbolic frameworks embedded in popular culture and which associated particular kinds of drug consumption with particular ethnic identities began to secure a stronger purchase in public thinking. While the number of registered opiate addicts remained still below four hundred during the 1950s across the whole of England and Wales, evidence of growing recreational use of other drugs including cannabis and amphetamines did became more evident (Berridge, 1999: 282). The government responded with the establishment of the first committee of enquiry since Rolleston in 1926. The Inter-Departmental Committee chaired by Sir Russell Brain began its work in 1958 and reported in 1961. Brain concluded that the evidence of supply indicated that 'the purveying of illicit supplies of manufactured dangerous drugs for addicts in this country is so small as to be almost negligible', and that the existing arrangements for treating addicts were appropriate. In a strong reaffirmation of the treatment model he concluded that, 'addiction should be regarded as an expression of mental disorder rather than a form of criminal behavior' (Brain, 1961: 24–25).

According to Yates the first Brain Report recommendations represented 'a model of complacency superficial in its consideration of the evidence and almost totally without vision' (2002: 115). The report provoked considerable criticism on publication and newspapers continued to publish stories about 'the purple heart craze' (amphetamines) and the practices of a small number of London doctors with a reputation for operating over-liberal drug prescription regimes (Yates, 2002: 116). Pressure mounted and the government asked Brain to reconvene his committee and in the meantime also tightened the regulation for cannabis and amphetamines in 1964 in order to come into line with the United Nations Single Convention, a new

international regulatory framework for drug control. The Second Brain Report (1965) is often regarded as the beginning of the end of the 'British system'—the professional autonomy of doctors in this area was greatly curbed, only registered doctors and psychiatrists would be allowed to prescribe and only in the particular location of the clinic, new offenses would be created to punish doctors who failed to conform to the new regulatory regime, and control and surveillance strategies were strengthened including the compulsory 'notification' of addicts to the Home Office. Brain blamed a small number of London-based doctors for vastly over-prescribing and claimed that the problem did not extend significantly beyond London, but nevertheless recommended that specialized treatment centers should be set up beyond the capital. However, in a tone strikingly more pessimistic than the first report Brain adds:

> We are particularly concerned at the danger to the young. Witnesses have told us that there are numerous clubs, many in the West End of London, enjoying a vogue among young people who can find in them such diversions as modern music or all-night dancing. In such places it is known that some young people have indulged in stimulant drugs of the amphetamine type. Some of our witnesses have further maintained that in an atmosphere where drug taking is socially acceptable, there is a risk that young people may be persuaded to turn to cannabis, probably in the form of 'reefer' cigarettes. There is a further risk that if they reach this stage they may move on to heroin and cocaine.
>
> The phenomena of habituation, dependence and addiction involve a complex variety of social, medical and psychological factors. The present trends, particularly in wider consumption of 'pep' pills, may foreshadow a significant change in public attitudes to the taking of dangerous drugs. We feel that this feature of contemporary life deserves thorough study so that remedial action on all relevant fronts may be planned with full knowledge and understanding. (Brain, 1965: 40–41).

Berridge suggests that the second Brain report retained the 'disease model' but in an amended form that moved from an individualized understanding of the 'illness' to one which understood drug use as a 'socially infectious disease' (1999: 284). In fact, the section from the Second Brain Report quoted above hints at something even more significant: that illicit drug use was now no longer a matter of individualized 'disease' but, in the case of the spread of 'soft drugs', a feature of leisure and lifestyle. In other words, this signaled a shift from a narrow addiction model to one that began to acknowledge recreational drug use. The call for 'remedial action on all fronts' in the context of the focus upon youth culture suggested a strategy that engaged young people in locations beyond the clinic or treatment center but the Second Brain Report did not spell out how this might be

implemented and the key government departments appear not to have wanted to make any connection between this and the potential of mass-mediated drugs education.

FROM OFFICIAL COMPLACENCY TO OFFICIAL RESISTANCE: 1965 TO 1979

In fact, the lack of interest in drugs education during the early 1960s in retrospect appears remarkable. In 1959 a review of the School Health Service included no discussion of either drugs as a problem in schools or any need for drugs education, school-based or otherwise (Leff and Leff, 1959). A review of health education advice for Local Education Authorities undertaken by the Ministry of Health in 1961 made no mention of drugs education whatsoever[4], while in 1962 the Report of the Chief Medical Officer at the Ministry of Education reviewed a number of risks that Britain's school population might face including accidents, defective hearing, dyslexia, and even exposure to radiation but not drugs.[5] Only in the 1969 Report of the Chief Medical Officer was the existence of illicit drug use in schools first acknowledged in the brief comment, 'although in some respects drug abuse may be considered a relatively small problem its rate of increase gives cause for concern'.[6] In fact, the Department of Education and Science had written to Local Education Authorities in July 1967 enquiring whether they had any information regarding drug use among young people, which suggests that central government had a perception of problems emerging but had yet to take any real steps to gather evidence.[7] The development of effective drugs education in schools was somewhat hampered by the Department of Health's (from 1968 the Department of Health *and* Social Security, or DHSS) reluctance to support the proposal for the creation of a new specialist profession of health educators.[8] Nevertheless, by 1974, the Chief Medical Officer acknowledged there was a problem but of a limited nature:

> The extent to which drug taking occurs among school children is extremely difficult to determine. School doctors and nurses as well as teachers are aware that children could be experimenting with drugs and are watchful, yet extremely few children are discovered taking drugs on school premises.[9]

It is clear then that by the end of the 1960s officials within the Department of Education and Science (DES), the Home Office and the DHSS recognized that drug use was a growing problem. The Wooton Report for the Home Office noted, for example, over 2,300 cannabis convictions in 1967. The implementation of the Second Brain Report via the 1967 Dangerous Drugs Act, the Home Secretary's rejection of the more liberal recommendations of the 1968 Wooton Report,[10] followed by a further toughening of the

regulatory regime in the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act, all confirmed that the government was developing a tougher 'control regime' in response to the emerging evidence.

But did the emerging evidence encourage ministers or civil servants to consider a new strategy to address the problem; one that might include mediated drugs education? The answer is only through a strained and protracted process of remarkably limited ambition that eventually produced a leaflet, *Drugs and the Schools*, which was circulated to all Local Educational Authorities in 1972.[11] This leaflet sought to set out the 'facts' about drug use, interpreted the use of marijuana as an example of the kinds of rituals that adolescents might find comforting, and acknowledged on page fourteen that 'boys and girls have to learn at some time that euphoria has been sought by many people for many generations', as illustrated in 'the lives of talented artists'. However, criminals always sought to exploit these vulnerabilities and drug taking had to be subject to the full force of the law. On page fourteen, the leaflet also took a sideswipe at the more energized anti-drug propaganda generated in the US, commenting that 'exhortations and crusades are best avoided.'

This provides an important clue in exploring why mass-mediated drugs education simply did not develop as quickly or in the same fashion in Britain as in the US. Rather than believing the mass media to be ineffective, officials within the Ministry of Health (DHSS), the DES and the Home Office were actually apprehensive that mass communication might be *too* powerful. These fears are revealed through the saga of the proposed leaflet which was first discussed by officials in 1968, four years before its eventual publication. In the summer of 1968 the Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence made recommendations regarding 'health education and publicity'. Officials at the Ministry of Health and the Home Office considered the possibility of a leaflet for schools but found a number of good reasons for delay. The recommendations of the Wooton sub-committee were pending, new evidence of drug use was emerging in the press and the implications of this required more consideration, the Brain Committee Second Report recommendations still had to be worked through, and in any case the DES was contemplating producing its own pamphlet.[12] In 1969 officials found further reasons to delay on the grounds that the Health Education Council was in the process of being established and this agency proposed to undertake it's own research on young people's attitudes to drugs before commencing any publicity campaign.[13] Even in 1972–1973 officials continued to wrangle over the wording and construction of the leaflet.[14] The reason for the heightened sensitivity here was bound up with the more generalized fears about the unpredictable power of media campaigning.

In fact, in the period between 1967 and 1969 officials at the Home Office and Ministry of Health had been subjected to significant external pressure to commence a campaign of mass-mediated drugs education. The news reports of 'alarming drug problems' in Welwyn Garden City had

heightened public concern, former senior police officers were voicing their own concerns in public, and organizations such as the National Council of Women in Great Britain, the Association for the Prevention of Addiction, The Samaritans and the Women's Liberal Federation called for the government to mount a media-based publicity campaign to address the problem. In a reply to a letter from Mrs. Wickens, General Secretary of the National Council of Women in Great Britain, an official at the DHSS specifically rejected a mass-publicity campaign, writing that 'in the light of present knowledge there was no realistic basis at present for a mass preventative campaign'.[15] Perhaps through the media initiative of the campaigning organizations who *were* prepared to harness the news media to their ends, papers such as *The Sun* and the *Daily Post* reported the government's refusal with headlines such as 'Time Not Right for War on Drugs' (*The Sun*), which explicitly contrasted the British government's lack of action with President Nixon's declared intent in the US. *The Sun* predicted 'a storm of protest' in the light of the reported difficulties in Welwyn Garden City.[16] To appease its critics the government offered the idea of the leaflet for schools, parents and young people but stood its ground with regard to any more ambitious publicity campaign.

An internal memorandum written during another spate of wrangling between the Home Office, the DES, the Ministry of Health and the Health Education Council explains why officials were so nervous of the mass media as a tool:

> It is essential to tread warily in considering widespread publicity on drug abuse, partly because of the uncertainty as to the precise size and nature of the drug problem in this country but also because of the risk that ill-chosen education methods might arouse in some people an interest in drugs which they had not previously felt.[17]

Far from the mass media being ineffective, officials clearly felt that their effects might be powerful but too unpredictable. What came to be known as the 'boomerang effect', the fostering of appetites for drugs through media campaigning rather than a diminution, was their big concern. In 1973, the Department of Health papers also indicate that officials attended screenings of three films about drug use made by a documentary film maker, but joined the HEC in refusing to fund his proposed future projects.[18]

It seems then that even in the period between 1967 and 1973, a time when the youth subcultures of the 1960s had flourished in a variety of ways that made illicit drug use much more visible in popular culture, the extent of the ambition of the government's mediated drugs education response was to propose one leaflet for schools, young people and parents that took four years to actually to produce. But even in the early 1970s the central government continued to be highly wary of any proposals for a national campaign utilizing mass-media technologies. The budget allocations for the Health

Table 4.1 HEC Spending for 1973–1974[19]

Smoking and Health	£458,00
Sex Education	£121,000
Veneral Disease	£56,000
Immunization	£8,000
Food Hygiene	£7,000
Drug Addiction	£6,000

Education Council (HEC) underline this. The figures for 1973–1974 (see Table 4.1 below) confirm that 'smoking and health' were by far the biggest priority, which is, perhaps, not surprising during the early 1970s, but 'drug addiction' was the lowest, even below 'food hygiene'. One of the reasons that the 'smoking and health' budget was largest was because it included expensive television and billboard advertising, which confirmed official trust in the potency of mass media. They clearly had not refuted a modernist attachment to linear models of mass communication or 'mediated social engineering'. What they feared were the consequences of applying this model to drugs education.

In September 1972 the Health Education Council was approached by Miss. Gray, an official at the Overseas Development Administration (ODA). The ODA was keen to find ways of supporting a UNESCO project to develop mass-media drugs education programs and to explore appropriate methodologies for their evaluation. After all, the academic study of mass communication in universities around the world was several decades old by the beginning of the 1970s; the potential of mass communication for development and education in other parts of the world was already at the forefront of research agendas, and UNESCO was on the point of funding a number of ambitious mass-communication research projects including some based in British universities. This was not sufficient for the HEC, or officials at the Ministry of Health to relinquish their misgivings. An official from the DHSS replied to Miss. Gray:

> The HEC has no experience of mass media projects dealing with this subject and, indeed, has so far been reluctant to use the mass media for this particular purpose.

The reply adds that it is unlikely that it will be possible to find a representative with the time to attend a proposed conference organized by the ODA on behalf of UNESCO.[20] The lack of official enthusiasm could not be plainer.

While central government departments dithered some local authorities were beginning to develop their own local strategies as evidence of growing drug use in local contexts emerged more clearly. The London Borough

of Hammersmith undertook its own research into young people's attitudes and organized a conference in 1968 for teachers and local officials to which the Ministry of Health and the Inter-departmental Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence were invited; the London Borough of Westminster also produced a report on the growing drugs problem in its locality, and similarly local authorities on Merseyside were in touch with the Ministry of Health reporting significant increases in drug use among the young.[21] By the early 1970s, some local authorities were actually producing their own mediated drugs education material. Significantly, this material differed in important respects from the US equivalents. The drugs discourses encoded in the material appear not to so strongly reflect the moral absolutism of the American counterparts; they drew more from the 'social realist' traditions that were shaping both documentary and drama in Britain during the 1960s, and most importantly they gave a voice to drug users themselves, rather than exclusively insisting upon an abstinence message. For example in *One Way Ticket* (1971), produced by South Staffordshire Medical Centre, an educational drama aimed at young people aged between fourteen and seventeen years, the plot involves a girl who is rushed to hospital after taking LSD. Her boyfriend and his friend 'discuss frankly the use and abuse of drugs with a doctor.'[22] *Better Dead* (1972), a short documentary made for Wessex Hospital Board, features drug users rather than actors and gives a voice to addicts who explain what life is like on various drugs, their symptoms and their desperate need for money with an emphasis upon 'the harrowing results of drug abuse'.[23] The discourse shaping these films clearly secures the view that drug consumption is to be avoided but does so through a strategy that opens up a space for the voice of the drug user and, in doing so also allows some discussion of pleasure and motive.

By 1973 Granada for Independent Television (ITV), the main commercial national television network, had produced a schools television series aimed at thirteen- to sixteen-year-old pupils called *The Drug Takers*, which focused upon addiction and the treatment for addiction. Two years later Grenada also produced *Facts of Life: Out of Control*, which looked at the consumption of a wider range of drugs including tobacco, alcohol, amphetamines and barbiturates, and the consequences of their use.[24] By the mid-1970s, short film production companies were beginning to open up a market in training films for teachers, social workers and agencies working with young people.[25]

The key government departments were, of course, fully aware of these developments but showed no inclination to harness these approaches for a national prevention program. Even at the end of the 1970s official anxieties about the power of mass communication systems persisted. In a COI pamphlet, *The Prevention and Treatment of Drug Misuse in Britain*, published in 1979, a section deals with health education and summarizes the position of the Health Education Council. Two years earlier the Labour Government had published a white paper on the need to develop a new approach to

general health, which placed a fresh policy emphasis upon prevention. The COI pamphlet concedes that the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs had highlighted the importance of educating the public, particularly young people, about the danger of drugs. Nevertheless, it insisted:

> Not enough is yet known about the types of health education that are most effective in this difficult area—an ill advised approach, by feeding interest in drugs in the wrong way, may actually encourage experimentation—but the Council considers that, as in the case of alcohol abuse, education should not focus solely on the problems of drug misuse but should preferably form part of a more broadly based health education programme. (COI, 1979: 17)

An intriguing comment is left hanging in the air: 'From time to time the press, radio and television have shown with much realism the consequences of drug misuse; television in particular is regarded as having a potentially powerful influence on the attitudes of the young' (COI, 1979: 18). No further comment is made on the implications of this point, whether for good or ill, but a decade later the COI, itself, turned to mainstream television drama as a vehicle for mass-mediated drugs education, as discussed below.

The drug discourse developed in this pamphlet moved significantly away from those associated with addiction model and the 'British system'. From 1926 to the mid-60s, official government discourse understood the drug problem as one of localized opiate addiction and not one requiring any kind of health education strategy. By 1979 government discourse constituted drug use as a rather different order of problem—one that extended through popular subcultures and was associated with recreational use; one that did require a health education strategy with a reach beyond 'pockets' of drug use to young people leading quite ordinary and conventional lives. There was also an acknowledgement of a wider symbolic environment in which alternative mass media, particularly television, played a significant role in the circulation of drug discourses. However, even with this shift in understanding the reluctance to engage with mass media to promote drugs education persisted.

BRITAIN TURNS TO 'FEAR AROUSAL': 1979 TO 1997

The 1980s saw a significant change in that the Conservative government, elected in 1979, made quite unprecedented interventions to override the advice of officials and the Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence, to instigate a program of mediated drugs education, including television advertisements, posters and COI short films. The very particular circumstances of the 1980s brought a new political urgency for the government to be seen to be 'doing something' and the rhetoric of the Reagan

administration's 'Just Say No' abstinence campaign in the US found a sympathetic supporter in Mrs. Thatcher. Again, the discourses of drug education developed in tandem with drugs regulation. The Conservative government responded to the changing situation with even greater emphasis upon enforcement measures, including tougher sentences for possession and trafficking. The new discourse of drugs education reflected these changes through the shifting 'control regime', drawing more explicitly upon the language of abstinence from the US, and the strategy of 'fear arousal'.

Several developments placed the government under more intense pressure to act. Firstly, the international supply of heroin suddenly increased in 1979, making it widely available in communities across the country, just at a time when rising unemployment among the young, working class made them more vulnerable to its temptations. The political opposition to the Thatcher government was quick to point to the growing 'heroin epidemic' as a consequence of its neo-liberal economic policy (Yates, 2002: 117–118). A change in the technology of consumption was also important: smoking or snorting rather than intravenous injection made it a more palatable drug. Secondly, a series of television current affairs shows and newspaper reports through the 1970s and into the '80s had pushed 'drugs' much higher up the public agenda.[26] Thirdly, the arrival of HIV, AIDs and the associated moral panic in the early 1980s further destabilized the 'regime of control' underpinning drugs regulation and with it, consequently, strategies of drugs education. Media discourses that referred to a 'flood' of heroin into the country in tandem with the concept of HIV as a 'plague' alarmed policy makers. The first television current affairs show dealing with HIV was broadcast in 1983.[27] Berridge suggests that it was the arrival of HIV that compelled the government to seriously consider prevention and harm reduction strategies on a mass scale for the first time (1999: 285). The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) produced a report in 1982 on the treatment and rehabilitation of drug users. The language in this signified a further shift from a 'disease model' to a 'problem model'. The focus was no longer upon individual pathologies and personality traits, but rather the health and social issues confronting communities (Berridge, 1999: 285). The report implied that the boundary of the policy community should be widened to embrace professionals and interests beyond medical civil servants, doctors and psychiatrists to include those working through social and community agencies. This represented much more fertile political terrain for those advocating mass-mediated drugs education. If prevention was now a higher priority the mass media represented a set of communications technologies that offered the potential to simultaneously reach different communities or target audiences across the whole the country.

But even at this point officials in the key departments, the Home Office and the DHSS, remained wary of mass-media campaigns and were not convinced by the ACMD's new faith in harm reduction and prevention (Berridge, 1999: 285). It took further external pressure for the new era of

mass-mediated drugs education to commence in Britain. Firstly, external campaigning organizations began to lobby the departments, as in the late 1960s, seeking to persuade officials to invest public funds in publicity materials. RESOLVE, for example, an organization campaigning to prevent solvent-related deaths maintained a dialogue with government throughout this period and the very first COI film dealing with illicit drugs, commissioned by the Health Education Authority (formerly the HEC), was *Illusions* (1983), which introduced 'the subject of solvent abuse and how the caring professions are dealing with the problems it creates'.[28] Secondly, politicians and public figures began to make public calls for more energetic drugs education.[29] Thirdly, the Conservative government itself perceived that that it must be seen to act. Although the ACMD still strongly advised against the use of widespread publicity, explicitly insisting even in 1984 that 'national campaigns aimed specifically at reducing the incidence of drug misuse should not be attempted' (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 1984: 17), the government sanctioned the development of a mass-campaign strategy in 1985, including television advertisements, billboard posters, and print advertisements.

Andrew Irving Associates were commissioned to evaluate the feasibility of a mass publicity campaign and their report on the targeting of the advertising significantly noted that one of the key aims was to 'reassure the public that the government is taking effective action' (quoted in Power, 1989: 133). The recommendation was that the campaign should be aimed at thirteen to twenty year olds, particularly those who had not yet tried heroin, and that it was possible to be 'streetwise' by 'saying no' (Power, 1989: 134). The campaign was to highlight the undesirable consequences of heroin but in a low key and factual way.

However, when the campaign was unveiled critics suggested that it was more 'shock horror' than 'low key' (Blackman, 2004: 151). The first television advertisement (directed by Ridley Scott), supported with billboard posters, was thirty seconds in duration and was clearly designed to make an immediate impact. *Heroin Screws You Up* used a classic 'before and after' narrative.[30] A young man, at first healthy and fresh featured, was pictured leaning against a wall in a dark lit alley. He confidently speaks to camera, declaring, 'Heroin—I don't know what all the fuss is about. I can handle it.' A reverse shot from the opposite angle then shows the same young man displaying early signs of physical deterioration, already merging into the shadow behind him. He now claims, 'Ok, so I do heroin a bit . . . I can control it, I can stop', but this claim is undercut by the sinister background, the eerie music, and his appearance. In the next shot, the young man's face shows powerful signs of physical deterioration, unshaven, tired, pale and ill. His arms clasp his body, leaning against the wall, as he says, 'There's no way I'm going to become an addict, I just do heroin.' Finally, holding his head in his hands, having slid down the wall, he insists, 'I've got this thing under control, I've just got a touch of flu again.' A final authoritative voice

seeks to secure the preferred reading with the comment, 'Everyone thinks they can control heroin until it starts to control them' and a banner at the top of the screen announces the campaign slogan, 'Heroin Screws You Up', which also appeared on billboard and print advertising.

Although there is not an explicit abstinence message, in many other respects this advertisement is rooted in the same discourse as the US social guidance PSAs discussed in the previous chapter. While a 'low key' strategy may have been intended at the campaign planning stage, this advertisement sought to achieve impact through shock or 'fear arousal'. Further, its discourse reveals a symbolic framework that works in much the same way as those discussed in previous chapters; one through which particular kinds of substances are associated with particular social identities and particular locations. The voice, manner and appearance of the young man identifies him as 'white, working-class', while the backdrop of an alley partly in shadow, signifies the marginalized public spaces and housing estates associated with social pathology. In fact, the *Heroin Screws You Up* campaign drew from the same symbolic framework that was to underpin commercial films like *Train Spotting* a decade later. Both signaled that heroin and opiate use were no longer intoxicative strategies for small, middle-class bohemian subcultures but were now embedded within white, working-class communities. The white, working-class becomes a new 'other'.

A second advertisement, *Dummy*, was produced at the same time in 1985 but this time featured a girl.[31] The narrative structure was very similar. Again, the running time was thirty seconds and the aim was clearly to make an immediate impact, this time particularly upon girls. A young woman was featured against another dark, gloomy external background. The soundtrack again injects a sinister tone. The camera moves to a close up of her face. At first she seems healthy and normal. The voice-over tells us that 'when friends told Kate that smoking heroin would make her feel good they forgot to tell her something else' As a sequence of shots chart Kate's physical decline and she appears to be continually falling backward, a list of highly disturbing consequences of heroin use, aimed at underlining the threat that the drug poses for traditional notions of femininity, are listed in sequence:

> that she would start to look tired, spotty and unhealthy, she'd lose all her friends, her looks and her interest in everything except heroin . . . how she'd eventually risk blood disease, liver damage, even heart failure.

Kate insists, 'Yeah but I'm still alive . . . I suppose.' However, the authoritative voice at the end seeks to secure the preferred message with the comment, 'Don't be a dummy. Heroin screws you up.' Again, heroin is located in a particular symbolic framework. Although feminine and innocent at the very beginning, Kate is clearly not from the respectable middle class, the use of light and shadow as a backdrop to a sinister open space signifying

very much the same spatial and class location as the first advertisement. The list of physical damage that Kate should expect to suffer again is shocking and intended to work through 'fear arousal'.

One of the reasons the impact of these advertisements is remembered vividly is that they were produced in the same era as the *AIDS Monolith* advertisement, which was also commissioned by the COI to alert the public to the dangers of HIV infection in 1987.[32] Notoriously, this featured a volcano exploding, with the commentary, 'There is now a danger which has become a threat to us all.' The next shot showed a drill cutting away at a rock face, with a deep, authoritative masculine voice-over:

> it is a deadly disease with no known cure . . . anyone can get it, man or woman. So far it has been confined to small groups but it is spreading.

The drill cuts the word 'AIDS' in the rock. The soundtrack of dramatic chords and dissonant bells ringing was clearly intended to disturb. At the same time as running the *AIDS Monolith* campaign, a further anti-heroin poster campaign was developed, again with 'high impact' slogans, 'Smack Isn't Worth It' and 'Smack Can Leave a Scar on Your Whole Family' (Davies and Coggan, 1994: 311).

Critics complained that the drug and health discourses generated through these advertisements in combination offered a picture of respectable Britain threatened by a symbolically merged epidemic of deadly drug and virus. For Power (1989), the stereotyping and process of symbolic stigmatization was problematic in three ways. Firstly, by foregrounding the young, white, working class the advertisements were likely to fail in reaching ethnic minorities. Secondly, by entrenching existing prejudices the advertisements were likely to push heroin users further to the margins of society rather than closer to potential help. And thirdly, by reinforcing the stereotype of the 'chaotic junkie' they would lose credibility in the eyes of the young people who might be in contact with heroin users and therefore would know that many users were able to 'manage' their heroin use on a day-to-day basis (Power, 1989: 137). Further, some critics argued that this kind of approach to health promotion betrayed the perspectives of those with power—the white, middle-aged middle class—and therefore, failed to address the underlying issues associated with opiate use at this time, the structured and growing social and economic inequalities, mass unemployment, and poverty that characterized Britain in the 1980s (MacGregor, 1989; Wibberley and Whitelaw, 1990).

The campaign failed to really engage key groups in a meaningful dialogue: it was assumed that a linear, unidirectional flow of communication would be sufficient. In seeking to arouse fear and deliver information via one 'absolute' frame, the strategy actually ran counter to the more effective strategies that were currently being developed in the health education field (Davies and Coggan, 1994: 312). While the campaign discourse appropriated signifying

elements from popular culture, it failed to really engage with the lived culture of ordinary people. As so often happened throughout the twentieth century when powerful political and policy elites tried to mobilize mass-communication technologies, it was assumed that control could be exercised from the center *over* the intended audience to secure the message or preferred interpretation. This, of course, underestimates the complexity of communication and the capacity of particular social groups within audiences to read messages in ways that reflect their own experience rather than the wishes of the powerful. A largely positive evaluation undertaken by a marketing company for the government suggested that the campaign had succeeded in raising public awareness of the health issues associated with heroin and eroded perceptions that heroin had any beneficial effects, or was less dangerous if smoked or snorted (Power, 1989: 134). But this evaluation was in turn subjected to a critical evaluation (Davies and Coggan, 1994: 312) and further evidence suggested a degree of resistance among certain sections of the target audience (Power, 1989: 132–135).

However, there was a wider strategy to embed an anti-heroin message in particular popular cultural texts and this strategy did gain some significant traction. The COI on behalf of the DHSS sponsored the production of a special schools episode of a highly popular television comedy-crime series, *Minder,* in 1986, deploying the two main characters, Arthur and Terry, to develop an anti-drug narrative.[33] The episode was integrated within an educational resource package produced for the DHSS, the COI and the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependency. *Thinking Twice* was targeted at thirteen to fifteen year olds with the aim to 'stimulate discussion about situations in which choices have to be made.'[34] This initiative did at least move some way toward promoting a dialogue through mass-mediated drugs education, but the summary of the aims confirmed that in practice the scope for discussion was heavily prescribed; the approach actually drew upon the same resistance training strategy that *Just Say No* was widely promoting in the US at the same time. Other examples of engagement with elements of popular culture included the development of a drugs narrative in *Grange Hill*, a long running BBC children's drama about school life. The story line involved a popular character Zammo becoming a heroin user and this attracted a great deal of press and public interest with further specialist drugs education spin-offs.[35] Adult soaps also began to develop plot lines involving drug awareness themes, something that is much more common two decades later, including *Brookside*, and even *Crossroads*.[36] The blurring of the distinction between mediated drugs education and popular culture which had characterized the US since the early 1920s now became a feature of drugs education in Britain.

A further shift occurred in the 'control regime' during the early 1990s. This was driven in part by developments in popular youth culture and the adoption of drug styles based on the consumption of 'soft' drugs such as ecstasy, amphetamines and cannabis (Hammersley et al., 2002; Measham

et al., 2001). Although there was plenty of evidence of continuing serious problems arising from the heroin supply reaching further beyond white, working-class communities (Pearson and Patel, 1998), the policy agenda driving formal drugs regulation began to shift from concern about 'hard drugs' and 'heroin epidemics' to more generalized anxieties that soft drug use was becoming a 'normalised' feature of young people's recreation and leisure time. Parker and colleagues were beginning to publish the early reports of the North West Longitudinal Survey (see Chapter 1, this volume) and these were circulating among civil servants at the Home Office (Parker et al., 1995). The public visibility of rave and dance culture and discussions in the press about 'the chemical generation' who, it was claimed, routinely fueled its evening leisure time on a mixed diet of alcohol and pills kept 'recreational drug use' high on the public agenda (Pearson, 1999: 479). The *Sunday Times*, for example, in an article titled 'Rave New World' interviewed a city commodity trader who had abandoned the banks in favor of organizing raves, and who cheerfully agreed that ecstasy was part of the routine experience for those attending (1993a). In another article the same paper reported Henley Centre research showing that young people now spent more money on drugs than pubs (1993b), while in a lifestyle feature it claimed that 'ecstasy dinner parties are all the rage' (1993c).

The government response was again to toughen formal mechanisms of regulation enacting new legislation, the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, to curb unlicensed dance events, and the 1994 Drug Trafficking Act, which significantly strengthened the sanctions to be used against those convicted of dealing. But by the early 1990s the broad consensus around drug policy was beginning to unravel. On the one hand, governments—including the US, under Presidents Reagan and Bush, and Australia, under Prime Minister Bob Hawke—were still pursuing the relentless 'war on drugs' with ever-tougher national and international enforcement strategies. In Britain this kind of 'tough' approach still had plenty of popular support. But at the same time the growing evidence of increased 'soft drug' use lent more weight within the drugs policy community to harm minimization or even decriminalization strategies. The Conservative Government's approach reflected these tensions or contradictions in policy. Whilst the criminal justice mechanisms were strengthened in 1994, in 1995 the government launched a new strategy, *Tackling Drugs Together* (Lord President's Office, 1995), which included several measures to foster harm reduction approaches at a local level. But the three aims set out at the beginning did not sit easily together: to increase the safety of communities from drug related crime, to reduce the acceptability but also the availability of drugs to young people, and to reduce health risks and other damage related to drug use. They imply a strong emphasis upon policing and the use of the criminal justice system to reduce supply whilst simultaneously developing an effective health and harm minimization strategy. The possible contradictions or tensions in this were to be 'managed' in practice through a new

emphasis upon multi-agency work, coordinated at a local level by newly created Drugs Action Teams (DATs), working with drugs workers, youth workers and teachers, as well as the police and probation officers. In addition to enforcement, the police would have a role in prevention through, for example, involvement in school-based drugs education initiatives. Indeed, at a local level this required the police to involve themselves in mediated drugs education to raise their public profile in anti-drugs work: almost every police force reported using 'media campaigns and publicity' in an evaluation carried out for the Home Office three years later (Newburn and Elliott, 1998: 9). A national communication strategy was set out to support the introduction of the new 'control regime' which included 'a national publicity campaign aimed at motivating young people . . . to resist illicit drug use' employing paid advertising, unpaid publicity, new media and resources (Tasker et al., 1999). This was the first time that the government had contemplated the use of new media in a mediated drugs education strategy, but it appears that few steps were actually taken to implement this before the government lost the 1997 general election and it was for the incoming New Labour government to establish the first government drugs website, a development discussed in the next chapter.

However, despite the increasingly explicit representation of drug experiences in film, television drama, music and other forms of popular culture, *Tackling Drugs Together* actually had little to say about the possible role of the mass media in shaping attitudes to drugs or the complex ways in which drug discourses circulated through popular culture. The unstated assumptions underpinning the communication strategy remained those of a traditional one-directional, linear model of mass communication.

Critics of *Tackling Drugs Together* argued that government thinking at this point failed to clearly address the tension between drug prevention and drugs education (Coggans et al., 1999). Should media campaigns aim to prevent the take-up of drugs in the first place, perhaps through a strong emphasis upon the penalties of enforcement and the dangers associated with the substances, or should drug use be acknowledged as a 'fact of life' and an emphasis be placed on providing the kind of information that could help risk minimization? In other words, should the emphasis be upon *primary* prevention (stopping people taking drugs in the first place) or a rather different kind of *secondary* prevention (preventing the harms that arise from sustained drug use). If mediated drugs education is intimately related to other regulatory discourses within particular 'control regimes', then the tensions inherent in the latter are likely to surface in the former, too. As discussed in the next chapter, mediated drugs education in this emerging era of 'new media' and a New Labour government in Britain, clearly reflected these tensions between primary and secondary prevention: enforcement and criminalization or harm minimization and health promotion. The tensions between the two were concisely summarized by Pearson in a review of the position at the end of the century:

> Rarely if ever can the penal powers of state and international law have been used with such zeal to promote health and protect people against themselves. Indeed, the concern with drugs and drug-related problems might well come to be seen as one of the more remarkable aspects of twentieth century history—beginning with largely unregulated markets, innocent if sometimes indulgent habits, and 'victimless crimes'; ending with vast and costly global law enforcement efforts, sustained levels of violence and widespread allegations of corruption, and drug markets which are massively regulated but nevertheless rampant. (1999: 478)

SUMMARY AND BRIEF EVALUATION OF TRADITIONAL MEDIATED DRUGS EDUCATION

The last two chapters have traced the history of mediated drugs education in the age of 'old media' in the US and Britain. There are two very different trajectories determined by two rather different 'regimes of control'. In the US, for lengthy parts of the twentieth century prohibitionist and abstinence discourses circulated widely, driven by the energies of a number of highly active moral entrepreneurs, and considerable effort was invested in strategies to suppress alternative discourses, particularly those stressing treatment, the medical model and power located within the clinic. Just as moral entrepreneurs and agencies were highly active, the state was primarily concerned with enforcement. Accordingly, mediated drugs education was largely structured through abstinence and prohibitionist discourses, circulated through the technologies of mass communication, often independently of state sponsorship. In recent years, harm reduction strategies have found more institutional support but only at local and federal level rather than through the concerted support of US administrations (Campbell and Shaw, 2008).

In Britain, although prohibitionist and enforcement discourses circulated in tandem during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a new 'control regime' emerged and a framework of formal drug regulation crystalized, moral entrepreneurs and agencies were more inhibited, the interests of the medical profession were more successfully articulated through government, and the tradition of the centralized British Civil Service as the engine of public policy positioned government to play a more decisive role. But this meant that the assumptions that officials and policy makers made about the technologies of mass communication, their fears and anxieties, were much more important in determining the trajectory of mediated drugs education. The absence of a sustained mediated drugs education campaign in Britain until the last two decades of the twentieth century can be explained, in large part, by this particular configuration of policy assumptions and drug discourses. However, one thing that both

countries had in common was a shared set of 'high modern' assumptions about the technologies of mass communication, their potency and potential effects upon target audiences. In the US, these 'powerful tools' were put to use from 1923 onward in a diverse range of projects intended to socially engineer drug abstinence. In Britain, civil servants and policy makers first assumed that the scale of the drug problem did not warrant any kind of 'mass campaign' and then assumed that perhaps it did but that resorting to the tools of mass communication might do more harm than good—a position that was only overturned by the political interests of Conservative ministers anxious to be seen to 'be doing something' about a problem that, by the 1980s, was touching communities across Britain.

The central concern of this book is the relationship between drug representations within popular culture, drugs education, and the impact of the arrival of 'new media' upon these. However, it is worth pausing at this point to briefly consider the evidence about the efficacy of mass-mediated drugs education and relating this to the central argument regarding popular culture. Evaluating the evidence is not as straight forward as might be supposed. This is because there are a variety of traditions within social science and cultural studies; there are important differences in the weight given to particular research methodologies, and consequently important differences in the way findings are evaluated. Researchers working in the fields of social psychology and communication studies, particularly those based in the US, frequently lean more toward 'scientific' and positivistic research designs which seek to explore relationships between 'variables', often in quantitative ways. In contrast, those working within the cultural studies traditions, particularly in Britain and Europe, may be more skeptical of quantitative attempts to reduce the complexity of social and cultural realities to observable 'variables' and may choose instead to explore the discourses at play in the construction of these social and cultural realities, often using qualitative methods. Some media sociologists, including this author, keep an open mind about the value of both, whilst acknowledging the epistemological tensions in doing so. What follows is *not* a comprehensive review or evaluation of the variety of school- or community-based drugs education that is undertaken. There is an enormous literature that does this and the complexity of strategies is beyond the scope of this book, which is simply concerned with mediated drugs education.

There is some research which claims to demonstrate efficacy in mediated drugs education. This is mostly produced by those working within the quantitative traditions and involves attaching weight to statistically significant differences between defined variables. Goldstein reported finding that drugs education delivered via television was more effective if 'fear arousal' was avoided and information was delivered by persons considered to be 'important' or 'knowledgeable' by the audience (1974). Elwood and Ataabadi (1996) found that serious drug users responded to 'media intervention campaigns' if these were accompanied by other forms of directly delivered

drugs education and health work. Derzon and Lipsey in a meta-analysis of reported research on the success of mediated drugs education, found some evidence of modest but positive changes in both 'knowledge' and 'attitudes' but contrarily, a negative effect (i.e. a slight increase) in actual substance use (2002: 249–251). The claims made in the interim report by the project leaders of the most recent National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (NYAMC) in the US were impressive. Significant success in raising awareness of drug issues and achieving attitude change were claimed (McCaffrey, 1999). However, as discussed earlier in this chapter the final evaluations of the NYAMC are more mixed and rather less encouraging (Hornik et al., 2008; Scheier and Grenard, 2010).

Overall the evidence of success in mass-mediated drugs education is patchy. In fact, Davies and Coggans comment that 'in terms of stopping or preventing people from taking drugs, many anti-drug campaigns have simply not worked or have made things worse' (1994: 313). There is, indeed, some evidence to suggest that traditional mass-mediated drugs education can actually promote interest in or even use of illicit drugs. This is the 'boomerang effect' reported in a number of studies (Brecher et al., 1972; Davies and Coggans, 1994; Hawthorne et al., 1995). Perhaps British civil servants during the 1960s and 1970s had some reason to be apprehensive though they certainly did not have the evidence available at the time to support their suspicions.

The US 'Just Say No' campaign was perhaps the most ambitious, all-embracing example of a large scale mass drugs education campaign, driven by 'old' mass communication technologies with a very simple, unambiguous abstinence message. It was evaluated by Patterson who found that 'fear' and 'enforcement' messages were so effectively received among a sample of college students that they secured a hegemonic position for the ideology of the 'drug war', but this did not necessarily translate into effective drugs education if by that is meant an understanding of the health issues associated with drug use based on 'accurate information' (1994: 359–360). Similarly, in an evaluation of Australia's own 'war on drugs', Makkai and colleagues (1991) found that the campaign did raise awareness of the government drug campaign aims, and increased 'personal knowledge' of drugs, but this was not the same as modifying drug behavior. The key target groups such as males, youths, and actual drug users, were less likely to regard the campaign as successful but more likely to be resistant to the message than other groups. A review of research literature produced largely in the late 1980s and 1990s, conducted for the World Health Authority, concluded that the use of 'scare tactics' in mass media campaigns clearly did not work and that more nuanced campaigns might have some limited success but only if they used messages which built on existing audience knowledge (Hawks et al., 2002: 28). It seems then that traditional mass-mediated drugs education was sometimes successful in making audiences more aware of drugs issues, or at least aware of the campaigns that agencies were developing, but not

necessarily, or even very often, successful in modifying actual behavior, either among drug users, or the wider population (Aldridge, 2008; Moore et al., 2011; Plant et al., 2011: 149).

Several critics have questioned whether it is possible to really effectively evaluate mediated drugs education because of the difficulties in untangling, separating out and 'controlling' the various potentially relevant variables (or influences), such as family, community, and previous experience including exposure to drug use, etc. (Power, 1989; Davies and Coggans, 1994; Crano and Burgoon, 2002). Put another way, we can say that these methodological problems arise because our experience of media and everyday lived popular culture, including drugs cultures, is highly complex and contingent upon a variety of cultural practices, and social interactions. Both traditional linear models of mass communication and traditional quantitative research designs in evaluations of media campaigns tend to underestimate these complexities in trying to model audience responses as 'dependent variables'.

Perhaps, the starting point for a more effective mediated drugs education is to accept this complexity and, in particular, the point that audiences, including drug users, are active creators, as well as reproducers of popular culture. They are unlikely to simply 'receive' mass-mediated drugs education in a passive way. Coggans and Watson are critical of approaches to drugs education that underestimate the critical skills of their target audiences, assuming 'a deficit model' in which the purpose of drugs education is to replace missing knowledge and competencies required to resist drug offers (1995: 212). The 'deficit model' misses the point that within popular drug cultures—as demonstrated in Chapters 2, 6 and 7 of this book—there is a multitude of cultural practices including the resistive and subversive; social actors actively create culture, partly through their experience of mediated popular culture and this was and is the context in which traditional mass-mediated drugs education is received. We know that young people are aware of the debates and discussions about drug use as they unfold through news coverage but that they may interpret news media coverage through their own critical lens, preferring to rely on information secured via friends and peers, rather than journalists (Hammersley et al., 2002: 116). On occasion, official enquiries have been surprised at just how well informed about drug issues young people actually are through their interaction with friends and peers, and through engagement with popular culture.[37] That is not a reason for complacency or inaction but it does suggest that the critical skills of young people as they engage with mediated and popular culture should be regarded as a resource rather than an obstacle in formulating a strategy for effective drugs education.

Davies and Coggans distinguish three kinds of drugs education. They conclude that the first, simple information provision, appears to be 'ineffective' while the second, a 'fear arousal' strategy, actually runs counter to the principles of effective health education precisely because it fosters fear, reinforces stereotypes about identity and stigmatizes particular social

groups (Davies and Coggans, 1994: 312; Power, 1989). The third approach to drugs education that they identify is often referred to as the 'life skills approach' because it places the emphasis upon the fostering of skills helpful to developing healthy lifestyles. This can mean little more than the 'resistance training' associated with fear arousal and abstinence campaigns (Blackman, 2004: 153), but it can offer the potential to develop a more sophisticated strategy, which begins to acknowledge the importance of popular culture as the context within which drugs education occurs. For example, Ross and Davies endorse those calling for an approach that replaces 'individualistic health behaviour change models' with a 'social ecological or "dynamic" model that takes into account societal/cultural norms' (2009: 160). In other words, drugs education whether mediated or delivered in a school or community context has to focus not merely upon 'vulnerable' individuals, but social actors embedded within communities or social groups, producing and reproducing complex cultural practices, including those relating to popular drug cultures. These cultural practices have to be understood as a communicative resource rather than a barrier.

Davies and Coggans go on to argue that television is ineffective as a tool for drugs education precisely because of its global reach; it has to appeal to a mass audience where as effective drugs education seeks a more intimate relationship with particular communities or social groups in local contexts (1994: 314). This suggests a model of television that belongs in the 'high modern' era of mass communication rather than television as it is produced and consumed in the contemporary late or post-modern world of multichannels, segmented audiences, niche programming and new media. But it does precisely highlight the inherent difficulties faced by those agencies in the twentieth century that sought to utilize the means of mass communication for mass-mediated drugs education. The linear model underpinning this strategy simply failed to grasp the complexity and activity of audiences, or the extent to which drugs education discourses were intimately bound up with other, alternative and resistive discourses within popular cultures. Now in the twenty-first century, an era in which the mediation of popular culture is accelerated through the arrival of digital technologies, the challenge is for mediated drugs education to develop approaches that foster not only 'life skills' but skills that will allow a critical engagement with mediated texts, including those circulating drug discourses. An early example of this kind of possibility was The British Film Institute's 'Media in Personal and Social Education' project in 1993, which was designed to foster skills of critical interpretation through the comparison of a 1935 cigarette advertisement, an edition of a 1970s children's television show discussing drugs, and two of the COI anti-drug advertisements from the 1980s. More recently, Jones (2005) developed an approach that placed media production skills at the center of a drugs project, locally embedded, to help drug users develop their own critical voices, reflecting both on other media representations of drug use and their own experience. Handing video cameras to

drug users is not necessarily a 'quick fix' for ineffective drugs education, but the recognition that in the contemporary era a 'life skills' approach has to include 'media skills' is valuable. The next chapter begins to explore the contemporary era in which the arrival of digital technologies, Web 2.0 and the processes of convergence between 'old' and 'new' media have fundamentally challenged the old models of linear mass communication and mediated drugs education. The next chapter examines the attempts by successive governments in Britain during the last fifteen years to utilize new media technologies for drugs education before adopting a wider perspective to review the mediation of popular drug cultures through 'new media'.

5 New Media, Popular Culture and Cultures of Intoxication

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins to explore the implications of the arrival of 'new media' for popular drug cultures but in doing this it also picks up the story of mediated drugs education that was the main concern of the previous two chapters. 'New media' is, of course, hardly 'new' as many of the technologies required to produce computer mediated communication (CMC) are more than three decades old; the Internet has been an everyday feature of life in many countries for two decades, and even the concept of Web 2.0 is on the brink of its tenth birthday. Nevertheless, the term 'new media' remains a term that is widely employed to draw a distinction between the mass media associated with analogue technologies and those media that operate through networks of digital technologies. Chapter 2 of this volume examined the representation of drugs and cultures of intoxication through the 'old media' of the analogue age: cinema, broadcasting and the press. Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume traced the history of the deployment of these 'old media' to disseminate mediated drugs education to 'mass audiences' via these technologies of 'mass communication'. This chapter first briefly considers what is different about 'new media' and the potential implications of its new characteristics for the themes set out in this book. It then returns to the topic of mediated drugs education to consider how drugs education agencies have attempted to harness the potential, or perhaps thwart the perceived dangers, of new media before contemplating in the final section of this chapter, the vast explosion in information flows both about the nature of drugs and intoxication experiences, and the actual distribution of drugs through white, grey and black markets.

THE 'NEW' IN NEW MEDIA

Put at its simplest the most important distinctive feature introduced by the arrival of new media and the Internet, in particular, is the destabilization of the linear. In an age of analogue mass communication, those in charge

of mass communication technologies, film producers, broadcasting schedulers, newspaper proprietors, and senior officials in agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, could determinedly defend the assumption that 'their' messages would be communicated safely in a linear direction toward their intended audiences. Of course, advertising hoardings might be defaced from time to time and even broadcasting signals jammed, but on the whole it was possible to assume control over both the content and the direction of communication. What audiences did with the messages they received was another perennial question, but control of content and direction lay in the hands of those initiating the sequence of mass communication. In the age of new media, particularly with the arrival of Web 2.0 technologies, the assumptions associated with linear models of mass communication are no longer secure. Through the networks of digitally driven computer-mediated communication that we now know as the Internet the direction of communication flow is simultaneously multiple and unpredictable; security of control over the content and structuring of messages far less certain. The term 'Web 2.0' is used to describe a variety of features of new media communication, many of which actually existed in the era of 'Web 1.0' long before the early 2000s, when the term Web 2.0 first began to be commonly used (Leaning, 2009: 45). However, the term has some value in underlining the progressive ease with which 'ordinary' users of the Internet can now create and upload content and establish their own on-line opportunities for interactive communication, even with the most limited technical skills. In this sense, as Molthrop (2000) argues while the Internet may exist as a physical network, the World Wide Web itself is more a way of thinking than a 'thing'.

In trying to describe the new media environment perhaps the first point to note is the sheer ubiquity of new media in everyday life in the developed world and much of the developing world. Seventy-three percent of individuals living within the twenty-seven nations of the European Union used the Internet either at home or work in 2012; seventy-six percent of households had broadband access, and sixty percent of young people (aged between sixteen and twenty-four years) used the Internet on the move via mobile devices (Seybert, 2012). More than half of these EU citizens posted messages to social media sites and 60 percent accessed news on-line.[1] This not only underlines the ubiquity of the Internet but the intensity of interaction with communication flowing in multiple directions. More significantly still for the purposes of this book, 64 percent of young EU citizens aged between sixteen and twenty-four years identified the Internet as their most favored source of information about drugs (Eurobarometer, 2011: 20). The Internet was much more likely to be identified than friends (37 percent), parents or health professionals (28 percent each), or mass media such as television, magazines, or newspapers (15 percent). For this age cohort in the developed world, new media have largely displaced old media as first port of call for information, entertainment and news. In the US, Internet use is equally

entrenched with 76 percent of the population living in homes with Internet access in 2010, according to the US Census, and 50.3 percent of young people accessing the Internet on devices outside the home.[2] In the developing world Internet penetration has grown steadily from less than 5 percent of the population in 2001 to nearly 25 percent in 2011.[3] As in Europe, young people in the US now turn to the Internet as the default source for information about health and drug issues, with 75 percent of 'on-line youth' in one survey reporting accessing the Internet for such information (Quintero and Bundy, 2011: 901). The reasons why young people are inclined toward Internet sources are not difficult to anticipate: the Internet provides fast, convenient, private and diverse points of access to information (Quintero and Bundy, 2011).

However, the speed and convenience of accessing information via the Internet is not the only reason why researchers and commentators have suggested that the arrival of 'new media' fundamentally alters the dynamics of mediated communication. As Leaning points out, discussions of the novelty of the Internet often conflate features associated with the infrastructure and hardware that support the Internet, with particular software applications that allow us to access and use the Internet (2009: 46): hardware and software innovations have distinct impacts. In his review of such discussions, Leaning finds lists of fourteen or more features identified by various commentators as new and decisive in their impact upon the nature of new media communication. For the purposes of this discussion we do not need to examine each one in detail, partly for the reason that when most people access the Internet they may have little or no understanding of, for example, the technical protocols that permit network interactivity. However, it is worth noting the distinction Leaning makes between the hardware and software dimensions of this new environment of computer-mediated communication because it is not only the arrival of the Internet but the more or less simultaneous development of particular desktop-based software packages, such as Photoshop or Windows Moviemaker, that has unleashed the full potential of these new communication networks. It is very often these that allow those accessing the Internet to become active user-producers rather than plain consumers of information.

In other words it is the new audience/user *activity*, the active engagement in the production of meaning as a possibility, that the Internet affords everybody with access to a mobile device or desktop, that really makes the difference to earlier eras of media communication. Now consumers of meaning can become simultaneously producers of meaning, or 'prosumers', in ways that become central to the functioning of capitalist economies, as consumers secure access to free content in return for the commodification of their personal data, and user-generated content is in turn exploited and commodified by producers (Bruns, 2008; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). It is this development that has opened up infinitely more possibilities for consumers of mediated images and information to appropriate these resources

for new purposes using digital technologies, thus triggering profound conflicts around the established social relationships of control and ownership of knowledge and image rights (Collins, 2010). As we shall see in this and the following chapter, these developments are highly significant for the circulation of meaning within popular cultures of drug use and intoxication and, of course, the mediation of drugs education.

Several social theorists have recognized the importance of new media for the process of identify formation in a 'late modern' social world. Beck and Giddens suggest that our experience of the world is one through which we construct our own narratives of self as we engage with the social structures of late modernity (Beck, 1994; Giddens, 1994a), and Thompson conceptualizes the self is 'a symbolic project' that in the contemporary world draws increasingly upon mediated images in its ongoing reflexive self-construction (Thompson, 1995). Beck particularly emphasizes the extent to which our self-narrativization occurs in the context of the self-assessment of mediated information about 'risk'. As we lead our lives, we reflect upon the lifestyle choices we make as we engage with the social structures that shape our experience, but we do this whilst processing streams of information from news media and elsewhere about risks to health, environmental risks, economic insecurity, etc., and perhaps risks associated with particular drugs. But further to this, as Slevin (2000: 157–158) suggests, from the perspective of these theorists of late modernity, it is not difficult to understand how important 'new media' could become to the 'project of the self', given the potential that these new media technologies offer, as YouTube proclaims, to 'broadcast yourself'. For example, the opportunity to blog gives new mediated expression to the desire to construct identity, find community, reinterpret and remediate one's past to wider audiences (Gurak and Antonijevic, 2008; Schwarz, 2009). As we shall see, the mediation of self is intimately bound up with the YouTube drug videos that we explore in Chapter 6 of this volume, but in a broader context the process through which self-identity is worked upon is a vital aspect of the engagement of individuals in popular drug cultures. The blog, the chat room, and the on-line forum, and now most recently, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace, provide opportunities for individuals to work, rework and mediate their narrative projects, which may include 'drug narratives', experiences of their own intoxication, or those of their friends and peers, or equally perhaps, an implacable hostility directed toward drug users and drug cultures. These currents have long circulated within popular cultures but the arrival of new media technologies hugely accelerates this circulation and adds multiple directions in which these ideas can travel across the virtual networks.

In short, drawing upon Leaning (2009: 46–60) the 'new' in new media is often understood to refer to a much heightened degree of interactivity that 'old media' simply could not sustain; the facilitation and intensified focus upon interpersonal communication via new technologies; content

production based upon the opportunities that new media technologies, particularly in the post-Web 2.0 era afford for the uploading of user generated material; and finally the individualization of media, because the greatly enhanced digital information storage and delivery systems now permit particular 'bits' of content to be accessed by individuals at their own convenience in their own time, rather than as structured through the collectively shared broadcasting schedules familiar in the era of 'old' centralized mass media.

MAKING SENSE OF NEW MEDIA

Are the changes described above going to make a better world or does the arrival of new media and Web 2.0 technologies actually herald the onset of a much darker dystopia? The debating points between 'cyber-utopians' and 'cyber-pessimists' have been rehearsed many times but it is worth examining some of the arguments on either side because they have some significant bearing upon the circulation of popular drugs culture and, of course, mediated drugs education.

From a Cyber Utopian Perspective

A tradition of technologically-fueled optimism is considerably older than the Internet. However, the arrival of the Internet encouraged the 'cyber utopians' during the 1980s and early 1990s to begin to make hopeful claims about the glowing future that new media would deliver. For some, the arrival of the Internet was going to usher in a new period of transformative economic growth with the newly generated wealth bringing prosperity to millions more employed in the 'new economy' (Curran, 2012: 4). Cultural democracy would be promoted. Negroponte (1996) offered a vision whereby digitalization of culture enhanced democratic accessibility through the process of individualization noted above. Individuals would become empowered by digital technologies to access the digitalized cultural resources that were most important to them. The opportunities for networked communication to foster democratic engagement in formal politics were seized upon by those who claimed that digital democracy might reverse the emerging signs of disengagement and disillusion with party politics in many Western liberal democracies. But some theorists went further claiming that the Internet would provide new opportunities for democratic discussion, deliberation and debate. In other words, new media might support the flowering of a new kind of public sphere, or multiple public spheres (Barber, 1984; Gitlin, 1998; Rheingold, 1993) in which more deliberative and equal communication might flourish to confound Habermas' gloomy prognosis concerning the 're-feudalization' of the public sphere in the age of largely advertising-funded mass communication (Habermas, 1989).

Particularly for those on the left-liberal and counter-cultural wings of politics, new media technologies, first bulletin boards, e-newsletters and chat rooms, later blogs and social media, offered technological tools to fix the inadequate institutional arrangements that worked against civic engagement and political participation. It was Enzenberger (1976) who first cautioned the left to abandon its traditional suspicion of media technologies. At the time, the mainstream left largely ignored him, but subsequently advocates of community or 'alternative' politics began to contemplate the possibilities that new media technologies offered for developing channels of political communication that sidestepped and re-routed the established 'old' political media (Grossman, 1995; Tsagarousianou et al., 1998). For some activists and commentators, these new communication channels could extend and universalize political rights, political movements and participation on a literally global scale (Hands, 2011; Mason, 2012). As Van Zoonen and colleagues (2010) note, many have placed their faith in the Internet as a technology that would give voice to the disempowered and marginalized.

Castells (1996 and 2009) reads the politics of the 'network society' in a more nuanced way but also points to more fundamental changes in the social structure driven by the arrival of the Internet. The Internet is not going to deliver utopia, dissolve structured inequalities, make culture more accessible or necessarily introduce more democratic politics. But the 'network society' does open up possibilities for new forms of politics, new patterns of resistance organized around fundamentally different axes of orientation to older mainstream political arrangements. Echoing the themes explored by Giddens and Beck above, Castells suggests that the arrival of the 'network society' brings a politics that works much more through identity and symbolism, as older social structures that prompted collective political action are destabilized, and individual social actors grow more exposed to the mediated environment that fosters the self-reflexivity identified by those theorists above.

> In a world of global flows of wealth, power and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning . . . Yet identity is becoming the main, and sometimes the only source of meaning in a historical period characterized by widespread destructuring of organizations, delegitimation of institutions, fading away of major social movements, and ephemeral cultural expressions. (Castells, 1996: 3)

According to Castells, 'Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies' with multiple horizontal and vertical lines of communication generating 'a networking logic' that 'substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture' (1996: 469). Another distinctive feature is the 'rise of mass self-communication', driven by the proliferation of wireless communication, digital

media, portable devices, and open-source software, which sustain the 'web of horizontal communication networks' that grant individual social actors their own mass communication systems (2010: 8).

In this kind of network society, it is possible for the subordinate to resist the power of those institutions and agencies that control the key 'switches' or nodes in the network but this is essentially a struggle of 'discursive power' (Castells, 2009: 51), played out through symbolic and identity politics, which is described by Castells as 'counter power' (2009: 47). We have to understand old and new media as not holding power in themselves but constituting 'by and large the space where power is decided', or in other words, the site across which power is exercised and contested (2010: 5). While Castells is by no means a fully paid up 'cyber utopian', he does claim that there are possibilities for social movements and political insurgents to 're-programme networks' and 'rewire' existing modes of political practice, 'by bringing new information, new practices, and new actors into the political system . . . to challenge the inevitability of politics as usual and regenerate the roots of our fledgling democracy' (2009: 412). Other network theorists are a little more skeptical of the capacity of the Internet to radically shift power relations; capitalism will remain capitalism, even if networked (Van Dijk, 2006: 243–244). A question to consider a little later in this chapter, then, is how much the arrival of the network society, and the associated complexity of horizontal and vertical flows, has destabilized the power relationships that, as earlier chapters have described, underpin the regulation of drugs, formal drugs education and the circulation of popular drugs culture?

According to the 'cyber optimists' the enhanced participation and contestation associated with the arrival, new media will also imply new and welcome challenges to existing hierarchies of expertise and knowledge-power relations. New media allow knowledge to be made more accessible, more collaborative and less controlled by established experts and institutional monopolies (Tapscott and Williams, 2006). The dissemination of knowledge and access to education need no longer be bound by spatial or temporal limitations, or for that matter, the political-economic constraints of formal education systems: cyber citizens should be able to access the knowledge they seek, free at the click of a mouse, wherever they might be in time and space (Tiffin and Rajasingham, 1995). This vision offers a thoroughly radical alternative to the hierarchies of expertise and power-knowledge associated with health care and traditional drugs work.

With new democratized knowledge networks will come new kinds of virtual community, offering the potential to overcome the familiar limitations and disadvantages of real, live communities. Rheingold (1993), for example, in a study of very early on-line communities anticipates a time when on-line forums allow people to talk, gossip and sift ideas for the common good, and in pursuing shared interests establish new forms of communal ties and patterns of on-line social integration. In practice, he found

that on-line communities created fresh hierarchies and social distinctions between, for example older and newer members, but on-line communities also afforded the possibility for new and humane patterns of communal sociability. According to Slevin, the Internet is now 'opening up opportunities for new forms of human association' (2000: 96). Following Giddens, he argues that the separation of time and space in virtual reality means that new forms of communal experience can be explored on-line. Freed from the bonds of tradition, these will be freely entered into, will therefore be based upon the exercise of intelligent choice, and are likely to demonstrate the tolerant cosmopolitanism that Giddens hoped would become an important characteristic of radicalized modernity (1994b). But Slevin and Giddens are rather more cautious than Turner (2006: 1, quoted in Walsh, 2011: 61) who claims that the individual, 'so long trapped in the human body is free to step outside its fleshy confines, explore its authentic interests and find others with whom it might find communion', thanks to the on-line community. Walsh adds that this might be particularly valuable for those who are separated by geography but share a common interest in getting high on psychedelic drugs. Similarly, in the US where the debate between drug abstinence and harm reduction (HR) approaches is sharply polarized and drug policy is an aggressively contested terrain, Gatson (2007) reports that harm reduction activist groups form mutually supportive communities to unify geographically and politically isolated dispersed HR activists. The relevance of the communal potential of new media for communities of drug users, those wishing to explore drug experiences, and those working for drugs agencies is obvious. On-line communities afford the possibility to share experiences, offer mutual support, and in certain circumstances convert virtual social relationships into face-to-face relationships (Tackett-Gibson, 2007a: 73).

Finally, if late modernity is characterized by increasing self-reflexivity, driven by the growing abundance of information available to the individual social actor as she or he engages with everyday life (Beck, 1994), then it is likely that what will follow is a preoccupation with identity and an inclination to succumb to the temptations of on-line anonymity, playing with and re-inventing the on-line self. Cyber-utopians regard this as a positive and liberating development rather than a descent into self-indulgent narcissism. As Leaning (2009: 129) points out, it is hardly surprising that the Internet fosters such patterns of individualism given that the societies that produced it were already characterized by highly individualist values and 'cultural machinery'; new media technologies were conceived and developed within subcultures centered around individualism. This is reflected in the positive, perhaps rose-tinted, lens through which Internet optimists interpret the on-line preoccupation with self and identity. Slevin analyses how the Internet enriches 'the process of self-formation' (2000: 174–175) as individuals acquire knowledge and skills, relate on-line mediated experience to their own primary experience, and 'cope with both the disruptive and the more

positive sides of their lives' (2000: 180). While these points seem perfectly sensible, Sherry Turkle (1995) in the mid-90s wanted to go rather further, producing what amounted to a postmodernist manifesto for the depthless, multiple self—learn to abandon the yearning for authentic relationships and embrace the possibilities that CMC afforded to play with identity and present as many different on-line selves as one wished. As we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7 of this volume, the comment strings associated with some drug-related websites suggest that this 'playfulness' is an enduring feature of mediated drug discourse on-line.

What might all this mean for an analysis of popular drug cultures, regulation and drugs education? As we have seen in earlier chapters, mass-mediated drugs education assumed a linear model of communication, with control over direction, flow and crucially the encoding of the message, firmly secure within the agencies responsible, whether government departments or campaigning organizations. Is it possible as the cyber-utopians might imagine, for the processes of mediated drugs education to be somehow 'democratized'? Can new media support a more interactive, deliberative and inclusive pattern to be introduced to mediated formal drugs education? Can the Internet sustain a number of dedicated forums or 'public spheres' in which drug issues and drug experiences could be discussed, considered and debated? We have seen that particular constructions of identity are at the heart of specific popular drug cultures. If new media open up new possibilities for 'playfulness' and fluidity in the presentation of self, in an age of radicalized reflexive modernity, will this lead to greater complexity in the construction of popular drug cultures, or the progressive destabilization of the gendered and racialized drug symbolism explored in previous chapters? Popular drug cultures have always revealed both 'celebratory' and 'disciplinary' currents but does the arrival of the network society with multiple possibilities for vertical and horizontal communication accelerate their circulation or fundamentally shift the power-knowledge relations that characterized the representation of drugs and drug use in previous decades?

Cyber Pessimism

Even in the 1980s and early 1990s there were plenty of skeptics; cyber pessimists who, rather than being convinced by the enthusiasm of cyber-optimists, instead offered a set of much darker predictions about the shape of things to come. Now, as the dust settles on the early decades of Internet history, it is possible to list the key points of a skeptical revisionist rebuttal of the most optimistic claims (Curran, 2012; Fenton, 2010).

Cyber-utopianism was often driven by an implicit or often explicit technological determinism. In other words, it was often assumed that technological innovation was the primary motor of social change and the immanent qualities within new media technologies made it 'inevitable' that

the Internet would progressively make the world a better place. Some cyber-pessimists share this assumption of technological determinism but believe it is 'inevitable' that new media technologies will make the world a much darker and threatening place. For example, Morozov argues that far from being a technology of liberation the Internet, including social media, actually provides authoritarian regimes with precisely the tools they need to keep populations subjugated and 'entertained' whilst simultaneously subjected to progressively more systematic surveillance (2012). While cyber-optimists might anticipate that Internet technologies would empower those dissenting Russian voices resisting Putin's authoritarianism, he notes that the search term 'breasts' pops up much more frequently than 'democracy' in keyword searches of Russian blogs.

However, the more convincing critique of cyber-utopianism is offered by those who reject all forms of technological determinism, in preference for an approach that stresses the continuing importance of the social relationships and political economic arrangements through which new media technologies are developed. Rather than technology determining social and cultural arrangements, it is those social relationships that shape the production of new technologies and are embodied within them (Leaning, 2009: 35). As Castells puts it 'technology is not simply a tool, it is a medium, it is a social construction with its own implications' (2010: 10). New technologies carry within them particular expressions of the wider social, economic and power relationships through which they were produced.

It follows, then, that we have to bear these configurations of social and economic power in mind when interpreting the impact of new media technologies in particular discursive spaces or policy arenas, such as those that circulate ideas about drugs, intoxication and their regulation. It is in this context that cyber pessimists point to the distance that has been traveled from the early era of new media when small Internet start-ups began to develop the innovative ideas of gifted individuals with student campus or counter-cultural backgrounds. In 2012 these young and gifted counter-cultural new media enthusiasts made up 10 percent of the *Forbes* magazine world's one hundred richest billionaires. A list that included Bill Gates, cofounder of Microsoft, with an estimated fortune of $61 billion net; Larry Page and Sergey Brin, co-founders of Google, with nearly $19 billion dollars net; Jeff Bezos, the inspiration for Amazon, with $18.4 billion dollars net; and Mark Zuckerberg who took Facebook from a campus dating tool to become the dominant global social media site, with $17.5 billion dollars net (Naughton, 2012a: 14). And these days much of cyber space is dominated by very large corporations, some having grown from small, new media start-up roots, others representing old media Leviathans that have bought up or converged with new media companies. The capacity for these very big corporations to begin to dominate on-line knowledge bases and information flows is underlined by a recent summary of Google's ongoing digital project called 'Knowledge Graph':

> It is in searchable possession not only of the trillions of pages of the world wide web, but is well on the way to photographing all the world's streets, of scanning all the world's books, of collecting every video uploaded to the public Internet, mostly on its own YouTube. In recent years, it has been assiduously accumulating as much human voice recording as possible, in all the languages and dialects under the sun, in order to power its translation and voice recognition projects. It is doing the same for face recognition in films and photographs. (Adams, 2013: 9)

Cyber-optimists might regard these developments as exciting possibilities for ever more efficient means of on-line information dissemination and communication. Cyber-skeptics point to the potential power that these developments allocate to already powerful media corporations and associated companies. As Castells (2009: 19–20) is quick to point out, some nodes in the communication networks that sustain the flows of information are more important and more powerful than others, acting as switches in the routing of this information. For Castells, some nodes exercise a kind of gravitational force in the processing of information and certain switches operate according to political or economic, rather than merely technical criteria (Fitzpatrick, 2002: 359). It needs little imagination to picture the emerging giant new media corporations developing their particularly engorged nodes to express their power and their interests through these communication networks. Indeed, tensions and conflicts are inherent to the system as rival networks and their embodied social and economic interests compete to secure dominance. Corporations now battle each other daily over image and intellectual property rights. Recently, Apple launched an action against Google based on the claim that the screen tap required to open a Google mobile phone was really a 'zero-length swipe', and therefore an infringement of Apple's iPhone swipe patent (Naughton, 2012b). Apple, Google, Motorola, Microsoft, Oracle, Hewlett-Packard, Samsung, HTC, and Amazon have all sued or counter-sued each other in the very recent past and show no signs of losing their litigious appetites, as they compete for dominance in markets for mobile devices. Now there is the prospect of even more intense struggles over the issue of net neutrality and the prospect of some 'new media' corporations pursuing a policy of 'virtual enclosure', building pay walls or subscription-related access points to enclose stretches of the net's virtual common lands.

For Castells, the power of corporations and their political allied interests is not secure; the particular configuration of political and economic elites in contemporary capitalism are unstable and vulnerable to challenge. He concludes his recent book *Communication Power* (2009) with a lengthy final section on the capacity of new social movements to mobilize through a politics of identity and cultural symbolism, sustained by new media networks. But for the critics, in this he significantly underestimates the continuing importance of 'materiality' in political struggles (Fitzpatrick, 2002:

360): that the most significant opposition to centers of power, corporate or state based, may employ symbolic and mediated strategies but still cohere around real marches and protests directed against real, not virtual targets. And in discussing the declining significance of the nation-state, critics suggest that Castells underestimates the extent to which state and private sector interests intersect in the expansion of new centralized media surveillance capacities (Fitzpatrick, 2002: 361).

This is the darker side of new media that cyber-pessimists point to. New media allows the commodification of our personal data; and the conjunction of Web 2.0 with the intensified drive on the part of Google to beat off competition from other search engines will lead to very significant new threats to individual privacy, as ever more intense scrutiny of our personal choices in consumption and information accessing occurs (Zimmer, 2008). This has the potential to become the dark and threatening world of panoptic surveillance that Neil Postman anticipated (1993). For a number of contemporary critics, the opportunities that Web 2.0 and associated social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and even YouTube offer to individual users represent a 'Faustian pact' in that the individual empowerment they afford is at the price not only of the surrender of control over personal data but also the granting of significant amounts of free labor to the powerful neo-liberal corporations (Everett and Mills, 2009; Keen, 2008; Van Dijk and Nieborg, 2009). Corporations welcome pooled collective effort, providing it generates information flows that work for them rather than against them.

Cyber-pessmists also question the extent to which new media can provide spaces for democratic discussion and are often even more skeptical about claims that they can address the more fundamental problems associated with political disengagement in liberal democracies. On-line discussion groups are not necessarily a short cut to a democratic or rational public sphere (Rodman, 2003; Leaning, 2009: 78–79). On-line discussion groups can be fragmented and fractious rather than democratic and communal. Indeed, chat rooms and discussion groups may function as exclusive and enclosed 'bubble worlds' that consolidate processes of self-reinforcing in-group discussion, thus exacerbating extremist discourse and wild beliefs, rather than rational, deliberative discussion (Charles, 2012: 6). In other words, as Gatson (2007) notes, those participating in websites that permit discussion of drug experiences or views about drug policy may not necessarily enjoy the kind of communicative equality that Habermas employs as a measure of the democratic qualities of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) and it comes as little surprise that on-line drug oriented communities can circulate some quite wild ideas in tandem with sensible suggestions for harm reduction.

The arrival of new media has threatened some of the long-standing hierarchies of expertise and knowledge-power relations, as discussed above. For cyber-optimists this is a welcome development in that it implies an equalization in the relationship between consumers and producers, clients and professionals, amateurs and experts. However, critics offer a more

skeptical reading. For some, existing inequalities and hierarchies in expertise and control over knowledge may be more durable than acknowledged by some cyber utopians (Fenton, 2010; Warren et al, 2012), or the hierarchies of expertise and knowledge control associated with old media are merely replaced by new structured inequalities associated with the new media (Curran, 2012; Charles, 2012; Zittrain, 2008). It is now much more possible for 'ordinary people' to access knowledge that they might use to contest the definitions and interpretations offered by 'experts'. Wikipedia is just one obvious example of the ways in which the process of knowledge creation can be made more inclusive and 'democratic'. But for some skeptics, the destabilization of such knowledge hierarchies is more problematic than might seem at first. Can everyone really function as a 'citizen journalist' without professional training (Fenton, 2010)? Will the process of collective editing and moderation really fully address the dangers of erroneous information, unbalanced judgments, or plain craziness that can be features of on-line knowledge generation (Keen, 2008; Charles, 2012)? While there are shining examples of the tolerant and the deliberative in the discussion groups and chat rooms of cyberspace, there are also disturbing indicators of irrationalism, fanaticism and hate pages (Curran, 2012: 10). The issues associated with the destabilization of knowledge hierarchies have obvious implications for the consideration of drugs, intoxication and drug policy. As we shall see, on-line discussion of these issues frequently involves contestation and open resistance to bodies of 'expert' knowledge offered by medical agencies, drugs workers, and governments.

Finally, even the fluidity and 'playfulness' of on-line cultures has been examined with a critical eye. The disembodied nature of CMC creates as many uncertainties and insecurities as it does opportunities for 'play'. Although Internet users may revel in the possibilities to create new identities or persona, indeed actually inhabit new lives in Second Life and similar sites, there is evidence of a continuing yearning for 'authenticity' and 'trust' in computer-mediated relationships, however problematic these ideas may be in 'real' life, let alone the virtual world (Slater, 1998). The Internet may create new technological means but not necessarily subordinate old human needs. Trust is a quality that social actors seek in others whether on-line or in real spaces and while users may welcome the anonymous nature of CMC, which may dissolve the constraining inhibitions of the 'real' world, at the same time, a mutual understanding that 'nothing is necessarily for real' may lead to alienation and suspicion (O'Brien and Shapiro, 2004). Friendship can be reduced to a commodified form of social capital to be accumulated and displayed on Facebook (Charles, 2012: 121).

Summary

The presentation of the debates above through a binary opposition between cyber optimists and pessimists is something of a short cut through what is

actually a rather more complex and nuanced field of scholarship. Nevertheless, it serves to highlight the key points that need to be born in mind when considering the impact of new media upon popular drugs culture and mediated drugs education. The potential of the Internet to disseminate knowledge about drugs and to circulate experiences of intoxication is obviously vast. The ease with which Internet users, including the young, can access an enormous variety of on-line information about drugs and drug experiences is unprecedented. As we shall see in the final section of this chapter, on-line communities have cohered around the numerous sites, such as Erowid, which function as clearing houses for drug information and the sharing of drug experiences. We can understand this in terms of the acceleration of the discourses and information flows that make up particular popular drugs cultures.

This represents a significant challenge to the agencies of official drugs education in two ways. Firstly, in the past their approach to mass-mediated drugs education was usually based upon the assumption of linearity in communication—security of control over both direction of drugs education messages and their content. As we have seen in the US, drugs agencies, whether government sponsored or working in civil society, have a long history of endorsing mass-mediated drugs abstinence messages, confident in the prospect that they would secure a hegemonic position for this particular strategy, the basis for the 'War on Drugs'. In Britain, as we have seen, the attitude of policy makers was rather more ambivalent until the political interests of the Thatcher government during the 1980s were served by a new investment in mass-mediated drugs education. But the ambivalence of British officials arose not from a lack of belief in the linear model of mass communication but a conviction that it was rather too powerful. Now the multiple directions of communication and information flow in the networks that the Internet sustains render such assumptions of control and security in communication much more problematic. Official drugs education messages cannot avoid entering the virtual world of on-line popular drugs cultures, the world that young people are most likely to access first in their search for information about drugs, and once circulated through these networks, such messages may be subjected to discussion, deliberation, remediation, 'mashing' and downright sabotage. Perhaps, more importantly, they have to compete with other bodies of on-line knowledge and sources of experience about drugs.

This could provide new opportunities for innovative work but not for drugs education strategies that are hegemonic in approach; those that depend upon the securing of a particular 'truth' over others and which try to 'frame' or 'primarily define' the understanding of drugs issues in just one way. The abstinence approaches developed through the 'War on Drugs' are a good example and as we shall see, these are subjected to a variety of critical discursive responses on-line. In their nature, harm reduction (HR) approaches to drugs education tend not to depend upon securing

a hegemonic definition or framing of drugs issues because HR strategies can be (though not necessarily always are) explicitly deliberative, inviting a *discussion* about the nature and management of the risks associated with particular intoxicative practices.

In turn, this points to the second significant challenge to the established practices of official drugs agencies. The arrival of new media has the potential to destabilize the traditional hierarchies of expertise and knowledge-power relations in this field just as in others. Now Internet users and potential drug users must make risk calculations, as Beck would anticipate, in weighing up the advice that is provided by official agencies with that provided by a variety of independent drug-focused information sites, blogs, social network sites and, of course, video file sharing sites, such as YouTube. While popular drugs cultures have always circulated alternative, 'lay' knowledge about drugs, it is now much more possible to seek out the experiences of those who have tried particular substances, or those challenging the information offered by official agencies. The arrival of new media has hugely promoted and accelerated deliberative communication about drugs.

That might be regarded as a 'good thing' by many, including both potential drug users and many professional drug workers. But the arguments developed by the cyber pessimists need to be borne in mind, too. While traditional knowledge-power relations may be de-stabilized they have not necessarily been equalized or democratized; there may still be structured inequalities in the discursive spaces that on-line drugs communication offer up. The official agencies of drugs education make frequent interventions into such new media spaces with a variety of, sometimes bewildering, consequences. The power of the very large new media corporations that cause cyber pessimists anxiety, is now also casting a shadow across these discursive spaces. Since Google bought YouTube, for example, this author has noticed a significant increase in the number of YouTube drug videos that have been removed from the site. The regime of regulation on YouTube has moved significantly from the early, more or less unregulated, libertarian era. The patterns of media power and control that loom large across mainstream media sectors are found here, too.

While there is a multitude of examples of thoughtful, deliberative posting on the huge variety of drug related sites across the Internet, there is an equal measure of often abusive or aggressive posting about drugs and drug policy. Trolls and those inclined to 'flame' lurk on these sites, just as on others. Sometimes the advice, information and experiences offered by those posting seems sincere but seriously inaccurate or misjudged. Given the destabilization of the status of experts, medical or otherwise, this has potentially dangerous implications for those lacking the skills to navigate and critically evaluate their way through the multiple information flows. The fluidity and playfulness of disembodied CMC invites posturing, boasting and self-promotion in on-line discussions of drug experiences

and policy. Drug sites are subject to official surveillance, particularly in relation to those promoting 'grey' and 'black' drug markets. But just as importantly, as we shall see in Chapter 6, on-line popular cultures sustain the circulation of 'disciplinary' discourses that can operate through non-official surveillance mechanisms that raise difficult questions about individual privacy. Frequently now strangers, or friends, may film individuals experiencing the worst effects of extreme intoxication in public or private spaces and load these videos to sites like YouTube. These films may serve as 'cautionary tales' but they also operate as mechanisms of disciplinary surveillance. They may humiliate in much the same way that the public stocks functioned in the eighteenth-century village and raise difficult questions about individual privacy.

In the next two sections of this chapter, we will explore the ways in which the complexities arising from shifts in power-knowledge relations and the destabilization of traditional linear communication models work out in relation to official drugs education and the proliferation of non-official sources of drugs information.

FROM THE DRUGS TSAR TO FRANK: OFFICIAL DRUGS EDUCATION AND ON-LINE MEDIA

In Chapter 4 of this volume we saw that in the UK primarily political concerns determined the belated development of a mass-mediated drugs education strategy during the 1980s and early 1990s, as the Conservative government felt it necessary to be 'seen to be doing something' in response to the heroin epidemic that had a profound impact on public opinion. When the New Labour administration took office in 1997, a rather different set of challenges faced the new government in the field of drugs policy, though resort to a mediated drugs strategy had the familiar ring of political expediency mixed with practical policy. The new challenge was the emergence of the dance culture and the growing use of 'recreational drugs'. Following the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act which effectively criminalized out of door rave events, rave had largely mutated into a dance culture 'institutionalized' in the clubs and pubs of the nighttime economy that the new government proposed to encourage (Hadfield and Measham, 2009). As discussed in the first chapter, the available quantitative survey data produced in, for example, the British Crime Survey or the North West Longitudinal Survey (Parker et al., 1998) began to lend weight to the 'normalisation thesis'. Evidence suggested that the 'recreational' use of drugs such as cannabis, and the drugs associated with dance and club culture, particularly ecstasy and amphetamines, was at a record level. Equally significant was the extent to which some mainstream media representations of drug use were beginning to change, as described in Chapter 2 of this volume. Increasingly, news and entertainment media were acknowledging the widespread use

of 'recreational' drugs in ways that Parker and colleagues would describe as a 'cultural accommodation' to recreational drug use (2002). Indeed, it is through this period from 1997 and into the early years of the next century, that the unraveling of the moral and political consensus about drug use began to receive significant mainstream media attention.[4] The drugs policy arena in the UK became a more openly contested space from this time onward, with more public figures, some politicians and harm reduction groups such as the Drugs Alliance (UK) questioning the continuing emphasis upon enforcement, but other campaigning organizations, such as the Leah Bett's Trust, Solv It, and the National Drug Prevention Alliance energetically contesting this.

Whereas the heroin epidemic was located and largely defined within tangible spatial boundaries, particularly urban working class districts of the major industrial centers, the new 'recreational' drug use of the 'chemical generation', was much more diffuse, distributed throughout different social strata and age cohorts, and in a wide variety of public and private spaces. The New Labour Government faced a twofold difficulty. On the one hand, the spatial and social location of the drugs 'problem' was more difficult to target than in the 1980s and on the other hand, the kind of approach that should be adopted was a much more contentious issue, as the policy and moral consensus unraveled.

The previous government had begun to contemplate the use of new media as part of the communication campaign to be developed with *Tackling Drugs Together*, the 1995 national drugs strategy, but it was actually for the incoming New Labour government to establish the first official drugs education website, as part of its own new national drugs strategy, *Tackling Drugs Together to Build a Better Britain* (HMSO, 1998). The eroding moral-political consensus exacerbated the tensions between the government's inclination to secure political capital by emphasizing enforcement measures and the pragmatic recognition that harm reduction approaches were necessary in an era of 'normalised' illicit drug use. *Tackling Drugs Together to Build a Better Britain* acknowledged the cultural normalisation of illicit drug use and tried to develop a strategy to explicitly address it. It aimed to 'make the misuse of drugs less culturally acceptable to young people [through] the use of effective and targeted national and local publicity and information'.[5] The focus on the popular culture within which drug use occurred and the use of a mediated strategy to address the 'cultural acceptability' of drugs was an important new step, but at the same time *Tackling Drugs Together to Build a Better Britain* continued to emphasize enforcement through the ambition to 'stifle the availability of drugs on the street'.[6]

As with the previous government, these tensions created an inconsistent set of policy responses characterized by the uneasy combination of harm reduction and enforcement measures (Measham and Moore, 2006; Ward, 2010: 14). The government hoped that the new media might provide the tool to engage a new generation of 'digital natives', the very people that

were 'the chemical generation', and that the non-linearity of new media networked communication would be the technology to reach varied and diffuse populations of young people it sought to 'target'. And yet, its approach to new media was still really rooted in the linear and analogue; its new media communication strategy revealing tensions that matched those between enforcement and harm reduction.

With the unfolding of *Tackling Drugs Together to Build a Better Britain*, came also the appointment of Britain's first 'Drugs Tsar', a former senior police officer, Kenneth Hellawell to drive through the new strategy. This denoted a notable feature of the new government's strategy, a very distinct top-down managerialist approach (Blackman, 2004: 155), although the Drugs Prevention Advisory Service (DPAS) was also established in April 1999 and was tasked with fostering local initiatives. The Drugs Tsar ordered the design of the first official drugs education website which was called, Trashed,[7] in an attempt to speak the language of the 'chemical generation' it hoped to reach. The Health Minister, Tessa Jowell, explained at the launch in April 1998 that the strategy was not to 'preach' but 'to inform in straight forward language'.[8] This was an initiative underpinned by the 'life skills approach', which explicitly dismissed 'fear arousal' as 'rarely effective' and, instead, concentrated upon 'promoting a range of social skills' which, it was hoped, would provide young people with the means to resist illicit drug use (DFEE, 1998: 23–24). In other words, the underlying philosophy was a quietly understated harm reduction approach. The website was hosted by the Health Education Authority, as opposed to the department responsible for criminal justice, the Home Office. It had a lively design with lots of 'busy' graphics. Although the government had suggested that the provision of drugs information alone was not enough (DFEE, 1998: 24), this was pretty much all that the Trashed site actually did, other than gesturing toward 'street hipness' through its title. It was possible to click on a proliferation of different drug name links, bouncing around the homepage, and then to be taken to pages with more information about particular drugs. But it betrayed a continuing 'linear' approach to new media technology; a reluctance to relinquish communicative control, which was in sympathy with the government's managerial determination to weld harm reduction strategies and enforcement measures into one drugs policy. There was no real interactivity on the Trashed site; there was no bulletin board, chat room, or possibility for interactive discussion. The user might choose which link to click but after that the direction of travel was controlled by the architecture of the site.

This early attempt appears to have been a little half-hearted; it was not regularly updated and was forgotten fairly quickly. It was followed by a new government sponsored site, D2K,[9] which did build some more interactivity, though an interactivity that could still be very much controlled and contained within the design. It included an animated game, supported by Flash software, which allowed the player to travel through a virtual town

on a quest to find information about drugs. On the journey the user would meet virtual characters who would supply information about drugs and, bizarrely, the game player had the option of shooting them or letting them live, a rather dramatic illustration of the tensions inherent in a twin harm reduction and enforcement approach. This site, too, was quickly forgotten. The government sponsored or encouraged a variety of mixed-media drugs education strategies during the late 1990s and early 2000s, which ranged from CD-ROMs and short video films to theatre groups.[10]

Neither 'old' nor 'new' media were regarded as central drivers of drugs education; far more resources and hope were invested in school and peer-based drugs education, as signaled by the inclusion of drugs education within the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 (Blackman, 2004: 150; SCODA, 1999). Nevertheless, there was a hope that that new media might overcome some of the obstacles faced by traditional drugs education strategies in, for example, using animation and graphics to reach young people with literacy problems (Allen, 2003: 50). The government began to make more use of web-based information sites to support professional practice in drugs work, including the DPAS website and the Tackling Drugs website, produced by the Drug Misuse Team at the Department of Health in 2001.[11] However, the next use of on-line media to reach young people and drug users came with the development of the 'Talk to Frank' campaign which combined old and new media in an attempt to employ a more sophisticated and humorous approach to engage young people, particularly. The stated aims of the campaign included informing 'young people about the dangers and risks of drugs' and also 'where to go for help and advice', as well as fostering in parents 'the confidence and knowledge to talk to their children about drugs'.[12] Videos to support the 'Talk to Frank' campaign were first produced in May 2003 and the original website was developed originally to support these.[13]

The first stage of 'Frank' campaign was launched through a joint initiative involving the Departments of Health, Education and Skills, the Home Office and the Central Office of Information. The Profero advertising and marketing company was commissioned to supply the creative content.[14] The TalktoFrank.com website was at the heart of the campaign and from the beginning it sought to harness elements of young popular culture, including contributions by characters from the UK television soap *Hollyoaks* and a series of humorous video ads that were circulated not only via the 'old' media of television and radio but also as viral ads on-line and via 'ambient media', including pubs, clubs, bars and washrooms. The humor was to be 'cool' but not 'too laddish or cringe-making.'[15] Rather than 'fear arousal' the aim was to 'ensure that all young people understand the risks and dangers of drug use and know where they can go for advice or help'; the tone was to be 'non-judgmental', 'honest', and 'discreet' among other things. 'Frank never scares people' was the claim made in the original promotional information pack.[16] The talktofrank.com website was originally intended to

encourage debate via a 'have your say' on-line forum; it included a helpline and a variety of links to the on-line videos. Although originally planned as a three year campaign, the New Labour government announced in the 2006 *Tackling Drugs Changing Lives 2008–2018* strategy document that it would continue the campaign. A new series of Frank videos, once again designed for both old and new media circulation, employed the voice of comedian David Mitchell to voice the part of Pablo a canine cocaine mule who suffered a series of unfortunate adventures as he mixed with drug dealers and users.

The 'Frank' campaign (and its Scottish counterpart 'Know the Score'), then, did seek to harness elements of popular culture including a 'knowing' understanding of some of the more humorous consequences of drug use and it did acknowledge the centrality of new media in popular youth culture. At the same time, the temptation to play upon anxieties and fears was not entirely resisted and there were frequent references to drug use consequences such as impaired sexual performance and the deterioration of 'good looks' in a not always humorous way. The government claimed that the 'Talk to Frank' campaign had been successful because it had created 'a widely recognized and trusted website helpline' and the old and new viral advertisements had in the case of cannabis, for example, brought about a 12 percent increase in young people acknowledging the damage it could do to the mind (Home Office, 2008: 33). The Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition, which took office in the UK in 2010 following the electoral defeat of New Labour, has shown no inclination to invest significant additional public money in drugs education despite claiming that its approach was to be new and more locally driven. As far as mediated education is concerned 'Frank' remains the key to 'reducing demand' (HM Government, 2010: 10).

STRUGGLING FOR DISCURSIVE CONTROL IN THE US AND THE UK

Despite the 'street' language, use of irony, and comedians popular with young people, drugs workers and charities pointed to the absence of effective harm reduction advice in the 'Ask Frank' campaign. While TalktoFrank.com provided 'frank' and quite 'balanced' information about the effects or experiences of taking particular drugs, critics argued that it could go much further in promoting risk minimization (Batty, 2003). While in the main it avoided 'fear arousal' techniques and the worst excesses of US style abstinence campaigns, critics complained that the focus on legal penalties rather than health issues made the campaign look like 'its been designed by some official at the Home Office' (Batty, 2003), which, of course, in part it had. Even at the very beginning some of the sharp tensions within the government's regulatory strategy posed acute problems for 'Talk to Frank'.

As discussed in the first chapter, the early years of the new century saw a significant increase in the use of licit as well as illicit drugs. The UK government recognized that the use of alcohol among the young represented as significant a problem and announced a National Alcohol Strategy in April 2003. The early 2000s also saw a significant increase in the use of 'legal highs', many of which were promoted on a variety of commercial and 'harm reduction' websites.

These developments generated a particular set of tensions for a drugs education strategy that strongly focused upon enforcement and legal penalties. To make matters worse, the politics of drug regulation exacerbated the inconsistent responses on the part of the UK government. It refused a House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee recommendation to review the classification of ecstasy as Class A in 2004, but did review and downgrade the classification of cannabis from B to C in 2004, only to return it Class B in 2009.[17] The way the TalktoFrank.com site managed these tensions was to render them invisible. In other words, there was no discussion of the debate around drug classification and no acknowledgement that the official classificatory scheme was a product as much of politics as real risk assessment. Thus, 'legal highs' such as salvia or 'magic mushrooms', which were formally legal but classified in the period between 2005 and 2010, were discussed without any acknowledgement of the important shifts in regulation. The critics of 'Talk to Frank' suggested that in not acknowledging the existence of the debate about drug classification, the campaign lost credibility in the eyes of the key target audiences (Batty, 2003). Recent research among young people in the North West suggests that 'Frank' continues to have very little credibility with key target groups (Moore et al., 2011: 57).

The reluctance to acknowledge the existence of a debate with regard to classification is symptomatic of a deeper desire to retain communicative control; a refusal to relinquish discursive and symbolic power. And this is reflected in the functionality of the TalktoFrank.com site and the reluctance to use the full interactive and deliberative potential of new media. While the launch of the site had promised a forum for discussion, during the ten years of its existence, the site has not permitted very significant discursive interactivity. It has included a variety of games affording limited interactivity, one of the most recent being 'spliff pinball', which in 2011 allowed users to play pinball, targeting a brain that could be 'damaged' with each hit.[18] But this is not really a substitute for the deliberative discussion that can be promoted via Web 1.0, let alone Web 2.0 technologies. Instead, there is what could be described as a 'managed interactivity', which can be accessed via the 'Your Say' link. This gives access to a message board, 'Hear From Others' and a 'Share Your Story' link for posting. The messages posted are largely 'cautionary tales', with headlines such as, 'Cannabis Can Mess with Your Mind', 'MDMA Has Taken Over My Life', 'Methodrone Quickly Stopped Being Just a Laugh', and 'There is Life After Smack'. But there are

some opportunities for dissenting voices. Alongside the posts just quoted was 'Just to Let You All Know', posted by someone who advised, 'you shouldn't believe all the propaganda the government come up with about cannabis'.[19] So it is possible to express dissent but not really to engage in dialogue. Comment strings are not permitted so there is no debate between young people; comments can be posted but not responded to. Similarly, the link that promises 'Live Chat' merely places the user in a queue to talk to 'an advisor'. There is some interactivity but it is not deliberative.

This suggests an apprehension regarding the full interactive potential of new media technologies, one which is also to be found among official drugs agencies in the US. In September 2006, the US Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) became one of the first official government drug agencies to engage with Web 2.0 technologies when it uploaded eleven videos to YouTube, as part of its 'Above the Influence' campaign (Hess, 2009). These were a mix of campaign videos, the descendants of the PSA television advertisements discussed in Chapter 3 of this volume and some videoed press conference briefings. In an early phase of what might be described as 'digital naivety', the ONDCP initially permitted full functionality, which meant that users could leave comments, post responses and rate the videos. This quickly prompted 'a flurry of video blog rants, parodies, and re-posts of the videos, and comment', which according to Hess meant that the messages the agency sought to communicate were submerged by the 'digital vernacular response of the YouTube membership' (2009: 412). Hess is troubled by the evidence presented here that YouTube does not provide 'a fully deliberative environment largely due to its overwhelming structure and use for entertainment' (2009: 421). YouTube users play around, flame other posters, and regard its functionality as a playground, rather than a virtual space for civic deliberation or reasoned resistance in much the way that the cyber pessimists discussed above feared. But the ONDCP were clearly more troubled by its inability to retain any kind of communicative or discursive control once the genie had been released from the bottle. It took very little time for the agency to abandon its early enthusiasm for interactive deliberation and the user functions were rapidly closed down. The videos now exist on YouTube like 'old media' television clips, suspended in cyberspace.

The story is much the same for the other major official and voluntary sector drugs education sites in the US. The toleration of full Web 2.0 interactivity is rarely permitted. The DARE site, for example, simply serves as an elaborate virtual notice board, the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA) embeds its own videos but does not offer posting or chat room functionality, and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) follows the same pattern.[20] The NIDA did at one stage offer Sara's Quest, an interactive site for children in school or at home, which allowed the user to journey around an island in search of information about various substances but, again, this was an example of 'managed interactivity', not deliberative communication. It is very difficult for organizations that desire target

audiences to receive *one* intended message, to fully utilize technologies that instantly destabilize this traditional linear model of communication. This is particularly true for organizations that seek to promote abstinence messages because with a 'zero tolerance' approach to illicit drug use, there by necessity also comes a pronounced reluctance to tolerate the kind of discursive questioning, discussion, or problematizing of that message. Even in the case of the UK 'Talk to Frank' campaign, which is not wholly wedded to an abstinence model, there appears to be a marked reluctance to accept the invitation that new media makes to relinquish discursive control.

VIRTUAL INTOXICATION: DRUG INFORMATION AND DRUG DISCOURSE IN CYBERSPACE

The tensions in managing the full potential interactivity of new media are by no means the only challenges that drugs education agencies face in the age of the Internet. The arrival of the Internet has brought with it a huge explosion in the volume of drugs information that can be accessed via any search engine. The search term 'drugs' is likely to produce around 450 million returns via Google; qualify this by adding the term 'illegal' and the figure falls to around 72 million. There were in 2007 apparently more than 10 million sites simply devoted to Ritalin (Tackett-Gibson, 2007b: 125). Montagne reports finding the keyword 'psychedelics' generated 1,060,000 sites, while 'psychedelic drugs' generated only 188,000 sites, and 'entheogens' generated 397,000 sites (2008: 19). In a paper published in 2011, Quintero and Bundy found 2,870,000 returns for 'prescription drug information' (2011: 899), but less than two years later the same search returned 65,500,000.[21] During the research undertaken to support the next chapter it was found that there were approximately 320,000 illicit drug videos available on YouTube alone, though a few months later a quick unfiltered search suggested over 800,000 'drug' videos available.[22] There has been in the last twenty-five years a huge proliferation in sites providing information about licit and illicit drugs; blogs supporting discussions of drug experiences; sites campaigning for or against particular aspects of drug regulation; sites marketing legal, 'grey' and black' markets for substances and the associated technologies of consumption such as bongs and growing kits; and the various more general social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and YouTube, which may also sustain the circulation of popular drugs culture. Even virtual video gaming sites can circulate ideas about drugs and intoxication: The World of Warcraft has been evaluated in terms of what it suggests about alcohol (Thorens et al., 2012), while there is a paper waiting to be written about the drug dealing capers of those playing Grand Theft Auto.

Researching the nature of these sites presents significant challenges because while many are long established, others are somewhat ephemeral,

appearing and disappearing in ways which defy conventional social scientific requirements for replication and reliability in research designs (Montagne, 2008: 18). While web metrics can provide quantitative totals, such analysis still requires more qualitative processes of 'cleaning' to weed out 'false returns' and to produce an understanding of the kind of discourse that circulates (Monhahan and Colthurst, 2001; Hillebrand et al., 2010). There are further challenges because unlike 'old media' texts, research on 'new media' require a consideration, not only of text but functionality and utility, too. Much of the early research on drug information sites tended to focus primarily on these latter dimensions rather than *how* drugs were represented and how these representations were then received and circulated by users.

It is not difficult to explain why this explosion in information and virtual drug culture has occurred. In an age of 'radicalized modernity' one key strategy for the management of risk is the securing of 'information' (Beck, 1994) and, of course, the Internet is a vast repository for information about health and environmental risk. Levy and Strombeck estimate that around one-third of all health risk Internet searches related to pharmaceuticals, as distinct from diet or disease searches (2002). The Office of National Drug Control Policy commissioned an extensive survey (ONDCP, 2008) that suggested that nearly one million US teenagers watched 1.2 million drug videos in a single month and research by Murguia et. al. (2007), and Quintero and Bundy (2011) suggests that this is often because young people now aim to evaluate information about the risks and possible pleasures of drug use from a variety of sources, rather than only drugs education sites. But beyond risk management, as Castells argues, the more people try to make sense of the conditions of late or radicalized modernity, including popular cultures in which drug use is given an accentuated prominence, the more they will develop 'projects of autonomy' (2010: 11), which in turn encourage them to produce and upload to the Internet their own experiences and ideas, rather than simply accessing sites to consume information, and so the chains of drug related comment and information proliferate further.

There are now several surveys of the kinds of drug sites online (Montagne, 2008; Wells et al., 2009; Quintero and Bundy, 2011). Quintero and Bundy (2011: 899–900) distinguish 'administrative sites' that supply 'general surveillance information'; state sponsored sites, such as the ONDCP, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) or Talk to Frank; harm prevention sites, such as DanceSafe or Drugtext (supported by the International Harm Reduction Association and the International Society for the Study of Drug of Drug Policy); sites that provide general information about particular kinds of drugs, such as the Psychedelic Library; sites with no institutional affiliation such as the long established Erowid site ; usenet groups and online communities; and finally, sites dealing with pharmaceuticals. To this list, we could also add the sites, including social media, that promote licit commercial drugs such as alcoholic drinks, and the sites supporting 'grey'

markets in 'legal highs' and, more rarely, 'black' markets. And this is not to mention sites that support campaigning organizations with policy prescriptions for drug regulation.

Many of the non-official sites show none of the inhibitions about exploiting the full communicative and deliberative potential of the new media that characterize the official sites discussed above. Erowid, for example, in addition to holding a vast repository of technical drug information accumulated by experts, site members and users, also permits users to share ideas, suggestions and information about experiences of intoxication, dosages, advantages and disadvantages of particular kinds of substance, equipment and technologies of consumption, and even routes for access to different substances. Erowid announces itself as a site dedicated to 'Documenting the Complex Relationship Between Humans and Psychoactives' and boasts that more than two million people use the site every month.[23] The homepage communicates a very strong 'organic' message with images of a variety of plants and leaves, including coffee, tobacco and cacti, but also MDMA and triazolam (a prescription sedative) tablets. Each image signifies a particular psychoactive compound and serves as a link to the extensive 'Vaults of Erowid' databases for each associated substance. The message of the Erowid homepage is that the user will find information here about pretty much every psychoactive compound known to humankind. For each image there are further links to 'Basics', 'Effects', 'Images', 'Law' and 'Chemistry'. The range of information accumulated is vast. For most drugs from alcohol to nitrous oxide, cocaine and opiates to marijuana, methamphetamine to dance drugs, US street prices are listed (although not frequently updated), terminology and slang explained, the potential legal sanctions noted, extensive discussion of effects undertaken together with 'duration charts' mapping the relationship between intensity of effect and intervals of time, and even detailed technical data with formula, compound diagrams, and melting points, for the chemistry enthusiast.

Unlike official drugs education sites there is extensive discussion and deliberation among users and some of the vernacular knowledge generated is harvested by the site organizers under the heading 'Suggestions from the Masses' so that, for example, recommendations for cheap 'Trip Toys', things to further enhance the trip experience, are discussed and recommendations made, from face paints and particular kinds of music to:

> slime, kaleidoscopes, dragon lenses, pinwheels, bubbles, tinfoil (crinkle it up and see what the wrinkles form), sponge cubes painted with fluorescent paint, books of optical illusions, a ball of yarn unraveled (fun to get tangled up in), whipped cream (fun to stick your fingers in), shiny junk jewelry, patterned clothing, black light bulb . . . [24]

The 'Erowid Experience Vaults' allows users to upload their own reports of particular intoxicative experiences. Just over 23,000 user reports had been

posted at the time of writing and were organized alphabetically, starting with Absinthe and finishing with Yohimbe (a natural aphrodisiac).[25] If many of the official drugs education sites either explicitly foreground or implicitly betray an ideological commitment to abstinence, there is no mistaking the values of individualism and libertarianism underpinning the Erowid site, mixed with an interest in alternative lifestyles and spirituality. Together with the drugs, the 'Mind and Spirit' link takes the user to information about yoga, meditation, health, diet and spirituality. The emphasis is upon informed individual consumer choice, together with a suspicion of the material produced by official agencies. As the Erowid fundraising slogan goes, 'Think People Have Access to Truthful Information About Drugs? We Need Your Help to Make that Happen'. However, the site provides a space for the reporting of negative drug experiences, as well as positive, and the description of the risks and possible damaging consequences of taking particular substances is set out with the same meticulous technical detail. 'Long term Health Problems' and 'Risk of Death' are standard headings for each drug discussed and problematic 'street developments', such as the mixing of cocaine powder with veterinary worming compound, are highlighted as updates.

Erowid is just one of the leading sites providing alternative information, but there are many thousands of others. In his study of psychedelic sites, Montagne (2008) constructs a four-fold typology. He tries to distinguish sites that are primarily 'scientific' in approach, serving research institutes devoted to the scientific investigation of psychedelic drugs, such as the Heffter Institute (www.heffter.org) and the Hoffman Foundation (www.hoffman.org), from sites that are primarily intended to act as information resources, which include Erowid (www.erowid.org), but also the Psychedelic Library (www.psychedelic-library.org), The Lycaeum (www.lycaeum.org) and Trip (www.tripzine.com). But he further distinguishes these from sites that combine information with a political agenda based around critiques of state regulation or the *War on Drugs*. Here he includes sites such as Neurosoup (www.neurosoup.com) and Tryptamind (www.tryptamind.com). Finally, he identifies sites that have primarily a commercial purpose in marketing substances, usually legal highs, and equipment or technologies of consumption. The difficulty, however, as Montagne recognizes is that on so many sites there is an overlap in purpose and ideology. Thus, for example, while Erowid offers access to a vast information database, its architecture, discourse and design all suggest a particular political-ideological understanding of drug use, whilst Neurosoup, which has a very significant presence on YouTube as discussed in the next chapter, is more clearly the social and political project of one individual who appears to be committed to road testing as many drugs as possible, but actually provides a great deal of harm reduction advice and information about intoxicative experiences at the same time.

Some have drawn, perhaps, a rather over-simplified correlation between the growth of Internet use and growth of drug use. Wax claims that

'adolescent use of these websites [sites devoted to recreational drug use] may have a direct impact upon their drug taking behaviour' (2002: 96). This is because the language and use of 'buzz words' such as 'responsible drug use' may glamorize drugs or encourage the misleading view that such use is associated with only minimal risk. Boyer and colleagues share similar fears about the influence that 'partisan', 'pro-drug use sites' may exercise over young people (2001: 469).

These rather over-simplified fears are often voiced by professionals working in medical or drug policy fields rather than by media or communication scholars. Societies frequently experience the spread of anxieties about young people in relation to both drug use and media exposure. When the two are combined such anxieties can become very much amplified (Gatson, 2007). In fact, the relationship between new media users, the ideas they receive and remediate about drug use, and their actual behavior is likely to be very much more complicated than assumed in models which propose a simple correlation between Internet use and drug use. Lee (2012) has pointed to the importance of 'social capital' in the mediation of drugs education and, more specifically, Kam and Lee (2012) suggest that interpersonal communication is an important element missing from these over-simplified models and that mediation between different media has to be taken into account. Their research on the impact of official drugs education messages communicated via old and new media assumes that discussion with parents or friends is an important variable. The reception of messages is highly complex and in some instances difficult to predict. For example, 'the boomerang effect', first noted in the discussion of 'old' mediated drugs education in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book, has not disappeared and is an ever-present possibility in messages mediated via the Internet, too. In other words, *new* mediated drugs education and discussions about drug risks may actually serve as a catalyst for some young people to explore drug use in just the same way as *old* media. But most importantly Kam and Lee found that drugs education was likely to work as a prompt for young people to visit *both* 'pro' and 'anti-drug' websites. The Internet provided opportunities for young people to access information independently and with less danger of scrutiny from others. They might turn to websites to evaluate information they had received about drugs from other sources or sometimes to consolidate their own views through processes of 'self-verification' in which Internet sourced information was selectively assembled to bolster a particular understanding (Kam and Lee, 2012: 3–5).

The picture we get is of active information seeking among Internet users rather than a naïve vulnerability to 'buzzwords' and glamorized images. Murguia and Tackett-Gibson (2007a: 47–56) report the results of a survey of 1,038 users who accessed a popular US harm reduction drug site. Only 1 percent were above the age of forty-five and 95 percent were below the age of thirty-five; three-quarters were male and, of course, these are Internet users who have by definition a pre-established interest in drug use. So we

cannot be sure that the sample is perfectly representative of either wider Internet-using or drug-using communities, or indeed, the wider general population. Nevertheless, the findings help to place debates about the dangers or risks associated with Internet drug sites in context. The virtual has not replaced 'real' social relationships. A majority of respondents indicated that they were most likely to get information about drugs from trusted face-to-face contacts rather than the Internet, though 95 percent reported that they had searched websites for information about particular substances in the previous six months. The kind of information they looked for related to the effects of particular drugs, the long-term health risks associated with particular drugs, possible side effects, evidence of interaction between different drugs, how to use a particular drug and where to get it. As Murguia and Tackett-Gibson conclude, this is pretty strong evidence that Internet users are concerned with harm reduction (2007a: 55). In fact, this returns the discussion very much to the picture of Beck's social actors assessing and managing risk as an everyday motif in the age of radicalized modernity with which this chapter began.

However, further findings from the survey underline the questions this chapter has raised about the challenges new media pose for official mediated drugs education. It seems that respondents were most likely to visit education/harm reduction sites such as Erowid or Lycaeum (88 percent), sites dedicated to particular recreational drugs (49 percent), sites dedicated to prescription drugs (31 percent), dance or club related sites (27 percent), with government-sponsored sites (14 percent), 'drug use prevention' sites (7 percent), and addiction treatment sites (6 percent) firmly at the bottom. As might be expected from these figures, respondents found sites like Erowid, DanceSafe and Lycaeum 'most credible', and nearly half the respondents found government sponsored sites 'not very credible' (Murguia and Tackett-Gibson, 2007a: 56).

Just as across the terrain of old media there is also a struggle on-line to win 'hearts and minds'; a contest between organized groups and institutions with particular drug agendas, particular kinds discourse or ways of understanding drugs, and particular policy proposals. But given the proliferation of alternative new media information flows, and the routine skepticism directed toward official sources of information that is frequently part of the resistive tendency among those subject to authority, it is clear that government departments and official drugs agencies face some very significant challenges in communicating their preferred agendas on drug issues. Castells argues that the Internet fills a public, communicative space that opens up as globalized communication undermines the nation state and governments find their positions as key 'nodes' in the networks weakened (2010: 14). In the US, this shift is particularly pronounced as it involves hotly contested interpretations of the zero tolerance War on Drugs strategy that has been the cornerstone of successive US administrations since President Nixon. The campaign for abstinence and

'Just Say No' approaches has been driven by organizations in civil society, as much as by government, and with considerably more moral zeal. Few organizations can match the Church of Scientology for energized anti-drug campaigning across the Internet. At the last count, a YouTube search produced over 60,000 returns for its *Drug Free World* videos, let alone its other on-line communication.[26] But the prohibitionist case is not just made by US administrations and scientologists. Grieving parents who have lost children in drug-related deaths sometimes establish organizations that are many times smaller than the Church of Scientology but communicate more powerful on-line prohibitionist messages. In the UK this includes the Angelus Foundation, LOST, and Solve It,[27] but there are many others in the UK, US and elsewhere. As Gatson (2007) cautions there is not a simple binary divide between pro- and anti-drug sites but rather a continuum with sites located at various points between the strongly prohibitionist and abstinence based at one end and the libertarian at the other. Each contributes to the swirling on-line debate about pleasure and use, regulatory policy, risk, harm reduction and the various other aspects of intoxication. The on-line user navigates this tide of information deploying the social, cultural and technical skills they may possess in order to make sense of it all.

ON-LINE DRUG MARKETING

There is one last aspect to consider and that is when the virtual world of drug information intersects with the real world of drug distribution. The proliferation of on-line drug information and sites promoting, or at least discussing, the pleasures of intoxication has not gone unnoticed by those who have responsibility for enforcement. Wells, for example, points to survey data suggesting that nearly 30 percent of drug dependent adults reported knowledge of Internet sites and concludes from this that 'pro-drug' Internet sites can serve as useful sources of intelligence for the enforcement agencies in their attempts to track down illicit drug distribution chains (Wells et al., 2009). But the real and virtual worlds intersect in complex ways. Distinctions can be made between 'white' (legal), 'black' (illegal) and 'grey' (legal only in particular circumstances) markets but as Walsh (2011) notes, on-line Internet markets straddle national boundaries and consequently also differing regimes of control. Substances may be legal within certain national borders but not within others; distributers may legally sell within the borders of one country, but know very well that their products will be illegally consumed elsewhere. And to make matters even more complex, the Internet is the best way for those involved in the production of legal highs to let their customers know when they have produced yet another chemical compound that sidesteps the attempts of national governments to classify and criminalize earlier versions of their products.

The arrival of the Internet has rendered fuzzy and blurred the distinctions between 'white', 'grey' and 'black' markets; between prescription drugs and recreational drugs, and between legal highs and products belonging to 'grey' or even 'black' markets. Murgia and Tackett-Gibson (2007a) uncovered the high frequency of access to prescription sites in the New Drugs Internet Survey discussed above. Walsh notes that while only 11 percent of prescriptions processed by 'bricks and mortar' pharmacies were for controlled substances, 95 percent of the prescriptions processed by the on-line 'cyber pharmacies' were for controlled drugs in 2008 (2011: 57). According to Quintero and Bundy (2011), the availability of more information about pharmaceuticals has encouraged a real increase in the purchasing and use of prescription drugs. Increasingly the distinction between treatment, self-medication and recreational drug use blurs. And the available information on-line does not just cover pharmacology but other aspects of the practices associated with such drug use, such as swapping tips on the techniques to be used in persuading doctors to issue prescriptions (Tackett-Gibson, 2007b: 129). In any case, when markets are global, cyber pharmacies may not always be that scrupulous in monitoring particular regimes of control that operate within national borders far, far away. The growing use of e-currencies such as Bitcoins will make on-line black and grey market drug trading harder for control agencies to track.

Thousands of 'head shops' now exist on-line and can often survive more easily in cyberspace than in the real high street. At such sites, it is possible to buy, often legally and sometimes 'semi-legally', a variety of unclassified plants and substances as 'legal highs'. As we shall see in the next chapter, many 'head shops' use YouTube to promote their products with explicit advertising, or 'sponsored' customer reviews. 'Head shops' such as *Red Eye* or *Herbal Highs*,[28] both based in the UK, are fully commercialized on-line shopping sites, with on-line e-baskets and payment arrangements through Visa, Maestro and the usual credit cards. A European Union survey of sixty-nine on-line shops found just over half were located in the UK and 37 percent in the Netherlands (Hillebrand et al., 2010: 333–334). Over five hundred products were available including salvia, 'magic mushrooms', herbal hallucinogens (such as Hawian baby wood rose), Kratom (sold as an equivalent to opium) and various 'alternatives' to illegal dance drugs, such as 'happy caps' and 'party pills'. Once again, there is concern about the influence these sites may have upon Internet users. Hillebrand and colleagues are worried by the glamorized marketing language employed in the names: 'Feel the Love', 'Head Rush', 'Neuro Trance', and by the impression that 'natural' or 'herbal' can be elided with 'harmless'. But they are also worried by the consequence of the interaction between the virtual world of drug marketing and the 'real' world of drug control. Some 'legal highs' situated in 'grey' markets are marketed as non-consumable products like 'bath salts' or 'deodorizers' in order to evade regulatory controls within particular EU countries and as a consequence there is no guidance provided regarding dosages or harm reduction techniques.

Then, there are sites that openly sell marijuana, marijuana seeds and the equipment to cultivate plants. Many are based in the US were regulatory regimes in certain states allow the legal cultivation of 'medical marijuana', thus further blurring the distinction between self-medication and recreational drug use. As discussed in the next chapter, numerous YouTube videos advertise these US products but in the UK there are also sites such as Potseeds.[29] And finally, the Internet will inevitably support communication around a black market in which social media and email allow those seeking illicit and unlawful drugs to get in touch with those supplying such drugs (Wells et al., 2009). This is the 'dark web' (Goldberg, 2012) where it is possible to order everything from DMT and opiates to guns if sufficient time is invested in locating the right sites. Of course, it is very difficult to estimate the volume and extent of this kind of communication because it is submerged and difficult for either journalists or academics to thoroughly research.

The real world and virtual world collide and intersect. Just as drug consumers may rate their dealers on-line reflecting the dominant consumer values of the era, so it is equally possible for the 'real' world of enforcement agencies and regulation to sharply impact upon the virtual world of drug selling. Magic mushrooms were classified under the UK Dangerous Drugs Act in 2005 following sharp increases in Internet trading, while the distribution of other 'legal highs', such as salvia, for the purposes of human consumption was criminalized in the United Kingdom in 2010 (Hillebrand et al., 2010: 334; Walsh, 2011: 59) and in the US the Drugs Enforcement Agency has moved against Internet trading of GHB during Operation Webslinger (Murguia et. al., 2007: 20). But as Hillebrand et. al. observe this may simply encourage the 'balloon effect': regulation imposed in one country may simply produce an expansion in activity elsewhere (2010: 337).

SUMMARY

This chapter has considered the complexity of on-line communication about drugs. While the linear model of communication always underestimated the real degree of complexity in the communication and reception of mass-mediated messages, nevertheless it was the model that shaped the thinking of policy makers, campaigning organizations, and political elites as they contemplated 'old' mass mediated drugs education, as we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book. This chapter has shown how much the Internet undermines and destabilizes the communicative control that such elites hoped to have over mediated drugs education. Control is lost over the content of the messages they seek to disseminate, as the ONDCP found out to its cost when trying to use YouTube for the first time and which is also demonstrated frequently by the satirical remediation of *Talk to Frank* videos on YouTube. But control is also entirely lost over the direction of communication in the external cyber world of hyper information flows,

a world in which Internet users can access a bewildering range of sites about drugs and talk to each other about drugs via channels that used to be confined to the physical spaces of the school yard, college campus or park bench, but now can stretch much further across space and time. However, there is strong evidence that the young people who might be regarded as the most vulnerable to ideas that glamorize drug use may be more skilled and more critical in their evaluation of information and 'drug discourses' than some commentators give them credit for, though this does not mean there should not be concern about how drugs are represented, and indeed, traded on-line. As suggested in Chapter 2 of this volume, most societies have always contained popular drug cultures of some shape and form and within these discourses that may 'celebrate' intoxication. At the same time these societies also include some counter-balancing normative checks, 'disciplinary discourses', which operate as mechanisms of control and moderation, beyond official agencies, or campaigning groups, though sometimes perhaps assisted by them. The next chapter explores how the complexity of these popular drug cultures find expression on YouTube.

6 Virtual Intoxication
YouTube and Popular Drugs Culture

INTRODUCTION

This chapter builds on the arguments developed in Chapter 5 of this volume by exploring the way in which one particular but ubiquitous example of new media contributes to the circulation of popular drugs culture. In earlier chapters it was suggested that while a linear model of 'old' mass communication never adequately described the engagement of media audiences with 'mass' communication technologies, nevertheless the model was important because it informed the assumptions that policy makers made when contemplating mediated campaigns of drug education. Chapter 5 explored the ways in which the arrival of new media rendered the claims to communicative control associated with this linear model even more obviously problematic. Not only are the 'mass mediated' messages produced by official drugs agencies now emerging into a vast sea of alternative and unofficial on-line information generated by the many thousands of websites discussed in Chapter 5, but even the official content itself is no longer free from the kind of digital interventions that 'culture jammers' and those resistant to official messages choose to make through the deployment of digital technologies and their digital skills. This chapter will provide some examples of the way YouTube provides one vehicle for just this kind of resistive work. As we have seen, official agencies including both the US Office of National Drug Control Policy and the UK Home Office and Department of Health have found the potential interactivity of new media profoundly challenging, each attempting to retain 'communicative control' in the face of these developments, rather than exploit the deliberative potential of new media. But this chapter will underline even more strongly just how problematic this desire to retain complete communicative control actually is.

THE DISCIPLINARY IN REAL AND VIRTUAL POPULAR CULTURE

While this chapter continues to explore the implications of the arrival of new media it does so by returning to another theme first suggested in the

earlier chapters of this book. In earlier chapters it was suggested that there is an intimate relationship between regulation and patterns of contestation across and through popular drug cultures. The 'control regimes' that Bancroft refers to (2009: 114) are a product of the intersection between formal regulation and drug discourses circulating in a wider popular culture. Popular drug cultures circulate ideas, which associate particular substances with certain social identities, spatial locations, behaviors and kinds of intoxicative technologies (Manning, 2006). Further to this, as we have seen in earlier chapters, popular drug cultures have to be understood as contested terrains through which diverse and sometimes conflicting sets of ideas circulate. And while some discourses within popular drugs cultures may 'celebrate' various aspects of intoxication, it is also the case that there are normative elements within popular culture that serve to 'discipline' such intoxicative behavior in certain contexts. This chapter draws largely on primary research conducted by the author to look at how new media such as YouTube now significantly accelerates the circulation of these drug discourses to sustain and expand popular drugs culture. As we shall see some YouTube 'drug videos' certainly 'celebrate' intoxication, while others are intended to work as 'cautionary tales' or even 'disciplinary mechanisms' and others explore the experience of drug use and intoxication in even more complicated ways.

YOUTUBE

The exponential growth of YouTube is now a familiar feature of life in the twenty-first century. Founded in 2005, by 2007 six hours of video were uploaded to this file-sharing site per minute; by 2010 this figure had risen to twenty-four hours per minute, and by 2012, the figure stood at sixty hours of video per minute or an hour per second, according to the official YouTube blog (YouTube, 2012). YouTube also reported in 2012 that there were four billion views per day around the world, which positioned it as third in the global web traffic rankings after Google and Facebook (Alexa, 2012). YouTube has approximately 43 percent of the US on-line video market (Comscore, 2010). In the UK, Europe, the US and many other parts of the world YouTube is part of everyday life. Its potential importance for mainstream politics, activism, and campaigning have been widely discussed, but there is now a growing interest in the role that YouTube plays more specifically in the circulation of ideas about health, health education, body image, identity and stigmatization (Carroll, et al., 2012; Koff et al., 2012; Yoo and Kim, 2012; Backinger et al., 2011; Hussin et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2010).

Of course, the importance of YouTube lies not only in the way its videos *represent* social phenomena but also in two of the functions that set new media apart from old; the potential for 'virality' (Naughton, 2012c), or

rapid recycling and recirculation of content, and its 'interactivity' (Bakker and Sadaba, 2008), the open invitation for others to respond, comment, and engage in on-line dialogue. In other words, this is another example of the deliberative potential of new media discussed in the previous chapter. As we have seen drugs educators have tended to hesitate, but in other fields researchers and practitioners have begun to explore the potential of these new media functions for health education campaigns (Backinger et al, 2011; Richardson et al., 2011; Akagi, 2008). Some researchers have began to confront and research the very lack of communicative control in YouTube health education messages that seems to concern official drugs agencies (Paek et al., 2011), while others have been concerned with the potential harm that some intended or unintended health messages may do to YouTube users (Yoo and Kim, 2012; Hussin et al., 2011), and the implications of all this for strategies of regulation (Kim et al., 2010). However, the part that YouTube might play in the circulation of drug discourses within a wider popular drugs culture has yet to be properly considered. Lange (2010) has used YouTube videos to study the physiological effects of salvia intoxication outside the medical laboratory but only Hess (2009) has focused upon YouTube drug representation and reception in a study of the resistive responses to official US Office of National Drug Control videos posted to YouTube in 2006.

This chapter reports on the findings of a project that has analyzed a sample of 750 videos to explore the nature of 'drug videos' on YouTube and their role within a popular drug culture. The term 'drug videos' in this context refers to videos about drugs that are consumed for the purposes of intoxication and extends beyond official drugs education material to consider the full variety of vernacular drug-related content posted to YouTube. Given the constraints and parameters of the project, alcohol was not considered here though there is plenty of evidence easily available on YouTube to suggest that the patterns described in relation to the drugs included in the sample also apply to alcohol. The project had rather broader aims than Hess (2009) who was primarily concerned with the extent to which YouTube offered a space for political and policy deliberation as it related to drugs regulation. Following Chapter 5 of this volume, the argument here is that the arrival of so-called Web 2.0 technologies, such as YouTube, introduced an even greater degree of complexity to the processes through which drug images and drugs education are mediated. While the effectiveness of mediated official drugs education has always been open to question (Aldridge, 2008; Coggans and Watson, 1995; Cohen, 1996), as we have noted in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book, at least in the era of 'high modern' mass communication, drugs agencies and policy elites assumed a degree of communicative control in the construction of mediated drugs education texts and the targeting of particular 'populations'. Within the virtual space created by YouTube, however, officially produced drugs education content jostles side by side with vernacular content offering very

different, sometimes critical, celebratory or oppositional discourses about drugs and intoxication. Indeed, in the content searches undertaken for this project official 'Talk to Frank' drugs education videos produced by the UK government frequently appeared in search lists sandwiched between videos celebrating drug-induced intoxication or videos promoting technologies intended for the cultivation of cannabis.

Thus, YouTube and comparable video file-sharing sites radically destabilize the traditional channels for mediated drugs education and, more than that, YouTube also renders such mediated drugs education messages highly vulnerable to re-appropriation and subversion through parody, pastiche, reposting and commentary, as Hess (2009) describes in his analysis of the fate of the twenty-three official drugs education videos posted by the Office of National Drugs Control Policy in Washington, DC. This makes pretty grim reading for those official drugs agencies hoping to use Web 2.0 technologies to disseminate official messages about illicit drug use. However, while official drugs agencies struggle to retain control of the processes of mediation and the circulation of discourses arising from their use of YouTube, the variety of alternative discourses to be found circulating on the site are by no means exclusively permissive, hedonistic or critical of official educative drug discourses.

The approach developed here is to regard YouTube as 'a dynamic cultural system' (Burgess and Green, 2009: vii), an important site for the production, mediation, and remediation of popular and vernacular cultures, but one which still retains the dynamic features of traditional popular cultures. The influential cultural studies approach first set out by Hall and colleagues in *Resistance through Ritual* (Hall and Jefferson, 1976) has encouraged the analysis of popular culture as a site of resistance and opposition to dominant, powerful forces. But what this cultural studies approach sometimes overlooks is the extent to which popular cultures have always included disciplinary or regulative discourses along side the oppositional or resistive (Foucault, 1979). For example, even in *The Uses of Literacy*, one of the seminal texts of early post-war cultural studies, Richard Hoggart describes the traditional working class pub as an institution in which drinking and drunkenness were informally regulated by a local communal normative order, which awarded differing degrees of tolerance according to status. Thus, 'allowances' were made by the pub regulars for widowed husbands but young husbands with responsibilities might be told they 'had had enough' and be sent home (Hoggart, 1957: 72–73). Very similar scenarios are found in the Mass Observation reports of Britain the 1930s and 40s (Mass Observation, 1943). In the contemporary context, Measham refers to the 'lack of cultural credibility of extreme intoxication', suggesting that that those who collapse on the dance floor or in the toilets of the clubs and bars of the nighttime economy serve as visible reminders of the socially acceptable boundaries of risk (Measham, 2004: 319). She suggests that that there is now commonly among young people a 'calculated hedonism',

that factors in such public humiliations as one of the risks to be weighed against the pleasures to be secured through alcohol or illicit drugs. YouTube allows such scenes of intoxicated public humiliation to be recorded and encoded as more permanent reminders of the boundaries between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' intoxication. Thus, YouTube as a 'dynamic cultural system' circulates a complex variety of drug discourses. Some of these could be described as examples of an informal or vernacular drugs education, including the explicitly disciplinary, whilst others are examples of the more predictable celebrations of, or reflections upon, intoxication. In short, YouTube is now one of the resources that those operating a 'calculated hedonism' may draw upon in making decisions about the balance between 'pleasure' and 'risk' in intoxication. Indeed, YouTube actually circulates a continuing deliberative commentary upon these themes generated by YouTube users, themselves.

YOUTUBE, OLD MEDIA AND DRUGS EDUCATION

In their review of drugs education strategies through the second half of the twentieth century, Coggans and Watson distinguish 'information-based approaches' from alternatives delivered via face-to-face interaction within the school or local community. Information-based drugs education might rely upon 'fear arousal', but may also alternatively seek to 'educate' young people about likely risk situations, or opt for what would now be recognized as harm reduction strategies (1995: 215). In each case the underlying model of communication was simple, linear or uni-directional, and assumed that the drugs agencies enjoyed complete command of the text as it was disseminated. We know that such mass mediated drugs education was largely ineffective and occasionally actually counter-productive (Aldridge, 2008; Blackman, 2004: 151; Cohen, 1996; Plant, 1987; Power, 1989). And yet the *political* attractions of traditional mediated drugs education are powerful for governments who wish to be seen to be addressing the 'problem of drugs'. As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book, successive administrations in the US, Australia, and elsewhere invested enthusiastically in 'old' media drugs education. In the UK, the story was rather more complicated with successive governments during the 1950s and 1960s following the advice of civil servants in choosing not to utilize mass media to highlight a problem which, it was felt, might be exacerbated by publicity, until political expediency drove the Thatcher government to commission a mass media campaign in the face of opposition from the government's own Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (Coggans and Watson, 1995: 219).

But policy makers and governments cannot afford to ignore the extent to which new media, particularly those Web 2.0 technologies, such as YouTube, transform media users or recipients into potential producers of meaning (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). This is what Burgess and Green regard

as the 'participatory turn' (2009: 13) in which opportunities to produce and perform popular culture are now available to anyone with access to a mobile phone camera and a YouTube account, thus stimulating a spectacular growth in on-line 'vernacular creativity' (2009: 25). This affords 'ordinary people' new opportunities to generate their own mediated culture and implies that there are many more ways in which the experience of drug use and intoxication can be represented, discussed and circulated. In other words, YouTube and other video file-sharing sites may help to create and recycle on-line popular drug cultures via routes that entirely circumnavigate the mainstream media and official drugs agencies. Popular cultures have always revealed dissenting currents that challenged or subverted official disciplinary discourses on intoxication, but new media, and particularly video file-sharing sites like YouTube, hugely multiply and accelerate these currents.

There are thousands of amateur videos loaded to YouTube made by ordinary people recording their own experiences of 'getting high' and circulating these to others. Many are 'celebratory' or hedonistic but not all; some are reflective rather than hedonistic; and some are intended to serve as 'cautionary tales' so that others may learn the lessons of injudicious drug choices. Other YouTube users can choose to 'like' or 'dislike' videos; they can post comments or embed videos within other media, and recycle content, thus increasing the complexity of the drug discourses as they circulate. Similarly, YouTube users can extract professionally made clips from television or film sources and 're-mediate' this content via YouTube (Grusin, 2009: 61). Drug scenes from films and television drama are frequently recycled in this way. Just like other new media, YouTube offers a platform for the presentation of self through the production of video blogs which may include examples of 'empowering exhibitionism' (Burgess and Green, 2009: 27) but in the case of drug videos can also include quieter, more reflective pieces in which individuals talk to camera about their experiences of drug use. Gurak and Antonijevic (2008) note the extent to which video blogging appears to blur the boundaries between the public and the private domains in the minds of bloggers and it is quite extraordinary to find just how many teenagers are willing to demonstrate their private bedroom consumption of illicit drugs on YouTube, apparently impervious to the possibility that their parents, or even the police, might also use YouTube as a public resource. YouTube users may construct on-line identities through their videos and hope to establish contact with like-minded others. These 'videos of affiliation' (Lange, 2009) can include certain drug videos and in some instances appear to be loaded as a means of reaching out to an on-line community of like-minded YouTube drug users.

Thus, YouTube is not just a giant cyber repository for video but is also a giant social networking site. Drug videos on YouTube stimulate chains of comment and discussion. There is great variety and complexity in these discourses. While some may embrace a 'celebratory' tone, in others there

is often contestation, argument or disputes about the relative risks of particular drugs. Some comments question whether or not particular video accounts are 'for real'. Authenticity is frequently an issue for those posting comments to YouTube drug videos, just as Sherry Turkle (2011) has suggested 'trust' and 'authenticity' have become deeply problematic and worrying concerns for on-line communication more generally. Many comments challenge the very notion that *any* drug use is sensible. For Burgess and Green, YouTube expresses 'the rich mundanity of the communicative practices' (2009: 8). YouTube drug videos and their associated comment strings capture the everyday and the mundane in popular drug cultures but they also express strong currents of dissent, resistance and an empirically grounded skepticism.

YouTube is also an open site through which powerful, institutional and corporate interests find expression, too. The UK Government's 'Talk to Frank' drugs education campaign, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) in the US, the National Drug Strategy in Australia, and many other national government campaigns, not to mention hundreds of local drug agencies, have uploaded material to YouTube, hoping to exploit its popularity, particularly among the young. And yet, the official agencies are likely to be rudely confronted by the dangers, pitfalls, and vulnerabilities associated with uploading content to the site. Once material is uploaded to YouTube, according to the early culture of YouTube, the material is in a sense no longer yours. It becomes a resource for those with the simple skills to parody, pastiche, re-work or subvert the original message, as Hess (2009) demonstrated in the case of the ONDCP. On learning just what could happen when YouTube 'vernacular creativity' met official drugs education material, the response of both the ONDCP and the UK government was to quickly disable the comment function on all their YouTube videos. This demonstrated a rather inadequate 'old media' understanding of new media, firstly because to disable the comment function is to attempt to actually frustrate the communicative potential of YouTube and secondly, because in the case of 'Talk to Frank', at least, many of the original videos were quickly extracted and re-uploaded by other users with the comment function enabled. It is very easy to find non-officially uploaded versions of many of the 'Talk to Frank' videos with comment strings attached and ongoing unregulated discussions unfolding despite the best efforts of the UK Department of Health.

In summary then, official strategies rooted in the assumptions of linear models of mediated drugs education simply cannot survive in an on-line environment where communication is multi-directional and 'content' can never be securely retained within one text without the possibility of appropriation, remediation, pastiche or parody. Many of the films that were the subject of Chapter 3 of this volume, those of the *Reefer Madness*-era of the 1930s and the post-war 'mental hygiene' short films of Sid Davis and others, can now be found on YouTube, recycled and remediated for new

twenty-first century audiences, offered to them as amusing curios rather than chilling warnings.

METHODOLOGY

There are several significant challenges in researching video file-sharing sites. YouTube videos can be uploaded, unloaded, reloaded or in some instances actually removed by YouTube following a complaint. YouTube, therefore, lacks the stability that characterizes 'old media' texts. In practice, almost all the drug video content observed and all of the content that was coded during the course of this research remained available through the three month coding period, December 2011 to March 2012, and most remains available now. However, while the numbers of videos posted to YouTube continues to grow by the minute, some videos are removed either by the original posters or, increasingly frequently, by YouTube itself, which seems to bend more now not only to corporate complaints regarding intellectual property rights, but also to concerns of 'decency' and 'taste'. Some drug videos have been removed recently on these latter grounds though their former availability is still usually noted if a search undertaken.

The participatory nature of YouTube means that to study the video content in isolation from the unfolding comments would be to miss its significance as a 'dynamic cultural system'. In recognition of this, uploader comments were taken into account in the process of coding. In other words, when an uploader comment helped to define the intended message of a video this was noted in the process of coding it. The research project was organized in two stages. In the first stage, a list of drug or substance search terms was produced through a literature search to identify the most common terms used to describe illicit drugs, substances used in solvent abuse, and the consumption of 'legal highs'. This produced a list of eighty search terms including all the most common substances subject to classification under the UK 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act and the US 1970 Controlled Substances Act. To this list were added nine search terms relating to drugs education, including recent high profile campaigns in the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand. Terms included the obvious such as 'cannabis', 'ecstasy' and 'ketamine'; street terms such as 'weed' and 'skunk'; technical identifications such as 'methamphetamine'; and twenty-four names for the various 'legal highs' (some now illegal in the US and the United Kingdom) currently available, such as 'ivory wave', 'benzo fury' and 'bubble'. In a few cases, the word 'drug' was added to reduce the number of non-relevant returns in the search, as in 'pot drug' or 'speed drug'. This slightly erodes the validity of the comparisons between totals but ensures that manual cleaning can be done much more quickly (Thelwall, 2009: 12). These terms were then used to search YouTube in order to produce an approximate estimate of the volume of drug intoxication videos and drugs education videos available on the site.

The data produced at this stage is summarized in the next section. There are some significant challenges to acknowledge in researching sites such as YouTube, which arise partly from the sheer volume of content that now exists on the site and partly from its dynamic and unstable nature. Confidence in sampling techniques has to be tempered by the knowledge that it is very difficult to produce anything more than approximations of the total aggregates for videos in any particular category (Thelwall, 2009: 13) and that search engines including YouTube, itself, are likely to produce slightly different totals each time a search is replicated (Vis et. al., 2011: 115). YouTube, like most search engines, will provide estimates of the total number of videos satisfying a specified search term, which in the case of drug videos was frequently many thousands but it will only produce an actual list of pages to an upper limit of one thousand. Search engine returns are always prone to two weaknesses; firstly, double counting or including the same page more than once, and secondly, returning non-relevant pages or URLs among the relevant. In the case of drug research this latter difficulty is compounded by the predilection of so many popular music artists to either name their acts after particular drugs or write songs with the name of particular drugs in the title. For these reasons the data produced through the raw YouTube search was cleaned using two different methods and the results compared. A simple method was to use YouTube's own filter function to produce aggregate totals minus videos tagged as 'music', 'comedy' or 'games'. It might be argued that such videos still contributed to a symbolic environment in which drug discourses circulated but the more conservative approach to estimating video numbers was preferred. A second cleaning method was to manually check the first one hundred returns produced by each search term and then calculate the likely percentage of non-relevant and double-counted videos for the search term as a whole on the basis of this sample. Two estimates of the number of videos that could be accessed by YouTube users keying in all eighty search terms are presented on the basis of these two methods in Table 6.1 and similarly results using the two separate methods of counting for the nine drugs education search terms are presented in Table 6.2.

For the second stage of the project fifteen of the original search terms that produced the highest returns in each drug classification category (Classes A to C, legal highs and solvents) were employed in conjunction with the *Webometric* software developed by Mike Thelwall (2009) of the Statistical Cybermetrics Research Group at the University of Wolverhampton.[1] This software minimized the danger of double counting, guarded against 'cherry picking' examples, and interrogated YouTube to produce summaries of the available metadata on video watch counts, user demographics, subscriber counts, and comment networks. For each of the fifteen search terms 50 videos were manually coded to produce a total sample of 750 YouTube videos.[2]

Discourses of hedonism or the celebration of the experience of drug use are often reported in studies of the language or discourse of intoxication (Davies, 1997; Griffin and Bengry-Howell, 2009; Jones, 2005; Keane, 2009;

Table 6.1 Two Measures of Estimated Drug Video Totals at February 24, 2012

	Manual Cleaning	YouTube Filters
UK Class A	133,380	102,739
UK Class B	137,456	157,591
UK Class C	15,713	17,047
Legal High	31,993	62,656
Solvents	1,066	1,053
Total	**319,608**	**341,086**

Table 6.2 Two Measures of Estimated Drugs Education Videos by Selected Search Term at February 24, 2012

Search Term	Manual Cleaning	YouTube Filters
drugs education	54,802	57,418
Talk to Frank	19,436	22,404
'Just Say No drugs education'	1,008	1,275
The No Way Campaign (NZ)	1,136	1,639
The National Drugs Campaign (Aus)	57	122
Drug Free World	15,620	22,000
Drugsline (UK)	6	5
Alcohol awareness	3,784	4,400
Knowdrugsdotorg	162	318
Total	**96,011**	**109,581**

Measham et al., 2001). The coding schedule accordingly was designed to capture any UGC (user generated content) celebrating the pleasurable or humorous experiences of taking illicit substances or 'legal highs'. However, while the hedonistic celebration of drug use in YouTube videos might not be surprising, the pilot study indicated that in the case of some substances there might be quite high proportions of videos in which the loader wanted to communicate a much more critical perspective stressing the dangers and risks, or simply the lack of dignity associated with the effects of certain substances. This kind of 'vernacular drugs education' appears not to have received attention in the contemporary literature although as discussed above the 'disciplinary' with regard to alcohol and drug use has always been a feature of popular culture. The coding schedule therefore was designed to capture any UGC, not loaded by an official drugs or health agency, and which was explicitly intended to demonstrate the negative consequences of 'effects' or loss of 'dignity'. This is the 'cautionary' category. In some instances the video text alone was ambiguous but in most instances reference to the uploader comment confirmed the 'intended meaning' as either 'celebratory' or 'cautionary' while a small number were coded as 'other'

if the meaning was impossible to determine even after analyzing the text and checking the uploader comments. Some drug video content was neither 'celebratory' nor 'cautionary' but 'reflective' in that, typically in a piece to camera, the uploader would reflect on their drug experiences as if producing a drug blog in a cerebral rather than hedonistic fashion.

Jones (2005) refers to a 'discourse of fascination' to describe the preoccupation with technologies of intoxication shown by some drug users. The pilot study also suggested that a high proportion of UGC was devoted to demonstrating the advantages or disadvantages of particular technologies of intoxication, or to offering 'consumer advice' about particular kinds of substance. Such videos were captured in the 'Do It Yourself/consumer advice' category. Some YouTube legal high videos are produced by commercial enterprises and are simply advertisements for legal high products. These were distinguished from videos claiming an 'independent' consumer 'watch dog' role and coded separately. Some UGC attempted to offer a satirical or humorous take on either official drugs education or the actual process of consuming drugs and if the satirical intent was clear through reference to uploader comments this was coded as 'satirical'. Drugs education material produced by official agencies or departments of state was coded either as 'traditional' or 'new', the latter category being intended to capture the movement away from 'fear arousal' strategies toward the more 'knowing' or 'streetwise' use of irony, as in the UK governments 'Talk to Frank' campaigns. Finally, professionally produced news or documentary material was included but coded separately from UGC. Some YouTube researchers have excluded this material, choosing to focus only exclusively upon UGC (e.g. Van Zoonen et al., 2010) but such material was included here on the grounds that it still contributed to the symbolic environment in which drugs discourses circulated and that in many cases it was uploaded to YouTube through a process of remediation by other YouTube users for their own purposes, not necessarily those of the original professional film makers. This kind of material could be identified by the presence of a news organization logo or other indication of professional sourcing.

DRUG VIDEO TOTALS AND AUDIENCES

The eighty search terms produced a raw total of 581,256 potential drug videos, but the estimate after eliminating videos tagged 'music', 'comedy' and/or 'games' was 341,086, and after applying the manual cleaning strategy an alternative, more cautious and probably more accurate estimate was 319,608 videos, as detailed in Table 6.1. The precise totals will fluctuate slightly from day to day and will gradually rise as more videos are uploaded to YouTube and fewer removed, but it is safe to assume that near to 320,000 different videos relating to drug intoxication were available to be accessed by YouTube users employing the eighty drug search terms specified in this research during

the coding period from December 2011 to March 2012. Using the figures produced after manual cleaning, it is possible to suggest that something like 41.7 percent of these concern Class A drugs, such as opiates, ecstasy and hallucinogens like LSD; 43 percent involve Class B substances such as cannabis; and that legal highs videos, mainly commercial advertisements, are likely to represent around 10 percent of the drug videos available on YouTube. Solvent abuse features relatively infrequently which is, perhaps, a reflection of the popular stigma associated with this style of intoxication (Manning, 2006), and videos dealing with Class C drugs appeared relatively infrequently, though ketamine videos are an important feature of the YouTube drug video culture, which is discussed further below.

Mike Thelwall's *Webometric* software (Thelwall, 2009) allows data on video audiences to be extracted from YouTube searches. Table 6.3 shows the average number of times videos within each search term category were watched. Thus, for example, the mean for numbers of YouTube users watching 'crack cocaine' videos was 6,624,908 making it the most popular category of drug video, while on average 'party pill' videos attracted very low viewings, averaging a mere 2,417 watches per video. Even at the higher end, it is clearly difficult to describe drug videos as mainstream YouTube fare when measured against the current highest number one YouTube hit, 'PSY-GANGNAM STYLE', which had secured nearly 1.5 billion viewings at the time of writing. Rather, the significance is relational: YouTube is primarily

Table 6.3 The Fifteen Drug Search Terms and Their Mean Viewing Per Video at February 24, 2012

Search Term	Mean Video Watches	Estimated Total Videos on YouTube (manual cleaning)
Crack cocaine	6,624,908	9559
Cocaine	2,957,000	13489
LSD	1,520,057	16434
Ecstasy	929,558	4492
Crystal meths	787,024	8613
AMT Legal High	782,656	2680
Heroin	762,587	11024
Pot drug	644,304	43605
Cannabis	354,233	36432
GHB	305,462	3817
Salvia	258,242	16074
Ketamine	232,732	3184
Glue sniffing	230,062	706
Solvent abuse	9566	168
Party pills	2417	7631

a narrowcasting rather than broadcasting medium and the importance of drug videos lies in what they tell us about particular communities of YouTube users and the ideas that they potentially circulate rather than the extent to which they expose a wider 'mass' audience to drug messages at a particular moment in time. YouTube is a dynamic and continuously unfolding cyber repository and communicative network, not an analogue broadcasting system that might communicate a particular message at a particular moment in time. And, after all, to access particular videos YouTube users must actively search them out and are thus declaring particular interests or affinities at the outset. Those accessing drug videos are at least mildly interested in particular kinds of drugs.

It is in this context that the generic search term 'drugs education' has to be assessed. This search term, as opposed to 'Talk to Frank' or 'Just Say No', for example, produces the largest list of official drugs education videos and yet the average video in this category was watched by just under 77,000 people. Only videos for 'solvent abuse' and 'party pills' received less attention. It seems clear, then, that YouTube has so far not offered great potential as a tool for official drug educators hoping to reach mass audiences or exploit the generative 'virality' of the site, though this is not necessarily to dismiss the value of the drugs education content for those who do access it.

DISCOURSE AND DRUG VIDEOS

The first 50 videos identified by each of the fifteen search terms were coded using the categories described above to produce a total sample of 750 videos.

Table 6.5 YouTube Drug Videos by Discourse Category

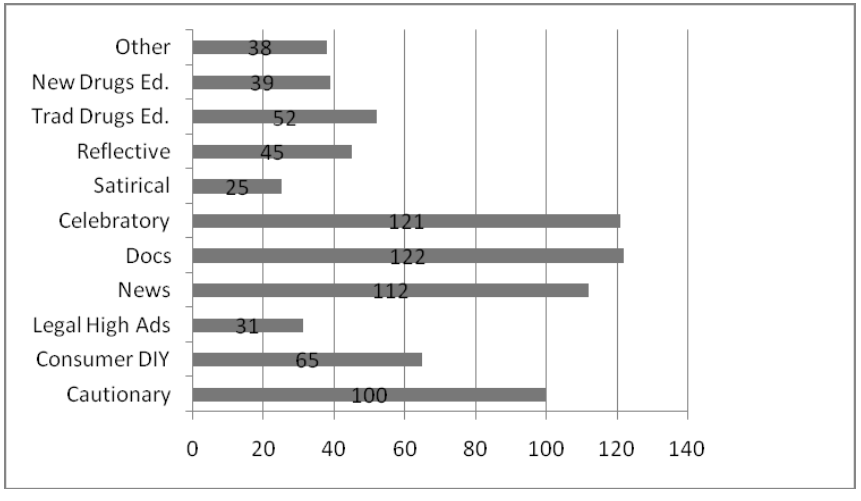

Table 6.4 presents a summary of the overall distribution of videos into discourse categories. It confirms that a large proportion were news clips (112) or documentaries about drugs originally produced by professional journalists or documentary makers (122), for a combined 31.2 percent, but that in terms of UGC the most frequently uploaded videos to YouTube were 'celebratory' (121 or 16 percent) followed by 'cautionary' (100 or 13 percent), with 'DIY/consumer advice' (65 or 8.7 percent) and 'reflective' videos (45 or 6 percent). While drugs education videos may not be *watched* so frequently they made up 91 or 12 percent (traditional and 'new' combined) of the video content available in the sample. The coding suggested a balance between the celebratory and the cautionary; the temptation to represent intoxicated hedonism is certainly a strong current but there are almost as many videos that emphasize the loss of dignity and the risks that can be associated with drug use. The number of 'consumer/DIY' videos points to quite a strong consumer discourse in which the intoxicative potential and possible disadvantages of different substances is evaluated. This included discussion of legal highs (other than explicit advertisements which were coded separately), 'grey' market substances such as 'medical marijuana', and black market illegal substances, but there were important differences between types of substance; only certain kinds of drug tended to generate 'consumer/DIY' discourses. Similarly, only certain kinds of substance seemed to provoke the 'reflective' blog. The following section explores the relationship between discourse and kinds of drug with examples and some consideration of the associated comment strings.

The Celebratory

The effects of salvia are hallucinogenic, usually very visible in terms of behavior, and follow rapidly (usually just minutes) after inhalation. These qualities make salvia a popular choice for 'celebratory' videos in which friends film each other experiencing the hallucinogenic effects and 'salvia videos' are now a YouTube genre in their own right as indicated by the frequent use of titles such as, 'the best salvia trip video ever', 'hilarious 20x salvia first trip best ever', or 'best salvia video ever!' More than half of all the salvia videos coded were 'celebratory' (see Table 6. 5[a] and [b]).

Examples include 'Mom and Dad take salvia 20x', the celebrity Miley Cyrus filmed by friends smoking salvia, 'Dave hits salvia and goes absolutely crazy' and 'Salvia 80x Crazy Trip.[3] The numerical rating of salvia strength (20x, etc.) is a consequence of its status as a legal high sold openly by commercial companies in the UK and parts of the US. What all these have in common is a focus upon the bodily pleasures of intoxication, laughter, a sharing of the experience among friends, or in the case of 'Mom and Dad' family, and fun. There may be a recognition of the pharmacological power of salvia and the possibility that this may result in a 'bad' experience, but this is overridden by the more dominant emphasis upon the pleasures

Table 6.5(a) Drug Search Term by Coded Video (%)

	'Cocaine'	'LSD'	'Ecstay Drug'	'Crack'	'Crystal Meths'	'Heroin'	'Pot Drug'	'Cannabis'
Cautionary	6	6	6	30	32	14	0	0
Consumer DIY	0	2	2	2	0	4	22	26
Legal High Ads	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
News	36	2	18	24	20	22	20	8
Docs	32	48	10	16	12	36	2	22
Celebratory	0	20	22	4	0	0	20	22
Satirical	10	0	2	2	2	0	12	0
Reflective	2	6	2	4	0	8	2	12
Trad. Drugs Education	0	6	30	4	22	2	0	0
New Drugs Education	8	4	6	10	12	10	0	0
Other	6	6	2	4	0	4	22	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 6.5(b) Drug Search Term by Coded Video (%) Continued

	'Ketamine'	'Glue Sniffing'	'Solvent Abuse'	'Salvia'	'Party Pills'	'AMT Legal High'	Absolute Totals
Cautionary	22	20	6	18	4	2	100
Consumer DIY	2	0	2	4	8	52	65
Legal High Ads	0	0	2	0	44	14	31
News	6	6	18	2	16	6	112
Docs	6	34	6	8	2	0	123
Celebratory	26	14	32	54	12	2	120
Satirical	4	8	8	0	0	4	26
Reflective	8	6	2	12	8	16	45
Trad. Drugs Education	0	10	20	0	0	0	52
New Drugs Education	10	2	4	2	2	0	38
Other	16	0	0	0	4	4	38
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	750

of intoxication (18 percent of salvia videos were actually 'cautionary' with titles such as 'worst salvia trip ever' and this is discussed below).

The salvia videos often generate a strong reaction among other YouTube users. For example, 'Salvia 80x Crazy Trip' had over 842,132 viewings, 1,136 'likes', fewer than 200 'dislikes', and over 2,000 comments at the time the coding was undertaken. The comment strings reveal a complex interweaving of responses: some simply enjoy the humor referring to the intoxicated behavior and adding 'LOL' or 'HaHaHa' and other comments raise 'technical' issues about techniques of intoxication, but there are also those who report 'bad' salvia experiences and challenge the 'celebratory' discourse underpinning these videos. To quote part of the comment string from 'Salvia 80x Crazy Trip':

> and to think, "This is what is feels like as you're about to die." (droppinbaums)
>
> i was happy when he said he was hot, because this shit is the definition of a one hitter quiter. and i literaly had the sensation that my arms, and legs were on fire! (songinmyhead)
>
> "oh shit i need to go outside. . . . oh nope not going outside" hahahahahhha (Arr0ze)
>
> @garycravens probably should of took a 5 second hit instead so you didnt od (SvddenDeth)
>
> my friend just got 400x. . . . any idea what that will do!?!?! haha (P4INFX)
>
> nice pipe man :D (alwaysneverDave)

And one of the 'top' comments in this string notes thoughtfully:

> what i like about this video is that the friends are making sure he's alright and not doing anything to exacerbate the situation. I think this video represents a positive, in a way that the guy smoking it around people who wouldn't put him in any harm, and are looking out for. . . . (hoodroock88)

Thus, in one string there are a mix of competing responses, some certainly hedonistic but others offering a more critical tone drawing on personal experience to offer harm reduction advice, or evaluate the technology of consumption.

'Solvent abuse', 'ketamine', 'cannabis', 'pot drug', 'ecstasy' and 'LSD' also all returned high proportions of 'celebratory' videos though not as

high as 'salvia' (see Tables 6.5[a] and 6.5[b]). In most cases, the same elements can be found in these: the emphasis upon the physical and bodily impact of intoxication, the affirmation of a shared experience of fun within a group (though there are some individual videos that are coded as celebratory because they retain the same sense of excitement in the experience of intoxication, which distinguishes these from those coded as 'reflective'), and the same sense of fun. Thus, for example, 'Hi I'm High with a Giraffe' featured a girl clearly enjoying the experience of smoking cannabis through a 'bong' whilst waving a toy giraffe at the camera; 'Daffid Snorting some Furniture Polish He a Glue Sniffer' shows a young adolescent sniffing an aerosol and laughing while his friend films him, 'GGDUB—Ashley and Cassie Jane' involves two girls filming themselves in a car having fun whilst smoking cannabis (the girlsgoneweed channel) and predictably a number of 'ecstasy' videos 'celebrated' an ecstasy 'high' by representing the 'fun' and 'togetherness' experienced within clubs and dance venues as in 'Ecstasy: the Greatest Drug in History Part 1'.[4]

But some kinds of substance appear not to lend themselves to the production of 'celebratory' videos. The search terms 'cocaine', 'crystal meths' and 'heroin' did not include any 'celebratory' videos at all and 'crack cocaine' only two (Table 6.5[a]). Part of the explanation for these patterns may lie in the differential distribution of material and symbolic resources between communities of drug users but also the symbolic frameworks associated with particular substances. Heroin and crystal meth users are less likely to have access to the material resources (Foster, 2000), for example, mobile phones, laptops, YouTube accounts, required to produce drug videos. But we also know that taste hierarchies operate within popular drug cultures (Measham and Moore, 2009; Russell, 1993; Van Hout, 2011; Ward, 2010): put bluntly while some substances are regarded as 'recreational' and are incorporated within popular 'drug styles', others are associated with the stigma of social pathology and these are much less likely to be 'celebrated' by users. There are two exceptions in the data that might undercut this explanation to an extent: 'solvent abuse' is not usually regarded as a 'recreational' substance, while 'cocaine' often is and yet the former as a search term revealed quite a high proportion of 'celebratory' videos and the latter, none at all. But the younger adolescents who are more likely engage in solvent abuse may not read this intoxicative practice in the way older cohorts of recreational drug users do.

The Cautionary

The search terms 'crack cocaine', 'crystal meths', 'GHB', 'ketamine' and 'glue sniffing' all returned relatively high proportions of 'cautionary' videos (Tables 6.5[a] and [b]) while the search terms 'cannabis' and 'ecstasy' generated very few. 'Cautionary' videos all had certain elements in common—a focus upon the visible and physical signs of intoxicated bodily impairment. For example, there appeared to be a 'crystal meth genre' which involved a

degree of 'vernacular' creativity in 'photoshopping' faces to represent the visible effects of taking the drug over a prolonged period of time, while more than one dentist loaded videos demonstrating the consequences of prolonged crystal meth use for teeth.[5] Here, then, is evidence of overlap between the pattern of substance representation generated by 'old media' (see Chapter 2 of this book) and the symbolic representations circulated by 'new media'. In the case of ketamine and GHB there is a preoccupation with the loss of bodily control and motor impairment that users experience. These are not drugs that induce the 'cerebral highs' associated classically with LSD, or perhaps ecstasy, mescaline and contemporary hallucinogens.

The video 'little too much GHB'[6] illustrates the point that YouTube encourages a fascination with the routine and mundane of everyday life (Burgess and Green, 2009: 8), except in this instance, and rather bizarrely, friends continue looking at a PC and doing their washing while another friend films the wild contortions of a companion as the effects of the drug kick in. There is no laughter, the framing of the behavior is not 'celebratory' and the uploader's comments confirm a critical, disciplinary stance: 'CRAZZZY VIDEO OF A MAN TRIPPED OUT ON GHB'. To push the point home, an insert is edited into the video at the twenty-two second mark, which explains that 'flopping' is the 'uncontrollable flailing of arms, slapping oneself, yelling profanity, etc.'

Both GHB and ketamine can immobilize the body or severely impair physical coordination. A number of 'cautionary' videos focus upon this and the associated loss of dignity, particularly if this occurs in a public space. 'Ketamine King'[7] is a video made by a dance club security man who used his phone to film a ketamine user lurch zombie-like along the street, body bowed, until he staggers against a parked car, falls over, gets up, pivots around and eventually staggers off back up the street. Some girls passing by ask what's going on and the doorman explains, 'he's having a ketamine attack and I'm filming it . . . when you take a lot of ketamine you don't really know what you're doing . . . that's about as far as you can go without falling into a K hole,' and a little later, 'he's done mate . . . he's a kipper without a stream.' A number of other voices can be heard laughing and making jokes at the expense of the ketamine user. Since 2007 this video had been watched 62,548 times at the time of writing and attracted ninety-seven comments. The video is humiliating and this is acknowledged in this extract from the comment string, although as with most YouTube comment strings there is still a complexity in the contested interpretations among the comments:

> while at work this poor fella stumbled past the front door (Contoblath) (doorman)
>
> poor sod!! lovin the use of initiative to film this, where is it?! brighton no doubt?! (Hollysturgess2712918)

> ha was too good to miss, was filmed in Leeds mate (Contoblath)
>
> this guy is on GHB you fucking idiots (Platnumcrk)
>
> erm mate, think about who you call a fucking idiot, and no its not ghb, it's Ketamine, reason i know? The guy came back the next night to apologise and told us. Well done (Contoblath)
>
> poor bugger, bet his head felt like ten tons! (Contoblath)
>
> perfect dosage (JunianoUY)
>
> haha im glad im not the only fucker that does this crap!! (Mallinson85)
>
> if you take a lot of ketamine . . . ye ye say it louder donk (slabkrk)
>
> K rocked! (Ketabiscuit)
>
> @duey07 bet you'll be a fucking vegetable very soon, good going loser. (wavular)
>
> @hollysturgess2712198 you guys sure do a lot of fucked up drugs over there, don't ya? Lol (wavular)

So while there is a degree of pity mixed with the condemnatory in a number of comments, some still want to 'celebrate' ketamine even in the face of the evidence of what it can do to users. Indeed, it is clear from this comment string and a number of the comments posted to ketamine videos, the very bodily impairment and loss of control that Contoblath (the uploader of 'Ketamine King') wants to underline as a cautionary hazard is, for some, precisely the attraction of using ketamine. This may be the attraction of the 'controlled loss of control' that Measham (2002), Hayward (2002), and others have discussed in interpreting the contemporary intoxicative behavior of young people. Some ketamine videos depicted ketamine takers among groups of friends who might laugh and mock, but did at least also represent the potential of some supervision and presumably assistance if required. Thus, the experience of significant bodily impairment might be read as 'controlled loss of control' in these circumstances, but there are other ketamine videos that feature lone individuals, just as 'Ketamine King' does, staggering across public space unaccompanied, subject to the surveillance of a stranger's mobile phone and exposed to risks that are not in any way 'controlled'.

There are many comparable videos depicting ketamine users undergoing similar humiliating experiences in public spaces, at music festivals,

supermarkets, dance floors and in the home.[8] It is tempting to regard YouTube in this context as an on-line digital version of one of the disciplinary technologies from an earlier historical period—the public stocks. And yet, those that apply this disciplinary technology are not officially sanctioned agents but ordinary YouTube users and the 'cautionary' or 'disciplinary' message is by no means always received by those posting comments, as clearly illustrated above.

Consumer DIY Discourses and Legal High Ads

The next most frequently occurring UGC category (leaving aside news and documentaries) contained drug videos offering consumer assessments of particular substances or offering technical tips on the techniques and technologies of consumption (Table 6.4). This was strongly associated with the search terms 'cannabis' (26 percent), 'pot drug' (22 percent) and 'AMT legal high' (52 percent) (see Table 6.5[a] and [b]). Perhaps not surprisingly, the two search terms referring to legal highs, 'party pills' and 'AMT legal high' also generated high numbers of actual advertisements for legal high substances (44 percent and 14 percent respectively), loaded by commercial suppliers. In the US where 'medical marijuana' is legally available in certain states, consumer cannabis discourses flourish, underlined by the example of the *Cannabis Review TV* YouTube channel, which offers regular 'reviews' of particular strains of marijuana available in the grey 'dispensary' market, the *Tokin Daily* channel and the *High Times* channel, which organizes the annual *Cannabis Cup* competition for the best cultivated 'medical marijuana'. While there is a UK YouTube counterpart, *Cannabis Cure TV*, much of the consumer discourse in relation to cannabis is driven by the US and 34.6 percent of those uploading cannabis videos were located there, with 30.8 percent living in Western Europe, and 8.1 percent in the UK. The discourse of these videos frames cannabis as a product to be assessed in much the same way as other on-line goods, with particular strains being rated, and helpful tips being provided to shoppers as to what to look for when choosing both the product and supplier. Cannabis in these discourses becomes akin to a hobby, which supports a valuable DIY market because enthusiastic consumers of the product may also be keen cultivators, and just as those brewing wine or beer at home have to invest in kit, so do committed cannabis home cultivators. So both the technologies of consumption (bongs, pipes, etc.) and the technologies of production (lights, seeds, cultivators, etc.) are product tested and the results circulated to other consumers.[9] In much the same way as competitive gardeners might show off their marrows at a village fete in the UK, the cannabis cultivator can film and display his handy work and receive critical feedback from within the community:

> That's a great plant my friend but you should lower your light. The reason it got so tall is because it was stretching to get more light. You

> should start your light at about 20 inches above your harvest then lower down to about 16 inches when they get the proper height you want to keep them at. (comment posted by Yourhippiefriend to 'My First Grow')[10]

There are also plenty of videos that simply demonstrate DIY techniques for rolling joints or 'blunts'. Very similar discussions circulate in relation to legal highs, such as 'AMT', 'salvia', 'benzo fury', 'ivory wave', and 'party pills'. Jay Muise, the 'Legal High Guy', a self-appointed champion of legal high consumer rights, has uploaded many dozens of consumer reviews to YouTube, and there are several other legal high users offering their own advice on legal purchases and suppliers.[11] Prices, strengths, effects and suppliers are all evaluated and guidance provided on whether particular products will show up in US probation drug tests. Ward notes an affinity between Thatcherism and the values of enterprise and consumerism underpinning the networks of relations between drug dealers and consumers in her ethnographic study of the London 1990s club scene (2010: 16) and similar market discourses appear even more pronounced in these 'grey' and 'white' drug markets.

Reflective Discourses

'Reflective' videos involved more 'thoughtful' discussions of drug experiences without the emphasis upon 'fun', 'laughter' and 'shared experience' to be found in 'celebratory' videos, though in a small number of cases there was a fine line between the 'reflective' and the 'celebratory.' 'Cannabis', 'salvia' 'AMT legal high' and 'LSD' were the search terms generating the most 'reflective' contributions (see Table 6.5[a] and [b]), which typically involved one person talking to camera about drug styles and experiences. What is interesting in these is the apparent blurring of distinctions between the public and private. In a number of the videos, young people sit in their bedrooms, with parents or guardians presumably downstairs, and openly confide their drug experiences to YouTube. In 'MDMA Ecstasy Trip 1', a young teenager actually puts his finger to his lips and whispers conspiratorially to camera before commencing a 'reflective' account of an MDMA trip as he experiences it in his bedroom, but at one minute, thirty-one seconds he turns to make sure his bedroom door is locked, clearly intent on maintaining a physical boundary, whilst divulging his private drug use to the public world of YouTube. This video had been viewed over 75,000 times at the time of writing.[12] The webcam, as a tool, offers an intimacy to the YouTube user that clearly encourages a suspension of the mechanisms that might normally prompt a wariness in those embarking upon illegal or normatively sanctioned intoxicative behavior. Those producing 'reflective' drug videos clearly want to share their experiences and invite deliberative discussion. While there are plenty of instances of wacky exchanges, 'flaming' and

'trolling' there is also evidence of non-official 'vernacular harm reduction' strategies being exchanged. For example, Audible 484 has posted a series of videos reflecting on 'trips' he has taken with detailed accounts of what happened, how long they lasted, and how he felt at each stage. But one called 'Drugs and Depression' begins to open up quite sensitive issues dealing with drugs, lifestyle and the possibility of suffering from depression as a mental health issue, which is unusual for a young man of eighteen to address.[13] In this sense, YouTube drug videos, particularly the more reflective, are often not just 'drug videos', but rather vehicles for the communication of ideas or experiences about a much wider range of concerns including physical and mental health, community, politics, and in a way the experience of life for individuals living through the stresses of neo-liberal capitalism.

Drugs Education and Satire

Videos originally produced by official agencies or government departments represented 12 percent of the sample, though there were wide fluctuations between search terms with 'ecstasy', 'crystal meths', and 'solvent abuse' returning the highest number of official videos (Table 6.5[a] and [b]). The very low returns for legal highs, namely 'salvia', 'party pills' and 'AMT legal high', suggests that at the time of writing, official drugs agencies had not yet fully addressed the issue of legal highs, at least in terms of the YouTube environment. The challenge that drugs education agencies face in embracing YouTube, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, is that new Web 2.0 technologies dissolve the control over both content and the direction of communication that traditional forms of mediated drugs education once offered them.

As described in Chapter 5 of this volume, in beginning to embrace new media for drugs education purposes, the British government also sanctioned a movement away from fear arousal techniques toward new kinds of drugs campaign, which tried to strike a tone that would engage young people more 'on their terms' and in a way that tried to mediate between enforcement messages and harm reduction. This was the 'Talk to Frank' campaign and it serves as the leading example of what this research has coded as 'new drugs education', though there are other examples, such as MTV's 'Don't Drive and Drug' campaign. There remain on YouTube plenty of examples of 'traditional drugs education' including much of the material produced by Australian, New Zealand and US governments, not to mention the Church of Scientology. As discussed earlier in this chapter, and in Chapter 5, governments and official drugs agencies are often reluctant to relinquish the communicative control that they have often assumed was offered by 'old' mass communication technologies, particularly broadcasting media. In trying to utilize YouTube, they have often tried to retain communicative control in the face of the very interactivity and cultural dynamism that characterizes it as an example of the new media, Web 2.0 technologies. Just

as Hess (2009) describes the retreat of the Office of National Drugs Control Policy from YouTube interactivity, as the comment functions are shut down, so the Department of Health in the UK tried to push the 'Talk to Frank' YouTube genie back into its bottle, with little real success. The genie had escaped and was being remediated. Official 'Talk to Frank' videos now never have an enabled comment function, but that does little to smother the discussion of 'Frank' via the comments strings attached to the non-official versions of the videos. And as noted above, there is little 'control' over the emergence of official 'Frank' videos in any given search; they may very well appear alongside the videos advertising legal highs or cannabis cultivation kits that have just been discussed above, or next to a series of 'reflective', or 'celebratory' drug videos generated by those non-official commentators on drug issues that now harness YouTube's 'virality' and 'generativity'. And this underlines one last reason why 'old media' assumptions can no longer hold in the age of 'new' media and YouTube: control over the very text itself—the actual content of drugs education videos—is no longer assured.

This is where 'satirical' discourses may intersect with official drugs education. Drugs and drugs education have long been a source of humor within popular culture but new digital technologies greatly enhance possibilities for creating and disseminating satirical material. While the 'mental hygiene' and 'Reefer Madness' films have become objects of fun for YouTube audiences, current official drugs education material has not escaped the contemporary satirical gaze either. 'Talk to Frank' videos are equally as vulnerable to those armed with Photoshop or video editing software. In 'Skunk: destroying the myth' (uploaded by The Resurrection09 in March 2009), which will be captured by either a 'cannabis' or 'Talk to Frank—cannabis' search, the campaign logo is 'Photoshopped' into a video that 'mashes' clips from 'Talk to Frank', clips from interviews with Jacqui Smith (the home secretary responsible for returning cannabis to Class B status in the UK), a 'drugs expert' also speaking on television, and Sacha Baron Cohen's Ali G comedy character, to challenge the assumption that skunk is more dangerous than older varieties of the drug.[14]

In 'Cannabis Ad UK'[15] uploader Jackmfunion employed a less sophisticated approach by simply filming a 'Talk to Frank' poster located on a bus shelter in the street and encoding a dissenting interpretative frame with an audio comment, 'hmmm', and a critical posted comment to YouTube, which in turn generated twenty-three further comments from other YouTube users, either critically comparing their own experiences of cannabis with the poster's linkage of cannabis use and vomiting, or providing advice on ways to avoid nausea whilst smoking the drug. Perhaps, inevitably there is now a 'Frank Prank' genre on YouTube consisting of videoed prank phone calls to the 'Talk to Frank' helpline[16] Within the US the impulse to use YouTube to subvert drugs education messages appears to be even stronger given additional energy by the libertarian organizations that campaign for decriminalization of cannabis and 'recreational drugs'.[17]

These are all examples of the 'vernacular creativity' (Burgess and Green, 2009: 6) that YouTube sustains and it is this that makes mediated drugs education a much more complex and problematic process for contemporary drugs agencies.

CONCLUSION: VIRTUAL VERNACULAR HARM REDUCTION

Popular culture, including popular drug culture, is always made up of a complexity of divergent and contradictory discourses. While the particular articulations of these currents are always historically and culturally specific, it is possible to identify the 'celebratory', the 'cautionary' or disciplinary, the 'reflective', and the 'satirical' in cultures of intoxication from the 'gin epidemics' of the eighteenth century, to opiate consumption in the nineteenth century, and into more recent decades of recreational drug use (Berridge, 1999; Walton, 2001; Warner, 2003; Manning, 2007). YouTube does not necessarily create new popular culture but it certainly accelerates the speed at which these popular discourses may circulate and in doing so amplifies their complexities. We can see these complexities surfacing in several ways through the drug videos now loaded to YouTube.

The number of 'celebratory' videos can be understood as the YouTube expression of the 'calculated hedonism', associated with the growth of recreational poly drug use in the dance and leisure contexts described by Measham et. al. (2001), Hammersley and colleagues (2002), Sanders (2006) and Wilson and colleagues (2010), among others. Using a phone to video friends or to be filmed by friends whilst sharing experiences of drug use and intoxication reinforces the communal dimension and pleasure of 'going out' for many young people in twenty-first century leisure spaces. Facebook and other social media sites perform much the same purpose. This is the extension of the 'empowering exhibitionism' Burgess and Green applaud as a YouTube characteristic (2009: 27) to popular drug cultures. YouTube 'celebratory' drug videos are not necessarily about experiences spatially or temporally restricted to the clubs and bars of the night time economy. They can include just three friends smoking cannabis in a car or just one person with a camera and a 'salvia gardener' sharing the humor of trying to do anything, let alone gardening, immediately after ingesting salvia. YouTube proclaims the opportunity to 'broadcast yourself', just as Castells suggests that the network society enables 'mass self-communication' (2009: 58), and part of the intoxicative pleasure is the communal sharing of an experience which can now also be virtual.

Perhaps the most surprising feature of this study of YouTube drug videos is the strength of the 'cautionary', or disciplinary counter currents that in some ways work against the 'celebratory', though they are rarely placed directly in opposition to them. Salvia is a case in point. Unlike many of the drug search terms used in this research that tended to generate videos

clustered around either the 'celebratory' ('ecstasy', 'cannabis', 'party pills'.), or the 'cautionary' ('crystal meth', 'heroin', 'crack'), salvia generated a much more mixed response. Its powerful and rapid pharmacological effects encouraged the production of the 'celebratory' videos (54 percent) but these were accompanied by a significant number of 'cautionary' videos pointing to the possible dangers of these effects (18 percent). Ketamine produced similar patterns with almost equal numbers of 'celebratory' (26 percent) and 'cautionary' (22 percent) videos. These two substances are rather like 'open texts' in that they seem to invite contested and contrasting interpretations or frames in almost equal measure and, perhaps, this is because they pose more significant risk management challenges than cannabis, ecstasy or some of the 'legal highs' that are often regarded as highly controllable leisure time technologies. If many attracted to intoxicative experiences are the hedonistic but rational risk calculators described by Measham (2004), the risk calculation divides opinion more strongly when it comes to these two substances. The pleasures might be intense but the risks are perceived as high in comparison to some other recreational drugs.

However, in the comments attached to many of both the 'cautionary' and the 'celebratory' videos studied here, it was often possible to find thoughtful and 'sensible' harm reduction advice. For example, '~ typical 5-MeO-DMT experience ~' (uploaded by vicariously13 on March 11, 2012) claims to provide 'a typical walkthrough of an experience with the drug', with a detailed account of the what the effects of taking DMT are likely to feel like and the 'sensible' harm reduction steps that should be taken in preparation.[18] Similarly, 'All about Salvia Divinorum (Not a boring classroom vid)' (uploaded by BitchWABishiin in February 2009) provides sensible guidance on relating salvia strengths to personality and disposition.[19] Comparable examples could be found for many of the drug search terms employed in the study. The *NeuroSoup Channel*, which is run by a US postgraduate student with an enthusiastic technical and leisure interest in drug consumption, provides thoughtful reports on a bewildering range of substances that she has personally used.[20]

But there is great variation in the nature and quality of the advice that is offered by this 'vernacular harm reduction' drugs education; it is the digital equivalent of the popular 'knowledge' that has always circulated through social networks of friends and acquaintances. Thus, we return to one of the great dilemmas that the arrival of the Internet has thrown up. As discussed in Chapter 5 of this book, 'new media' threatens and sometimes destabilizes long-standing knowledge-power relations and hierarchies of expertise. The information provided by 'qualified experts' or drugs agencies has a muted voice on YouTube. On the other hand, there is a lot of sensible and measured vernacular advice to be found in some of these YouTube drug videos and their associated comment strings. The fact that it is offered by those who often have personal experiences of the substances they discuss may make that advice carry more weight for young

people who are seeking information. We also saw in Chapter 5 that official drugs education campaigns and drugs education in school frequently prompts young people to search further afield across the Internet to sites that will almost certainly include YouTube. There they can find the drug videos with vernacular harm reduction suggestions and advice, but also all the 'celebratory' videos and 'cool' 'reflective' videos; the advertisements for 'legal highs' and cannabis cultivation kits; and amidst all this, some pretty poor advice about using various drugs, too. In other words, to navigate their way through the almost overwhelming volume of information about intoxicative practices generated by YouTube and other new media, young people now have to acquire critical, reflexive and evaluative skills in order to exercise a necessary discernment. These are critical skills not only relating to drugs, popular drugs culture and drugs education, but they cannot be separated from other necessary skills to do with engaging and making sense of media and mediated popular culture.

The contours of popular drug culture are also reflected in the substance taste hierarchies that YouTube drug videos reproduce (Measham and Moore, 2009; Ward, 2010). The absence of many 'celebratory' videos in the 'heroin', 'crack cocaine' and 'crystal meth' search lists reflect wider, traditional popular understanding of these kinds of substances and may partly relate to the way news media reproduces particular symbolic frameworks about substances and the identities of those who consume them (Humphries, 1999; Giulianotti, 1997; Manning, 2006; Reeves and Campbell, 1994). The face montages produced in crystal meth videos are particularly striking examples of the reproduction of such symbolic frameworks, crystal meth users being represented as the embodiment of social pathologies and located in the very specific contexts of urban poverty and community breakdown.

The 'consumer DIY' discourses also reflect currents running through a wider popular culture, a culture that has not remained impervious to the influence of market oriented consumerism (Ward, 2010) and which chimes with powerful libertarian currents in the US. In this context YouTube also helps to sustain the virtual zone for the trading of drugs, discussed in Chapter 5, which parallels the physical 'grey zones' to be found within the night time economy of clubs and dance venues where the dealing of illicit 'recreational drugs' is often tolerated. Patterns of consumption, including drug consumption, are intimately bound up with identity (Collinson, 1996); commodities including drugs generate cultural meanings and in adopting particular 'drug styles' and expressing these through YouTube, social actors are representing versions of their selves and responding to the representations of others. The challenge for drugs agencies seeking to use YouTube effectively as a communicative tool is to embrace this degree of cultural complexity, to acknowledge that YouTube is a 'dynamic cultural system', and work with it. But the more profound challenge for those seeking information about drugs, particularly young people, is to acquire the sets of critical and evaluative skills that will

enable them to navigate their way through the virtual popular drugs culture sustained by YouTube and other new media. At the moment, drugs agencies do not usually contemplate these skills, parents may sometimes, but not always, and very few schools or colleges make any kind of connection between drugs education and 'media studies'. Young people have to draw on the resources at their disposal; they need to become rational calculators of risk and critical evaluators of mediated discourse at a pretty early stage in their lives because 'new media', and mediated popular drug culture, are part of their everyday lives.

7 Conclusion

Virtual Intoxication, Drug Styles and the Way We Consume

INTRODUCTION

This chapter develops the concluding argument of the book by considering what we know about the ways in which drug users and their peers develop their *own* understanding of drug use. The focus is both upon the kind of language, conversation and imagery that is exchanged in communicating ideas about drugs, but also upon the part played by old and new media in this process. In other words, it is assumed that these conversations about drugs and drug practices are inevitably *mediated*—they cannot be understood in isolation from the symbolic frameworks and drug discourses circulated by media, both 'old' and 'new'. However, it is suggested that the arrival of 'new media' significantly accelerated the dissemination of these conversations through the networks discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this volume. This chapter begins by reviewing what research tells us about the meaning and understanding drug users and their friends attribute to drug use and drug practices, or what can be called popular drug culture. This draws the discussion toward debates concerning the social construction of risk, as well as the substance images that may be exchanged, the part that community and identity play in drug conversations, and the responses that drug users and their friends may develop toward formal drugs education. The part that 'new media' specifically plays in these conversations is considered with further evidence from the comment strings generated by the YouTube drug videos discussed in the previous chapter.

In the final section of this chapter (and the conclusion to the book), the threads of the book's argument are drawn together to make an assessment of the relationship between popular drug culture, 'new' and 'old media', and the part they play in the lives of drug users, their friends and peers, facing the challenges of life in the era of late, modern twenty-first century capitalism.

In a social world in which popular drug culture, the conversations and social practices that make up that culture are inextricably bound with processes of mediation, it is suggested that drugs education has to sit alongside strategies for fostering critical media skills. In part, the vernacular culture that is now sustained through both new and old media already opens

up the possibility for such criticality. As new media accelerates and adds complexity to the circulation of drug meanings and conversations about intoxication, it provides new opportunities for those previously without a voice to mediate their experiences and understandings in critical ways. In the past within drugs research young people have tended to be viewed as 'the object of change, not subjects with knowledge views and ideas' (Parker et al., 1995, quoted by Leeming et al, 2002: 170). In the age of YouTube, social media, instant messaging, and the Internet, there are new opportunities for young people to develop a critical voice, though there are also new constraints and difficulties for them in making use of these opportunities.

POPULAR UNDERSTANDING AND POPULAR DRUG CULTURES

Campbell and Shaw (2008) call for a reconciliation of two contrasting pictures produced by the 'epidemiological tradition' in drugs research and produced by researchers working within the 'cultural studies tradition'. The former explores the distribution of the exposure to risk among defined populations, while the latter engages with the understood pleasures as experienced by those involved in popular drug cultures. Epidemiological studies tend to miss the importance of 'pleasure', 'context', and 'agency' in researching drug use but 'the cultural studies tradition' can sometimes play down the significance of the substances in question and their associated risks (2008: 612). In examining the circulation of drug conversations and drug meanings through popular drug culture we find both the expression of the experience of pleasure but also the patterning of that experience epidemiologically together with an acknowledgement of risk as constructed in terms understood by drug users and their peers, rather than 'experts'. If particular patterns of drug use are all social practices embedded within popular drug cultures then it is important to explore the 'drugspeak' (Davies, 1997) that is employed within these cultures, understood as 'communities of practice' (Jones, 2005: 26). New media accelerates, extends and amplifies the language, imagery and meanings in circulation within these 'communities of practice'. However, interpreting and charting the circulation of these ideas is not a straightforward process because they are frequently complex and often inconsistent. Davies (1997) describes the 'hard' drug users in his research as holding contradictory discourses but Jones prefers to read this as evidence that drug users can strategically switch between kinds of discourse or kinds of explanation for their drug styles (2005: 43). Benoit et al. (2003) refer to this as 'code switching'. As we shall see below, those hoping to find coherent and logically consistent beliefs expounded through the comment strings generated by YouTube drug videos will be disappointed. But there is evidence of a critical engagement with evidence and critical skepticism directed toward both 'official' and 'vernacular' accounts of drug use.

Social Location, Cultural Meaning and Pleasure

While the circulation of popular drug cultures may be a significant and continuing feature in contemporary late-modern societies, this is not to say that a consensus has emerged around the normalization of drug use, or that drug use is now widely accepted among the population at large. As we have seen in Chapter 1 of this volume, there is a continuing debate regarding the interpretation of the available data on actual drug use and 'offer situations' in the context of the 'normalisation thesis' and more importantly here, data on attitudes suggests that a majority of young people are likely to cite a range of 'negatives' that they associate with drug use (Wibberley, 1997: 175). Indeed, during the enquiry following the death of Victoria Climbie, young Londoners interviewed for the report in 2003 cited drugs and the associated community risks as one of the most significant routine hazards that they faced.[1] But evidence from numerous studies also shows that alongside an awareness of 'risk', for users of 'hard' and 'soft' drugs, regular or intermittent, and even among non-users there are vocabularies and associated images, kinds of conversation, available to describe and differentiate particular substances, their technologies of consumption, and the associated pleasures, as well as risks. For example, among poly drug users in Hong Kong, Jones found some employing a 'discourse of recovery' that stressed the struggle to overcome the power and danger of heroin as a substance; some others stressing their experience and 'expertise' in managing poly drug use to secure pleasures in a 'discourse of hedonism'. While the first group saw themselves as 'addicts', the second group saw themselves as 'authorities' (Jones, 2005: 36). At the same time, Jones also identified a 'discourse of fascination' associated with the 'physical or technical' aspects of drug consumption (2005: 41).

This is an example of the points at which epidemiological patterns, the data that describes the social location of particular groups and the quantitative evidence of the 'risks' to which they are exposed, intersect with cultural meaning and the mediated experience within popular drug cultures. As in Hong Kong, so also for young, working-class men with recent experience of prison in England, there can be a fascination with particular kinds of 'hard' drugs and their associated technologies as 'a source of male (street) cultural capital' (Collison, 1996: 431). In addition to 'status' and 'fascination', pleasure also has to be acknowledged as one of the cultural meanings associated with the social practices of drug use (Hunt and Evans, 2008; MacLean, 2005) and, once again, epidemiology intersects with cultural meaning, in that the understanding of 'pleasure' is specific to particular social groups in particular locations. Whilst a discussion of 'pleasure' in relation to dance culture drugs might not surprise the ethnographers studying the practices of relatively affluent young people located within dance club culture, perhaps more surprisingly MacLean, for example, identified seven dimensions to the pleasures that young, poor and marginalized

Australians experienced through 'chroming' or inhaling aerosol sprays (2005: 300). These young Australians talked of the pleasure of 'feeling' the physical effects of 'chroming'; of 'escaping' or 'relocating' to another dimension of experience removed from the necessity to think; of 'imagining' access to 'vivid imaginative worlds as active participants' (2005: 304); of enhancing their physical experiences, or 'doing', and of affirming their identities in opposition to others (particularly those with authority over them) whilst consuming substances in a highly transgressive way. But in another social location, more affluent and 'empowered' young San Francisco clubbers make up a very different epidemiological category; their choice of substances and their consequent experience of pleasure are different, though with some important commonalities. Rather than securing 'pleasure' through transgression and in response to subordination, these young people can celebrate 'fun', but also the opportunity to find 'a whole other way of looking at the world and seeing people', a spiritual dimension to the experience of taking club drugs that endures in the longer term (Hunt and Evans, 2008: 336), though they also shared in common with the young Australian chromers a pleasure in the physical, embodied experiences of intoxication. Back in the United Kingdom, young clubbers located in the night-time economy of Manchester celebrate the bodily pleasures of alcohol and dance drug fueled intoxication in ways shaped by drug and music genre taste hierarchies (Measham and Moore, 2009). Those attending drum and bass events were likely to eschew ketamine, in contrast to those enjoying hard dance, trance, and funky house. For all these clubbers, consumption of familiar dance drugs, such as cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis was common, but drugs less fashionable in these social locations, such as psychedelics, crack and heroin, did not feature in the 'discerning if prolific poly-drug repertoires' of these club goers (2009: 454).

Official, Vernacular and Mediated Ideas of Risk

Several researchers have pointed to the tendency in much of the older drugs research to position drug users, particularly young people, as the vulnerable objects exposed to risk through their drug use. It is suggested that this produces a consequent 'blind spot' in the literature, which is that risk taking can be intimately bound up with pleasure as well as hazard (Collinson, 1996; Lupton and Tulloch, 2002). Managing the understood risk can be part of the pleasure and excitement of drug use (MacLean, 2005: 307). This in turn implies that those involved in the social practices of intoxication and drug use are more active, critical and reflective than they are sometimes given credit for in the older literature, though this is not to assume that their ideas about risk and risk taking are necessarily 'sensible' or 'realistic'. Other researchers, following Giddens, have made the obvious point that drugs may help to sooth the anxieties that individuals face when they contemplate other patterns of risk that threaten their 'ontological

security' in late modern capitalism (Collison, 1996: 433). Managing the anxiety arising from one package of risk through exposure to another set is not necessarily 'sensible' or 'rational' but it is a common coping strategy.

The experience of risk has a social and mediated dimension which cannot be reduced to either adolescent biology or psychological determinants; it is in part a shared and collective social practice (France, 2000). Decisions about risk are not made by individuals in isolation, but by social actors within social groups and are subject to the particular power relationships that are always at play in social contexts, including those of gender and age and those shaped by the distribution of social and cultural capital. This is the missing dimension in some of the models which picture drug-using social actors as lone 'rational' risk-to-benefit assessors—a point now willingly acknowledged by the NWLS team in their return to the 'normalisation debate' (Aldridge et al., 2011: 6). But beyond this, social practices that involve decision making about risk occur in the context of wider societal processes including the circulation of media representations of risk and the exercise of power to discipline and 'manage' populations. Lupton (1993), for example, argues that political and media discourses setting out the epidemiological distributions of 'risk' in relation to health, the body, and by implication drug use, also function to apportion 'blame' to those embracing the risks. The construction of risk is therefore a political and contested process.

It follows, then, that the construction of 'drug risks' can be understood as intimately bound up with the reproduction of the 'control regimes' identified by Bancroft (2009: 113). In contemplating the use of licit or illicit substances, potential users are confronted with the competing claims as to the risks associated with particular substances. There is good evidence to suggest that young people are often not persuaded by the risk claims made in official agency drugs education materials, as we have noted at various points in this book. Shiner and Newburn found young people feeling thoroughly bombarded but not impressed by official UK government drugs information in their evaluation of drugs education projects in the mid-90s (Shiner and Newburn, 1996). As noted earlier, there is little evidence that more recent on-line drugs education, even the 'knowing' and 'humorous' 'Frank' campaigns, have managed to win many young people over (Moore et al., 2011). Instead, research suggests that young people rely to a great extent upon 'local' or 'situated' knowledge, circulated via friends and peers (Demant and Raun, 2010; France, 2000; Pilkington, 2007; Shiner and Newburn, 1996). There is a strong empiricist commitment in these evaluations of risk, a desire to *see* the evidence of risk in the local context of their own experiences, and those of others. As we shall see below, an empiricist approach to risk calculation is a notable feature of the YouTube drug video comment strings, too.

However, an empiricist commitment to localized knowledge and risk evaluation cannot be untangled from a mediated context. Locally-grounded knowledge is also at the same time mediated knowledge (Thompson, 1995).

Since the beginning of the era of mass communication in the second half of the nineteenth century this has been the case. Indeed, this is what the earlier chapters of this book have partly aimed to establish. Young people will be aware of the patterns of drug representation and symbolic frameworks that are circulated through film and television. They will, for example, be aware of the drug choices made by stars and celebrities and engage critically with both the news media coverage that dwells upon such things and also the constructions of drug risk suggested by such coverage (Shaw et al., 2010). The construction of local or 'lay' knowledge about drug risks seems to be highly complex, in part critical and skeptical but in other ways, rather reliant upon vernacular or 'folk' knowledge that has been accumulated through a less critical absorption of mediated frames from the past. In the UK, for example, young people are likely to associate the risks associated with ecstasy use in the context of the death of Leah Betts, which received intense news media coverage during 1995, but continues to resonate through popular drug culture even to this day (Critcher, 2003). Hammersley and colleagues found that young people were simultaneously highly skeptical of news media coverage and yet often formed their understanding of both legal and physical risks partly on the basis of this mediated information (2002: 112–116). Similarly, Demant and Raun found that the Danish youth in their study often referred to ecstasy as a 'killer drug', not on the basis of their own immediate experience necessarily, but through the recycling of mediated images originally constructed in Danish drugs education campaigns and associated media coverage fifteen years earlier. These mediated frames had been received and remediated through local experience over time to become popular 'local' or 'situated' knowledge (2010: 539–540).

Demant and Raun also found that young people understood substances in terms of hierarchies of risk. While some large scale quantitative surveys have suggested that there is an association between prevalence and normalisation, so that substances that are used most frequently are more likely to be accepted as 'low risk', they found that in the case of their focus groups, risk was actually assessed through the interplay of some 'general discourses prevalent in their social environment' (2010: 529). Substances were evaluated in terms of the distinction between the 'natural' and 'chemical'; between those that presented the greatest risk of addiction; and in terms of the technologies required to consume them, and the extent to which it was believed possible to continue performing routine roles in everyday life whilst under their influence (533–535). Thus, cannabis was regarded as least risky because it was 'natural', required neither needle or pill to ingest and did not interrupt daily life, whilst the use of amphetamines was seen as posing a greater risk, and cocaine was identified as the most risk-related of the three. The needle and intravenous injection have, of course, a powerful, mediated and iconic resonance in popular culture (Manderson, 1995). Cannabis use was widespread among focus group members, but far fewer actually used amphetamines or cocaine: these understandings were drawn

at least partly from local, but mediated knowledge, mixed with an understanding of the local empirical context.

Substance Risk and Identity

To summarize the argument up to this point, it is clear that social actors engaging with popular drug cultures make decisions about the drug styles they choose to adopt or reject on the basis of the highly complex interplay of drug discourses, some originating from direct local experience, some from the mediated local knowledge that becomes a resource reproduced and recycled over generations, and some from wider mediated representations circulated through news media and other media that contribute to popular drug cultures. In part, the understanding of risk is bound up with particular substance images, but these are complex social processes in which inconsistent and even contradictory ideas can simultaneously guide the choices that are made. Thus, for example, young Australians may enjoy the pleasures of chroming whilst also recognizing the low popular cultural status of inhalant as a 'scummy-arsed drug' (MacLean, 2005). Similarly, although young offenders in England might be aware of the particular risks associated with heroin, nonetheless they still may enjoy the 'street cultural capital' with which it was associated (Collison, 1996). In other words, social identity is an important factor in patterning the choices and risk assessments that are made. The experience of the structured inequalities and power relations associated with class, gender, ethnicity, age and locality make a difference both in terms of providing cues for drug identities and in the unequal distribution of material resources that determine the intoxicative opportunities that may be available to particular social groups (Foster, 2000: 319). Drug styles are also dependent upon time and place; particular drugs suit particular moods or situations (Riley and Hayward, 2004: 249), which implies that risk assessment is even more 'situational'. Indeed, Pilkington found in her study of Russian youth that drug-related risk-taking was often 'an act of companionship' (2007: 382); awareness of risk would be subordinated to the appeal to share a drug experience as an act of friendship.

The picture we have, then, is of social actors seeking to navigate their way through the choices, opportunities and risks associated with drug cultures, not on the basis of an exclusively rational or well-informed appreciation of epidemiology or 'officially' defined risk, but rather on the basis of a rather sketchy awareness of official drug risk discourse (Wibberley, 1997: 179), and a more clearly defined understanding of localized, 'situational' and mediated knowledge, grasped within the social context of friendship, identity and micro-power relations. As Hunt and colleagues conclude, 'the meanings that young people give to the drugs they use and the potential pleasures and risks associated with them are all socially embedded and socially determined' (2009: 615). Indeed, a number of researchers have

suggested that the experience of risk is not understood as a set of episodic, discrete, or single 'choices' occurring one at a time but rather as continuous flow of routine, everyday experience (Collison, 1996: 434; Pilkington, 2007: 381).

NEW MEDIA DRUGS INFORMATION AND THE CRISIS OF 'EXPERT' KNOWLEDGE

In Chapter 5 of this book, the volume and accessibility of on-line information about drugs and drug distribution was described. It was suggested that through the emergence of the multitude of horizontal and vertical networks that now sustain on-line drug information flows, it was no longer tenable for official drugs agencies to cling to the idea that it was possible to stay in 'control' of the communicative process. However, the question of how those using on-line media actually engage with the torrent of drug information available was posed but not answered. Now we can return to this question having set out in the previous sections of this chapter the ways in which the understanding of drugs and intoxication and the evaluation of 'official' information about drugs have always been 'localized', 'situational', inherently social, and most importantly for this book, mediated, in ways that pre-date the arrival of new media.

However, we know that the arrival of new media and new technologies makes accessing and circulating information much easier. In addition to the multitude of unofficial websites providing drug information and the hundreds of thousands of drug videos available on sites such as YouTube, Boyer and colleagues have shown, for example, that 'innovative drug users' can rapidly disseminate information about particular drug experiences, or links to sites such as Erowid, to hundreds of on-line peers, hundreds of miles apart, by simply using instant messaging (2007). Advice, techniques, information about access and distribution, even ploys for hoodwinking doctors into providing prescriptions, can now all be circulated easily and speedily (Tackett-Gibson, 2007b: 130). The speed, convenience, accessibility, and volume of drug information are vastly increased.

How is this torrent of information processed by online participants in popular drug cultures? In some ways we can see the same patterns of grounded empiricism, skepticism, and inclination to rely upon localized, situated knowledge discussed above reproduced, through the on-line discussions. Resistance to official drugs agency messages and skepticism in relation to the constructions of risk offered by on-line official messages is widespread. Indeed, Hess identifies a number of resistive discursive strategies employed on-line in his study of ONDCP YouTube videos, including parody, pastiche, jokes and a reassertion of the local and 'outlaw' vernacular in opposition to the discourses of governance (Hess, 2009: 415–416). In this case study, the particular critical focus of YouTube users is directed

toward the 'prohibition logic' of US government policy. The on-line critical evaluations are grounded in the use of empirical evidence and the search for inconsistencies in the prohibitionist logic. So, for example, one poster mentioned a recent concert venue at which signs had prohibited drug use, while the bars sold alcohol and tobacco (2009: 421). A grounded skepticism is directed not only toward government and official drugs agencies but most institutional and corporate sources of information. Quintero and Bundy (2011) found that the young adults in their study belied the fears of those substance misuse researchers who concluded that young Internet users might be vulnerable to on-line media manipulation (see Chapter 5 of this volume). On the contrary, these subjects were 'media savvy' and 'skeptical', capable of applying a critical perspective that placed all the claims made by various on-line pharmaceutical outlets and official agencies in the context of their particular institutional or corporate interests: 'no one source was accepted at face value' (2011: 898). Despite the tsunami of drug information now flowing around the Internet, according to Quintero and Bundy, young adults employ 'intricate forms of information assembly and evaluation' to make sense of it (2011: 905). The critical skills involved in this process of 'information assembly' involve a skeptical attitude toward industry claims and scientific knowledge, but not necessarily an automatic rejection of it. Instead, knowledge of this kind was set against alternative forms of knowledge, including the subjective accounts of drug users. Here there is clearly a continuation of the traditional reliance upon localized and empirically grounded 'lay' knowledge described in the earlier sections of this chapter. Quintero and Bundy are remarkably upbeat in their account of the criticality of the young adults in their research. High levels of digital literacy were entirely compatible with high levels of drug use. But some care needs to be taken in assessing Quintero and Bundy's picture of the pragmatic, critical on-line drug user. Their subjects were all college educated with presumably high amounts of cultural and social capital. Nevertheless, one conclusion to be drawn here is that the arrival of 'new media' and the volume of alternative information or 'knowledge' available to young people about drugs and intoxicative practices means that if there is to be an effective drugs education it must, at the same time, involve strategies for fostering digital and media literacy. As Quintero and Bundy (2011: 907) note, the Internet is awash with apocryphal stories, drug myths, and inaccuracies alongside information that may be useful and helpful. The young people in their study had the critical skills to exercise a fairly sophisticated discernment but it cannot be assumed that those skills are universally and equally distributed.

What makes this point even more important is that the arrival of 'new media' accelerates the erosion of pre-existing knowledge-power relations and hierarchies of expertise. As we have seen in earlier chapters, popular bodies of drug knowledge have always been available within popular drug cultures as alternatives to the 'expert' knowledge of doctors, scientists and

drugs workers. The speed, accessibility and volume of alternative information provided by new media provides very significant new opportunities to subject the discourses of medical and official drugs agency 'experts' to a critical scrutiny. But the crucial point is that drug users and young people on-line are much more *inclined* to question traditional knowledge power relations and hierarchies of expertise. For example, in an analysis of the comments generated on-line by a US based 'harm reduction site', Tackett-Gibson found that ketamine users were well-versed in the scientific literature on the dangers of ketamine use (2008: 254–255). They often acknowledged that some of the risks identified were significant but also exercised a critical discernment that distanced them from 'official' discourses and also constructed their own, alternative risk calculus, which was in some ways broader than the official accounts. Thus, they acknowledged a number of physiological risks, but tended to discount psychological risks stressed in official 'expert' literature, and added discussions of environmental and socio-legal categories of risk. They constructed their own alternative risk hierarchy, which acknowledged ketamine use as 'risky' but placed it lower than the use of 'dance drugs'. These ketamine users also frequently subjected 'official' information to critical scrutiny through comparison and evaluation against sites such as Erowid and other US 'harm reduction' sites. In the absence of clear-cut scientific evidence of harm, website members turned to other website members for guidance and 'knowledge'. The danger of 'addiction' through long-term use of ketamine was recognized, not because of the compelling quality of the scientific evidence but through the 'addiction narratives' offered by some long-term users of ketamine, who acquired 'expert' status on the basis of their personal experience and frequency of postings.

Two points are significant here. Firstly, that the grounded empiricism based around the significance attached to personal experience is a common feature of lay drug discussion and risk assessment. It is this that is one of most powerful agents in the dissolving of traditional expert knowledge hierarchies. Jones, for example, refers to a grounded 'discourse of expertise' based upon personal experience of drug use in his study of young drug users in Hong Kong. 'Expertise' was acquired through empirical experience (2005: 42–43). Similarly, Crispino in his analysis of on-line discussion generated by two US websites, one 'anti-drug' and one pro-'harm reduction', found that the ideas that were most significant in deterring drug use were 'causal-empirical', or grounded in the actual experience of drug use, rather than abstract hypothetical dangers, such as those represented by law and formal regulation (Crispino, 2007). The second point is that these research studies suggest that the critical evaluation and the destabilization of traditional expert knowledge hierarchies arise from deliberative and communal processes. Whilst official knowledge and assessments of risk are contested or resisted, there is a mutually supportive dialogue that occurs within an on-line communal context, acknowledged by self-reflexive

participants (Tackett-Gibson, 2007a). While aggressive resistance may be directed against official campaigns such as DARE,[2] dialogue with fellow members within the on-line communities that these sites support appears to be largely harmonious, with older members providing encouragement for new members, and a generally supportive atmosphere being maintained (Tackett-Gibson, 2007a). This picture does accord with research on the findings of ways in which groups of drug users discuss and assess risk in the 'real world', too (Pilkington, 2007). It seems from these accounts that alternative bodies of expertise, different kinds of risk assessment and resistive strategies for 'harm reduction' within digital communities can emerge in a rather smooth and organic fashion.

Again a note of caution needs to be sounded here. The on-line subjects of these research projects are inevitably self-selecting, and by virtue of the nature of the kinds of contributions they make, are likely to possess critical skills, cultural and digital capital, that may not be shared by all those visiting but not participating in such website discussions. Secondly, the on-line communities that evolve around particular 'harm reduction' or 'pro-drug' sites may be positively inclined toward communal and supportive values and modes of interaction, in ways that may not characterize participants to less specialized sites, such as YouTube. As Hess (2009) concludes and we shall see below, on YouTube, there is evidence of harmonious and communal deliberation but there is also considerable evidence of more aggressive contestation, 'flaming' and an inclination to summarily dismiss alternative perspectives.

YOUTUBE DRUG VIDEO COMMENT STRINGS

One measure of how YouTube drug videos may be received and interpreted is provided by the comment strings that they generate. Those who make the effort to post a comment may not necessarily be representative of the whole population engaging with such videos but analysis of the discourses circulated through these comments at least provides some insight into the discursive processes through which other YouTube users engage the 'frames' within which uploaders encode their videos. The discussion presented in this section of the chapter follows from the analysis of the 750 YouTube drug videos reported in Chapter 6 of this volume. Here we can look at the comment strings associated with some of the videos uploaded to YouTube, in the context of what is known about 'real' and on-line drug discussions described in the earlier sections of this chapter. To what extent do YouTube comment strings reflect a deliberative and harmonious discussion of risk? Do YouTube posters seek to challenge traditional expertise or construct alternative 'risk' assessments? How do they describe substances and do they also reflect a commitment to a grounded, empiricist mode of evaluation? In short, how do those using YouTube make sense of YouTube drug videos?

The analysis is confined to the comment strings generated by just six videos, but even these produced a raw total of 982 separate comments, though irrelevant comments (for example, male and often quite misogynistic commentary concerning the attributes of women appearing in the videos, comments on the technical aspects of video production, or 'flaming' exchanges not involving drug topics) have been ignored in the analysis. The six video comment strings were selected not as a representative sample but simply as six individual case studies with contrasting characteristics in terms of the complexity and nature of the discourses. Following the analysis of types of drug video discussed in the previous chapter, two 'cautionary' videos, one 'celebratory', one 'reflective' and two official drugs education videos were chosen.

The comment strings revealed three kinds of discourse that operated in much the same way as those identified in the coding of the videos. These were, *celebratory*, *cautionary*, and *consumer and DIY discourses*. Thus, there was plenty of evidence of those contributing comments embracing the meanings and frames that particular drug videos offered through the process of encoding. Videos that celebrated particular drug experiences in a spirit of hedonistic and bodily pleasure were often received by other commentators in this way; those that offered cautionary tales seeking to discipline or underline risk were also often received by many in these terms, with commentators providing additional 'empirical evidence', mainly personal testimony, to lend weight to the message of the video. Certain videos particularly but not exclusively those coded as 'consumer/DIY' in the video analysis prompted a lot of discussion in comment strings around the technologies of consumption, such as the merits of particular kinds of pipes, bongs, techniques of inhalation, or cultivation. In this analysis these are termed discourses of *technology* and to an extent they provide further evidence of those posting comments embracing and engaging with the meanings and frames encoded in the videos. Here there is overlap with the picture presented by Murguia and Tackett-Gibson (2007), Crispino (2007) and Quintero and Bundy (2011) in the sharing and accumulation of techniques, tips, and vernacular knowledge.

However, the discourses circulating in the drug video comment strings extended beyond the parameters set by the discourses or frames offered in the uploaded videos. Some comments did, indeed, reveal a grounded *empiricism* in that they attempted to measure the claims or representations made in drug videos against an empirical benchmark, usually personal experience but sometimes 'facts' or 'statistics' that the had been 'read about' or 'seen'. Other comments employed a *skeptical* stance, not based upon empirical evaluation but rather a questioning of the authenticity, veracity, or logic of a video. Some comments developed an alternative *vernacular drugs education*, offering harm reduction strategies that consisted of lay advice regarding the risks associated with particular substances or suggestions for harm minimization—further manifestations of the 'homegrown harm reduction' noted by Campbell and Shaw (2008: 689) and Tackett-Gibson (2007).

The point that on-line communication provides plenty of opportunities for play with identity and the presentation of self is familiar (Slevin, 2000; Burgess and Green, 2009) and clearly there is some degree of identity investment in the drug styles adopted by particular individuals posting to YouTube drug videos. Arguments about the merits of particular substances developed through some comment strings echoed the *drug taste hierarchies* identified in the coding of the videos in Chapter 6 of this book, and the evidence that drug users associate particular substances and associated risks with meanings of status and social identity as discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter.

But the YouTube comment strings explored here were not the tranquil communities of calm deliberation described by some researchers. There were often quite heated policy arguments about the merits of decriminalization and prohibition. These are termed *libertarian* and *anti-libertarian* discourses, respectively, in this analysis. In this respect, these YouTube comments more closely correspond to those described by Hess (2009) in his study of YouTube drug discourses, than the on-line communities researched by Tackett-Gibson (2007). On general open-access sites such as YouTube, where there are not necessarily unifying points of common interest that foster communal norms, the potential divisiveness of policy and formal regulatory issues can prove an inflammatory mix. Here, it appears to be not unusual for those loading comments to indulge in *flaming*, or the posting of comments in a rude or aggressive manner and where this occurred in a response relevant to the discussion of 'drug videos', this was noted because it provided a sharp contrast to the on-line discussion described by Murguia and Tackett-Gibson (2007).

It was often the case that comments combined more than one of these discourses in a single comment. Indeed, sometimes comments contained elements of two, three, or even four of these kinds of discourse. Hess (2009) reluctantly concludes that the lack of internal coherence or logical consistency in many of the comments posted to the ONDCP YouTube videos, together with the volume of associated 'flaming', means that YouTube is a rather unpromising model for on-line deliberative discussion. The six comment strings discussed below will probably not encourage him to modify this conclusion. YouTube comment posters appear not to regard the possession of two inconsistent and contrary opinions simultaneously as a necessary barrier to free expression.

Responding to the Celebratory

Table 7.1 provides a quantitative summary of the distribution of types of discourse within the drug relevant comments generated by each video but there is as much to be gained from exploring the nature of the commentary as the quantitative profile. The 'celebratory' video selected, 'Hi, I'm High with a Giraffe'[3] generated one of the simplest and least complicated comment strings with only sixty-nine comments in total and no discourse combinations. As Table 7.1 suggests, much of the commentary (41.4 percent)

Table 7.1 Discourses as a Percent of Drug Video Relevant Commentary*

	'Hi with a Giraffe'	'Ecstasy'	'Crystal Meth'	'Ketamine King'	'Talk to Frank – Brain Warehouse'	'The Effects of GHB'
Celebratory	41.4	7.7	3.2	14	8.8	6.7
Cautionary	10.3	1.6	28.4	32	6.7	15.6
Consumer DIY	0	0	1.1	0	0	0
Empiricist	3.4	2.4	10.5	18	8.8	0
Sceptical	17.2	20.6	8.4	0	28.9	6.7
Vernacular Drugs Education	0	12	4.2	4	2.2	8.9
Drug Taste Hierarchies	0	1.6	9.5	2	2.2	8.9
Technology	6.8	3.2	0	2	0	6.7
Libertarian	3.4	0	3.2	0	0	8.9
Anti-Libertarian	0	0	0	0	2.2	0
Flaming	17.2	12.5	0	4	2.2	2.2
Combinations of 2	0	26.0	29.3	20	31	31
Combinations of 3	0	4.4	1.1	2	4.4	2.2
Combinations of 4+	0	7.8	1.1	1	2.2	2.2

*percentages rounded

embraced the 'celebratory' frame of the video, which featured a girl smoking a bong whilst waving a toy giraffe at the camera. One 'celebratory' comment from fullmetal891 was:

> holy shit this video tripped me out, with the music and the girl with weird painting on her face hitting a bong with a stuffed animal on her lap called Mr. Pig . . . maybe im just really high . . .

This kind of comment embraces the pleasurable aspects of cannabis intoxication and is communal in that it acknowledges a shared experience. Similarly, bbaker23 1 comments, 'love all ur vids u always take awsome bong hits . . . '. A large proportion of the comments shared the spirit of the video, recognized the 'fun' element, employed a common vocabulary and regarded cannabis consumption via the use of a bong in a positive light. But some comments were 'skeptical' (17.2 percent), casting doubt on the authenticity of the video: 'that realy weed?' (svensken4 1) or 'Try inhaling . . . ' (SmokeTooMyHighh). And some were 'cautionary' (10.3 percent) despite the 'celebratory' discourse developed in the video:

> What the hell, you're like 11. Go play on Neopets and watch Disney channel insted of smoking weed. You're heading down a bad road, you know. I don't smoke so I won't see you there (BriannaBlog).

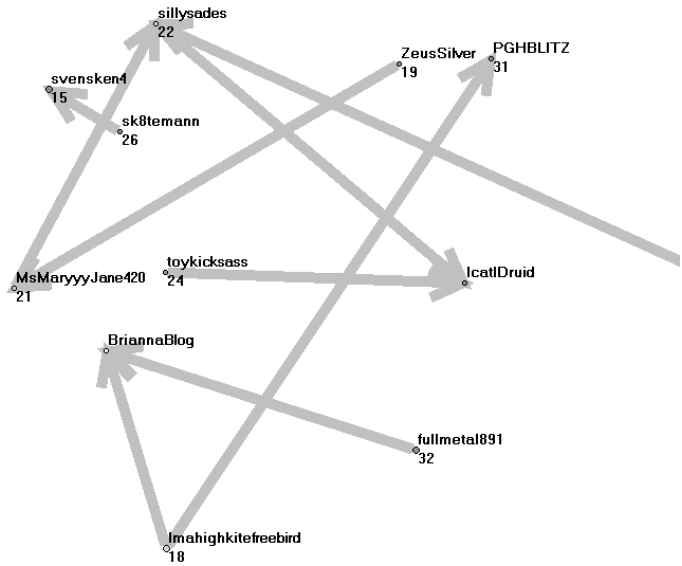

Diagram 7.1 The 'hi, I'm high with a giraffe' comment network.

A discourse of 'technology' was occasionally offered through comments on techniques of intoxication as in, for example, 'need to hold that shit in longer but still not bad' (redsneckboy). The structure of the comment network as revealed by the use of *Webometric Software* (Thelwall, 2009) was also uncomplicated with only two comment sequences involving more than two people. The *Webometric Software* traces the volume of exchanges between individuals posting on-line and expresses that volume by the thickness of the arrows in the diagram.

Responding to the Reflective

In contrast 'Ecstasy'[4] (viewed 66,144 times to date) generated 398 comments at the time of the research and revealed a much more complicated comment network (see Diagram 7.2).

Diagram 7.2 shows that most exchanges were linear, involving just two people and one exchange of comment, but there were also some more intense exchanges involving frylock991, tomtom11222, dyllpickle94, and Jaylyn. Frylock991 and dyllpickle94 debate the facts regarding MDMA and dehydration in a series of exchanges while frylock991 and tomtom11222 argue about health and penal risks. In fact, 'Ecstasy' generated a number of discourses which ran counter to the 'reflective' framing of the video by offering 'skeptical' comments (20.6 percent), or comments that combined the 'skeptical' with the 'empiricist' (3.2 percent), offered

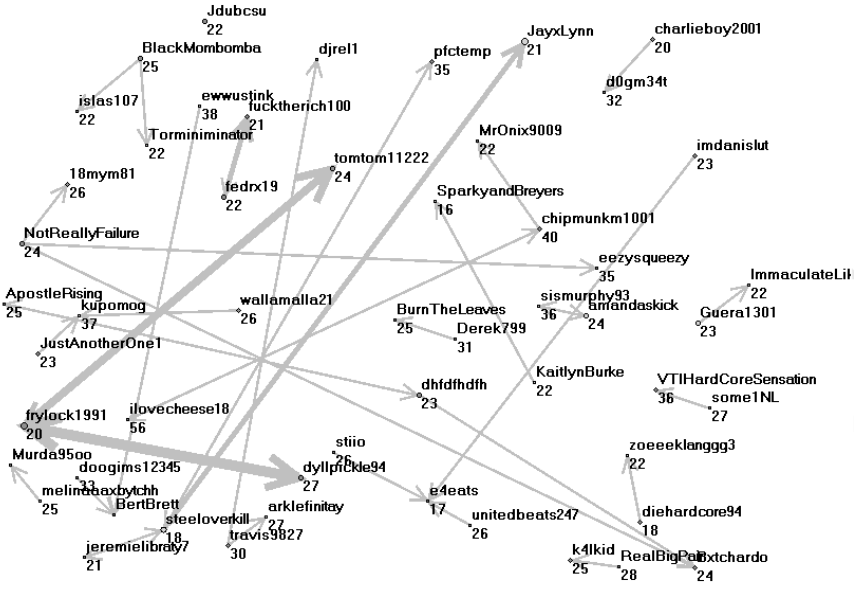

Diagram 7.2 The 'ecstasy' comment network.

alternative 'vernacular drugs education' (12 percent), or 'vernacular drugs education' combined with an 'empiricist' discourse (4.4 percent). In the video Lubyy25 describes taking ecstasy 'once' and then discusses the risks of criminalization, the pleasures of the experience and strategies for harm reduction. But some of those commenting challenge the information on sentencing, question the advice on water consumption, debate whether taking 'e' really does 'make you horny', and suggest alternative reasons why those taking 'e' might use Vaseline or Vicks. In the comments below, skepticism is based partly upon empirical evidence (personal experience), partly upon 'technical' claims regarding physiological and chemical processes, and partly upon support for a drug taste hierarchy, in this case of MDMA over ecstasy:

> its only man slaughter if your distributing, and your probably the most ignorant person i have ever met lets start with number 1) the chemical MDMA is NOT a diuretic infact, most deaths occur when you drink EXCESS water, drink when your thirsty, dont when your not (2) Vaseline doesnt clear the sinuses, and ecstacy / MDMA does NOT affect your sinuses (3) MDMA doesn't make your horny, in fact people often find its harder to orgasm on it (4) thing DO NOT slow down the reason lights make trails is for. (vampir3blood)

> has this chick even done E? (Eyeliner In My Eyes)

> Vaseline??????? LMAO!!! VICKS SWEETHEART! has nothing to with ur sinus lmao. Its bc it feels amazing when u breathe in! Lol or it tingles on ur skin. Lol (euphorickaitxoxo)

> essentially everything i wrote sums up to this, your wrong, and get your facts right before you go and potentially kill someone[especially with that water thing]finally, a word of advice, do NOT buy ecstasy tablets instead go for MDMA aka Molly, its the purer substance and contains more of the chemical people want [MDMA]my grounds for posting is that ive done MDMA and my research (vampir3blood)

At the same time, 7.7 percent of comments were simply 'celebratory' (see Table 7.1), as in:

> you don't know what haviing a good time is until you take e on a techno party with everyone there also on e. you will have the night of ur life.' (floriswazza)

So the framing of this video is not necessarily embraced uncritically. In fact, many of those commenting evaluate the video through their own claimed personal experience and technical expertise, developing discourses that

consider risk, strategies for harm minimization, and technical processes, pharmacological and physiological, as well as more effective routes toward intoxication. There is also a 'vernacular drugs education' in circulation here, which will not satisfy the requirements of health professionals but is nevertheless an important dimension of the popular drugs culture that YouTube circulates. But the network diagram (Diagram 7.2) does not suggest the communal, deliberative harmony that Tackett-Gibson (2007) found. Interaction is largely characterized by linear single exchanges between particular individuals rather than groups in discussion, and comments are by no means always mutually supportive.

Responding to the Cautionary

'Crystal meth'[5] is an example of the crystal meth 'Photoshop genre' discussed above, uploaded by QuoteTheMadRaven (viewed 206,716 times to date). As Table 7.1 shows, the 'cautionary' discourse of the video is matched by a strong cautionary response among those commenting (28.4 percent) and a further 13.7 percent comments combining cautionary and empiricist discourse. For example, this comment combines a 'cautionary' discourse with an 'empiricist' reference to personal experience and a 'technological' account of harm:

> Yes. I knew a meth user that sounded just like you described. It really turns people into users and does something to their brain. You are lucky you quit before you got endocarditis. That is when people shoot up and they get bacterial leading to infection into their blood stream from sharing needles or whatever and infection reaches inner lining of the heart. Horrible stuff. (abby495 in reply to pzp886)

Crystal meth was frequently located at the lower end of a 'drug taste hierarchy' with comments such as,

> why do people do thid drug in the first place?? I really do nut understand . I've been drinking beers and smoking weed for over 20 years and never once thought about Meth or coke or crack. (Bolooee 1)

But even in the case of crystal meth there were a few prepared to 'celebrate' its intoxicative power and in doing so attempt to secure discursive distinctions between 'normal' and 'pathological' users:

> I did meth for about 6 yrs. My teeth are still good and I never had sores like these ppl. I guess it's because i still took a shower every day and brushed my teeth after every meal. these ppl are drug ABUSERS not drug users. stop knocking it if you can't uderstand it. meth is great if you do it right. (alrags1979)

In the last comment, the 'celebratory' argument again rests on the empirical (six years personal experience) and invokes the distinction between 'drug users' (by implication those in control) and 'drug abusers' (by implication those controlled by the drug).

There were some comments simply skeptical of the discourse in which the video is framed: 'I wonder if these are really photoshopped pictures of Arizona police dept.?' (poopooman38111 1), but the 'crystal meth' video also prompts some highly complex comments which really extend the discussion beyond the video to develop complicated, combined discourses. For example, the following acknowledges some 'celebratory' pleasure before suggesting harm minimization strategies (vernacular drugs education) and a critique of drug prohibition (a libertarian discourse) whilst ultimately still placing the drug within a 'cautionary' discourse grounded in personal (empirical) experience:

> to be honest, its very nice when you use rarely, regular use SEEMS cool at first but will have you psychotic before you know it, so you'd better have someone around who will keep you grounded and aware of what you are doing or you will LOSE YOURSELF. its way too common! i know many users who work regular jobs sleep every night and duck the drama. i also will tell you most of the people i know who use, i wont associate with, they're negative. the prohibition is what makes things so bad, costs etc. (pzp886)

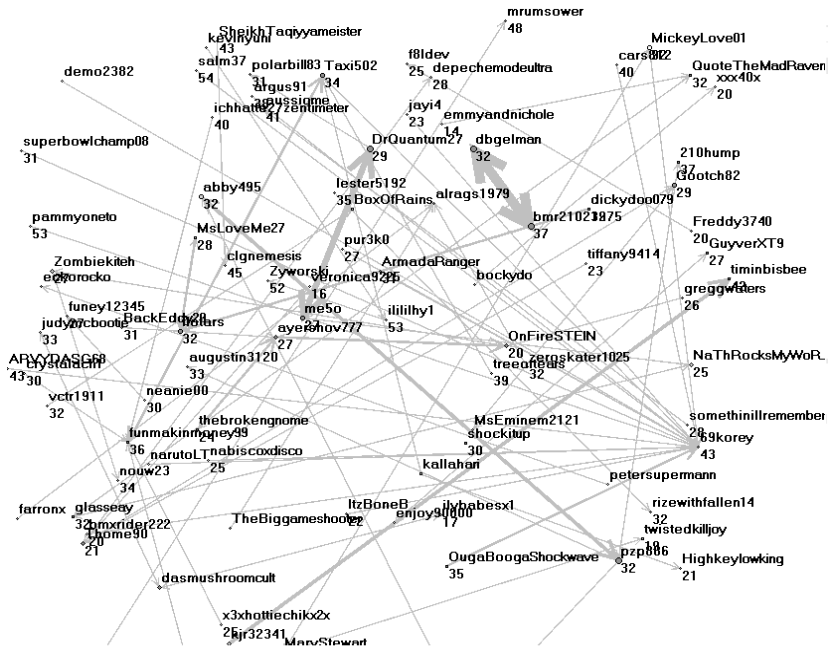

Diagram 7.3 The 'crystal meth' comment network.

The 'Crystal meth' comment chain is displayed in Diagram 7.3. Although 294 comments produces a very complicated network, it is still possible to note that, once again, the majority of network exchanges involve pairs producing a series of 'linear' relationships; in addition nineteen commentators are involved in more than one dialogue and there are five multiple dialogues producing 'radial' structures. For example, 69 korey who is a former crystal meth user becomes involved in a series of exchanges concerning the role of choice or free will in drug use and addiction. There are two sustained exchanges (indicated by the thickness of the arrows): dbgelman and bmr21021975 debate toxicology and the impact of crystal meth use on teeth and gums, while DrQuantum27 engages in a 'flaming' exchange with me5o, triggered by a disagreement over the value of 'natural' drugs such as magic mushrooms and marijuana. The uploader, QuotetheMadRaven, only has two exchanges. So while some of the interaction here is combative, there is some evidence of the more deliberative discussions identified by Tackett-Gibson (2007) and Crispino (2007).

The other 'cautionary' video selected for this part of the discussion, 'Ketamine King',[6] prompts equally complicated responses. As described in Chapter 6 of this book, the video is intended to serve as a 'cautionary' warning, highlighting the public humiliation associated with the motor impairment that ketamine induces; 32 percent of the comments embrace this frame, but 14 percent of the comments 'celebrate' the intoxicative experience of ketamine, and a further 14 percent combine 'celebratory' with either 'empirical', 'technical' or 'vernacular drugs education' discourses, despite the voice over and loader comment underlining the 'cautionary' frame. In other words, almost as many commentators offered some kind of 'celebratory' view of ketamine intoxication as those embracing the clearly 'cautionary' frame of the video. Thus, pontiacfirebird1997 embraces the emphasis upon humiliation intended by the uploader, commenting 'You can tell he's trying to? act normal but fails hilariously' and wavular fully embraces it: 'bet you'll be a fucking vegetable very soon, good going loser?'. At the same time, duey07 (duane price) says:

> this is what I must of been like the other week when one of my mates found me outside? face down in the rain!!! . . . I love ket best buzz ever . . . If your gonna do it . . . Do it by the shed load it mashes your head right up, it's like the film inception is going on inside your head . . . Special K FTW!!.

Diagram 7.4 displays the comment network diagram for 'Ketamine King'. Again, most relationships are simple, linear exchanges between two commentators. But three commentators develop 'radial' relationships. DemonWTF asks, 'Is this what ketamine really does? LoL?' Dancidelics provides some 'venacular drugs education':

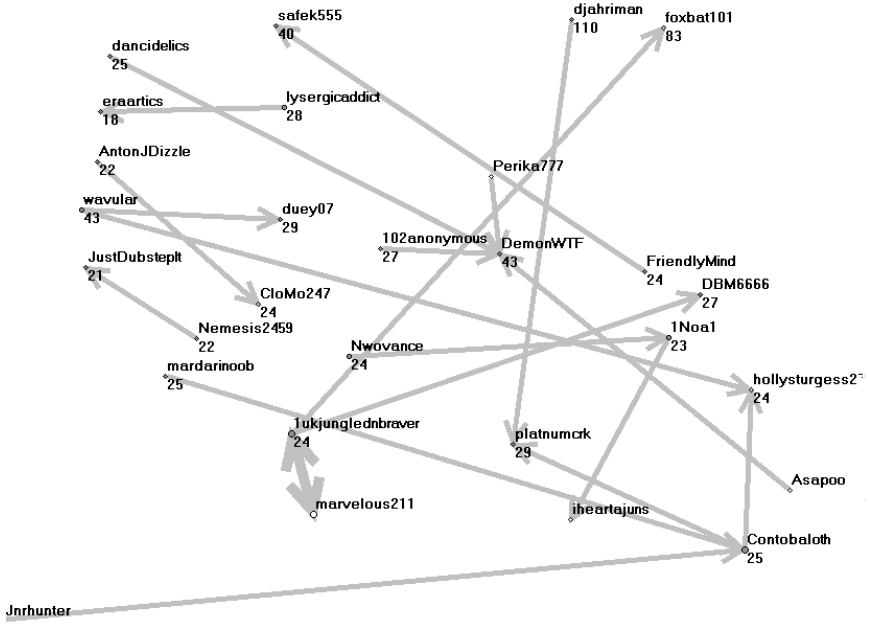

Diagram 7.4 The 'ketamine king' comment network.

> K does many things, using it in a controled environment can be beneficial to your mental health. done in an uncontroled environment. i.e. like this dude. . . . . it can lead to falling hard and getting hurt, and possibly getting arrested. . . . safe trippinpeace

But 102 anonymous is skeptical questioning whether ketamine is actually the drug responsible: 'doesnt look like it, when i had mine i couldnt even stand after like 4–5 hours after i took it fuck it was amazing,' while Asapoo thinks it is ketamine and Perika 777 agrees commenting, 'yep!lololl', which seems to indicate this commentator also finds humor in the public humiliation. Meanwhile UKjunglednbraver is a 'celebratory' advocate of ketamine, explaining to marvelous211 and DBM6666 that it does not necessarily act like a tranquilizer putting people to sleep but that care should be taken about doses: 'it must be worth taking as millions do. . . . i love the stuff. . the buzz is amazing in small doses large dose like the ones you give to the rams are anything but calm and relaxing'.

Clearly, the 'cautionary' framing of this ketamine video is not embraced by all those posting comments. Rather it stimulates quite distinct discourses, some comments fully endorsing a disciplinary 'cautionary' frame but some others offering explicitly 'celebratory' comments, despite or even because of the impairment of bodily control and motor functions, while

others offer 'vernacular drugs advice' about where to take ketamine safely and in what quantities.

Responding to Drugs Education Videos

We have seen that previous research has suggested that both in the US and the United Kingdom official mediated drugs education has been received with considerable skepticism by target audiences. Do the YouTube comment posters in these case studies reveal the same robust resistance as that found by, for example, Hess (2009), Moore et al. (2011), or Shiner and Newburn (1996)? 'The Effects of GHB/GBL'[7] video loaded by Know Drugs, an independent drugs agency that seeks to promote 'informed choices', was viewed 191,906 times, and generated 196 comments at the time the research was conducted. The video lasts less than a minute, but suggests that 'you should think twice before you say yes to GHB or GBL' and lists a number of physiological effects, including 'lowered pulse, reduced respiration, non-existent choke reflex', showing a young man marooned on his bed to emphasize the point. A majority of comments did embrace the 'cautionary' frame: 15.6 percent of comments were simply 'cautionary' and a further 15.6 percent combine 'cautionary' with 'empirical' discourses (see Table 7.1), as in the comment based upon first-hand 'empirical evidence' posted by mariansobituary:

> DO NOT TRY THIS SHIT!! I was rushed to a&e yesterday unconcious, unresponsive and stopped breathing after downing what could not have been more than 4 or 5 ml of GBL. . last time i measure a dose by eyeing it alone.

There were relatively few 'celebratory' comments (6.7 percent) with a further 2.2 percent combining the celebratory with the 'empirical' as in, for example, tagmandan's view that:

> G is a quality d**g to have with much less negative side effects than the rest of the recreational d***s. . . . . i know this 1st hand!!! . . . although some ppl it doesn't agree with but thats the same with every d**g.

Some comments offer 'vernacular drugs education' (8.9 percent), mainly advice about how much to take, and there is a view that GHB belongs below other drugs in a drugs taste hierarchy: 'smoke weed instead. you can trust a plant over some stupid chemical' (WhiteKnightDubstep). As the comment network diagram reveals, Know Drugs is the agency responsible for the video but it does not contribute any comments to the subsequent discussion (though agency workers may have contributed using their own YouTube identities).

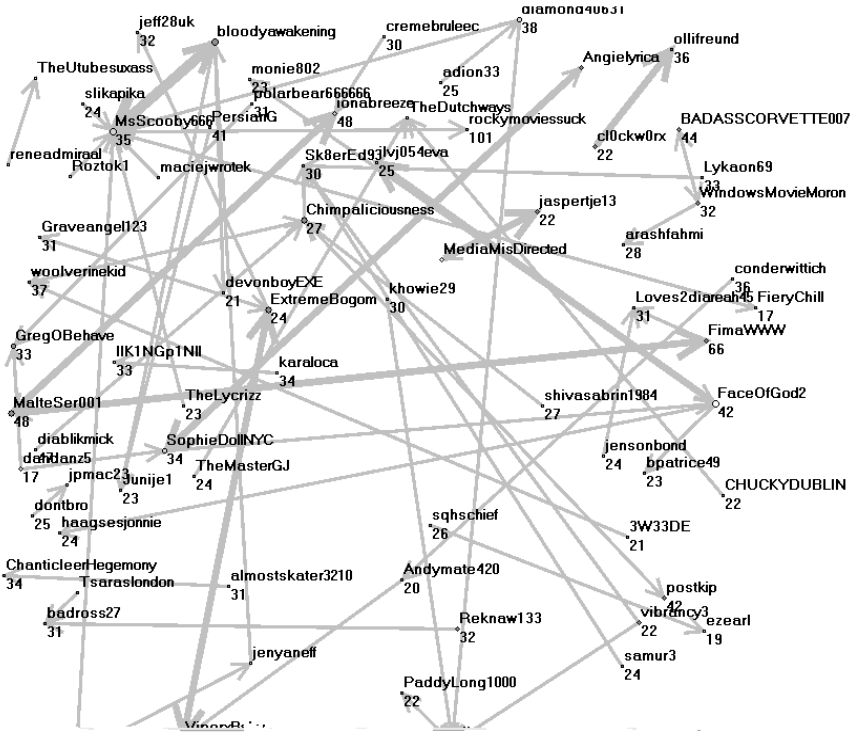

Diagram 7.5 The 'effects of GHB/GHL' comment network.

Once again much of the interaction involves simple linear exchanges (see Diagram 7.5) but there are five commentators engaged in multiple, radial discussions, including MsScooby who contributes an empirical, cautionary comment about the death of a personal friend using GHB, which is challenged by others; Chimpaliciousness, who prompts a discussion about preferable drug styles; Sk8erEd93 who provokes a 'libertarian' discourse locating the big pharmaceutical companies at the heart of a conspiracy to profit from prohibition; FaceofGod 2 who contests the relative risks of GHB versus other drugs; and diamond40631 who also gets embroiled in the argument first prompted by MsScooby. The 'cautionary' frame offered by 'The Effects of GHB/GHL' is shared by around a third of those commenting but the discourses at play are complicated and the complexity of the network, including multiple radial discussions and six intense exchanges (indicated by bold arrows), indicates that this video is not merely received or embraced, but rather serves as a resource or stimulus that provokes an energized and contested debate.

'Frank Brain Warehouse'[8] is an official drugs education video produced as part of the UK Government's 'Talk to Frank' campaign but the version

considered here has been uploaded by MrSmith356 and viewed a mere 13,573 at time of writing. 'Talk to Frank' campaign videos are regarded here as examples of a 'new' or 'revisionist' drugs education because they combine a slightly muted traditional 'fear arousal' approach with a more subtle strategy to engage young people through the use of a 'knowing' ironic humor (see Chapter 5 of this volume), in this case suggesting that regular cannabis users may need to trade in their brains for new ones at a brain warehouse. In contrast to 'The Effects of GHB/GBL', the highest proportion of the 107 comments posted here are 'skeptical' (28.9 percent, see Table 7.1), with a further 11.1 percent combining skeptical with empirical discourses, such as the following posted by norrisnuvo:

> I suggest you read the RSA Commission report, or the FCDA Europe findings on Cannabis and health, just google them! Here's a little bit from their pages.
>
> The state-funded Empirical Studies completely vindicate cannabis. Official Findings of Fact:

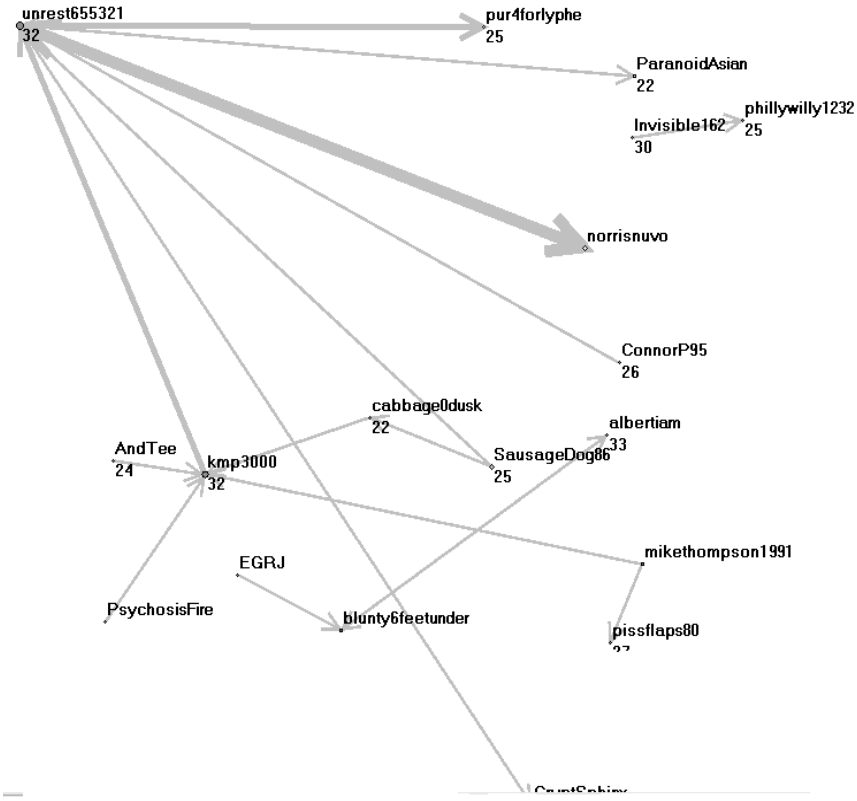

Diagram 7.6 The 'Frank brain warehouse' comment network.

2 conclude from replicable, mental/physical co-ordination, memory and ability skill-tests that use of cannabis herb produces categorically no 'impairments', and

3 confirm cannabis is profoundly benign to human Health.

They are the experts!

In addition, skeptical discourses also combined with drugs taste hierarchy and technical discourses (4.4 percent) and so, in total, 44.4 percent of posted comments involved skeptical discourse of some kind. In addition to the skeptical, there were a few comments 'celebrating' the effect of cannabis (8.8 percent) and only 6.7 percent of comments fully embraced the 'cautionary' frame of the video. Again, in contrast to the highly complicated comment network diagram generated by 'The Effects of GHB' (see Diagram 7.5), here there is a very simple structure with only two multiple dialogues suggesting less contestation, though there are two sustained exchanges involving Unrest655321, norrisnuvo, and pur4forlyphe regarding evidence of long-term physiological harm.

POPULAR DRUG CULTURE AND MEDIA IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CAPITALISM

In this final section of the book, first some conclusions are drawn in relation to the analysis of YouTube drug video comment strings. Then, these conclusions are related to the debates within social theory regarding the construction of risk and how these sit alongside the discussion of mediated, popular drug cultures that has taken up the earlier chapters. This section concludes the argument of the book by finally considering what is the relationship between those involved in popular drug cultures, the 'control regimes' associated with drugs, and the ubiquitous presence of new (and old) media, in the era of late modern twenty-first century capitalism.

We saw in Chapter 5 of this volume that a number of researchers, particularly those working in public health and criminal justice fields, were fearful about the proliferation of drug related websites and on-line drug information (Boyer et al., 2001; Wax, 2002; Wells et al., 2009). However, we also saw in Chapter 5 that the Internet had not displaced 'real' social relationships, family, friends and local peer groups as the primary source of information about drugs but instead supplemented these relationships. This is in accordance with one of the most important points to emerge from the analysis of on-line conversation discussed in this chapter. Most users of drug websites and those engaging with YouTube drug videos employ a range of critical skills to make sense of information and evaluate claims. They adopt a grounded empiricism that seeks out alternative sources of knowledge, particularly personal experience but sometimes alternative

sources of information, to employ as a benchmark against which to assess on-line drug information and the symbolic frames in which intoxicative practices may be represented. There is a self-reflexivity and active criticality that belies the fears of those who believe that Internet users may be manipulated or naively beguiled by 'pro-drug' on-line drug discourse. Much of this discourse is not 'pro-drug' in an unqualified sense though much of it is 'pro–harm reduction' and even here the discussions and comment strings suggest something very far from uncritical acceptance of the propositions that are circulated.

Whether or not either the 'celebratory' or 'cautionary' videos uploaded to YouTube were embraced by those posting comments to them often depended upon how the videos related to exogenous factors, particularly personal experience and pre-existing involvement in the social practices of intoxication. In the case of 'Hi, I'm High With a Geraffe' the large proportion of comments embracing the 'celebratory' discourse offered by the video reflected in part the popular view of cannabis as a 'recreational' and relatively harmless 'soft' drug. Similarly, the smaller but significant proportion of those posting to the 'Crystal meth' video who embraced its strongly 'cautionary' discourse, usually did this through reference to the pre-existing discourses that constructed this substance as significantly more harmful than other 'recreational' drugs. As we have seen a 'crystal meth genre' can be found on YouTube, which in turn chimes with wider mediated representations of this drug circulated by 'old' (see Chapter 2 of this volume) and 'new media' in tandem. Thus the 'moment of reception' or the way in which Internet users first engage with new drug related content occurs in the context of their pre-existing knowledge and critical skills which, in turn, accumulates through engagement with localized but also mediated knowledge. They watch these videos through a lens composed of localized knowledge and previously mediated frames but this is not to suggest that YouTube videos do not exert 'influence'. They can, as underlined by the proportion of YouTube viewers embracing the intended message in particular examples, such as 'Hi, I'm High with a Giraffe', but rarely in an uncomplicated way, removed from the play of other local and mediated drug discourses.

However, the significant proportion of 'skeptical' comments to be found in all six comment strings points to strong evidence that YouTube posters were not the vulnerable media dopes that some cruder variants of the 'effects' argument sometimes assume. The introduction to this book (Chapter 1) spent some considerable time reviewing the evidence relating to the 'normalisation debate' and tried to offer an assessment of drug consumption trends in the United Kingdom, Europe, the US and Australia. While the various sources of data all have their flaws it seems fairly clear that in the United Kingdom and most parts of Europe the very significant acceleration in the use of certain recreational drugs during the 1990s, leveled off during the 2000s. In the US and Australia there is no evidence of significant continuing increases in illicit drug use, with the exception of cannabis

in the US. These patterns have occurred in the period in which access to 'new media' has progressively advanced in all these parts of the world. At the very least we can say that the worst fears of those alarmed by the huge increase in on-line drugs information have not been realized.

So rather than trying to identify what dangers may lurk for young people and Internet users in the ever increasing torrent of on-line drug information, it is more fruitful to ask questions about what Internet users do with this information. The first most important point is that the discourses circulated by new media, just like those circulated by old media, become part of the fabric of everyday life, and part of the grounded, local and contextual but mediated knowledge about drugs that the opening sections of this chapter discussed. Secondly, what is frequently done with this information is that it is evaluated in the context of producing and circulating non-official, vernacular ideas for 'harm reduction' and risk assessment.

The proliferation of alternative flows of information which bypass, circumnavigate, challenge and subvert official drugs agency messages are, of course, irreversible. We are never going to return to a time in which alternative lay or local drug knowledge is only circulated through friends, subcultures and the school playground. In turn, there occurs the subversion and erosion of the older hierarchies of expertise in the field of drugs work; the claims of governments, drugs agencies, and doctors, are now placed alongside the information presented by Erowid or debated in a YouTube comment string. This is one manifestation of Bauman's 'liquid modernity', his description of the contemporary world in which not only do expert meta-narratives dissolve and professionals lose their command of knowledge-power relations but the capacity of institutions and governments to directly *manage* populations also greatly diminishes (Bauman, 2002: 33–48). As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book, potential drug using populations could never really be 'managed' through the use of mass-mediated campaigns even during the 'high modern' era, but now few 'managers' would even imagine that this was possible.

Bauman stresses the potential isolation of individuals in an era of 'liquid modernity'; his vision of a postmodern landscape is a lonely place in which the experience of the erosion of control by experts and managers is not necessarily experienced as liberation by the individual social actor. For Bauman, all that remains to bind people together is the seductive power of consumption expressed through the market (2002: 34–35). This touches upon the real dilemmas that are now posed for those contemplating the intoxicative practices of late modern capitalist societies. The seductive attraction of the numerous licit and illicit substances as commodities now available to the late modern capitalist consumer is powerful. Facing the bewildering volume and accessibility of so much drugs information and so many representations of intoxicative practices on-line, some offered by officially accredited 'experts' and some by those 'amateurs' challenging traditional hierarchies, how can the individual social actor manage the business

of processing information and making choices about their own intoxicative practices and harm reduction strategies? Are they now in a late modern, 'liquid' society, adrift and 'on their own', divorced from the comforting guidance of 'experts', medical or moral? This is one manifestation of the 'dilemmas of the self' that form a central theme in Giddens's account of 'reflexive modernization', except that for Giddens, as traditional expertise dissolves, society places ever greater expectations on social actors to take responsibility for their lives by making choices from the proliferation of 'new' experts, psychoanalysts, life coaches, health and well-being counselors, etc., to steer them through (Giddens, 1991). For Giddens, and also Thompson (1995), the social actor of the late modern world has to operate without the supports that 'tradition' afforded in the past, but now draws upon whatever available resources come to hand from micro and macro levels of society, including those narratives and frameworks for understanding offered by the media to negotiate relationships and navigate through the business of life. The idea of 'risk society' (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1994a) explores the particular working out of this theme as it relates to the social actor's engagement with the social construction of risk and it is hardly surprising that a number of researchers have been attracted to the concept in order to interpret data on drug use and harm reduction practices. As Measham puts it, 'this is the rational cost-benefit analysis in recreational drug use' (2004: 319).

However, there are critics of this model. Giddens suggests that the experience of late modernity is intensified precisely because the individual social actor is thrust to the forefront without the armor of tradition, as implied by the concept of 'individuation' (Leaning, 2009: 145). And just as some social theorists suggest that Giddens's account of the late modern social actor over-emphasizes the cerebral and rational at the expense of the aesthetic and emotive in human conduct (Lash, 1994), so some drug researchers argue that the danger of the 'cost-benefit analysis' model assumes a rational and 'over-individuated' model of those participating in popular drug cultures. We should not be surprised by contradictions or inconsistencies in subjective accounts of drug use that rather undercut the 'over-rational' model of the social actor in Beck's and Giddens's accounts; nor should we underestimate the importance of the bodily, rather than cerebral desire for pleasure, or the social, communal (and, of course, mediated) context in which such behavior occurs (Lupton, 1999). The danger otherwise, as Pilkington puts it, is that the concept of the individualization as applied to drug research produces 'a theoretical tendency to view reflexivity as wholly individual and . . . a resultant empirical tendency to underestimate the role of inter-subjectivity in risk decisions' (2007: 379).

Undoubtedly, one of the central themes for any discussion of contemporary mediated drug culture in late modern capitalism has to concern the individual's engagement with discourses of risk but to focus only on processes of cost-benefit risk analysis is to miss the importance of the mediated

context and social location. The sections above in this chapter have emphasized the point that even individual decisions about drug risks are contingent upon the micro setting: spatial location, friendship dynamics, and the rhythm of the moment in the day or evening. Calculation in this context is not a purely rational process but one driven by desire and also social dynamics, as suggested by the various accounts of 'calculated hedonism' (Measham, 2004: 319), the 'controlled loss of control' (Hayward, 2002), or the choice to liberate the body from reason (Collinson, 1996: 435). Hedonism is something that is usually shared, as underlined by the 'celebratory' drug videos examined in Chapter 6 of this book. In an age of new media it is possible to not only share the experience of risk and bodily pleasure in a social group but to easily mediate this experience, and to share the mediated experiences of others, thereby creating a feedback loop of localized, lay mediated knowledge about what it means to be intoxicated with the use of particular drugs in particular settings, with particular friends.

These processes can all still be partly understood in terms of 'the project of the self'. Reflection on risk is part of the process through which self-narrative becomes biography. Young people reflect on the development of their drug styles in terms of their sense of identity and friendship. This becomes part of their sense of personal biography (Collinson, 1996; Pilkington, 2007). For some young people the kinds of drugs they take serve in much the same way as labels; they are announcements of self (Collinson, 1996; MacLean, 2005; Measham and Moore, 2009). But they are announcements of self to *others* in social and mediated relationships. As Pilkington comments:

> That young people narrate their drug decisions as individual choices is not disputed; the imperative to narrate one's life as a project of the self—in video diaries, via mobile phone snapshots, and blog writing—is, after all, central to late modern societies. Rather it is argued that this narration should not be interpreted as reflecting the empirical reality of the individualization of risk but . . . should be viewed as a constituent part of complex inter-subjective relations that frame and support responses to risk. (2007: 385)

Individuals develop strategies for managing the risks associated with particular substances in the context of their social and mediated relationships, and as part of this broader 'project of the self', which also engages the social, cultural and mediated through engagement with drug styles or repertoires and 'drug taste hierarchies'. These in turn are partly constructed and reproduced through new media, such as YouTube, popular blogs, social media, and, of course, 'old' media, too.

However, at this point we need to return to the idea of popular drug culture. In earlier chapters, it was argued that popular drug cultures have always contained both 'celebratory' and 'disciplinary' discourses. While

excess and pleasure might be celebrated in the late 1980s rave event or the mid-nineteenth century working class pub, there were also important shared and social normative mechanisms that might operate to regulate intoxication. As Chapters 6 and 7 have explored, these discourses are now also at play through new media, too, in the 'cautionary' videos uploaded to YouTube, the 'cautionary' comments posted to YouTube videos and across the multiplicity of networked information flows that the Internet supports. Thus, the patterns of regulation, or 'control regimes' (Bancroft, 2009), that are associated with every intoxicative substance are multiplied and accelerated across the Internet and new media. These include remediated versions of the symbolic frameworks that 'old' media have traditionally reproduced in earlier decades, as described in Chapter 2 of this book. These disciplinary currents offer themselves to those involved in popular drug cultures as 'technologies of self' (Foucault et al.,1988), to be drawn upon as such social actors contemplate their own self-identities.

Finally, then, what picture are we left with of those social actors involved in popular drug cultures and the practices of intoxication during the early years of the twenty-first century and in an era in which the insecurities and antagonisms of late modern capitalism are more acute than ever? Some things endure from earlier decades. The distribution of social and economic resources still makes a difference.WhileCollinson (1996) found that gang membership and styles of masculinity, rather than social class, patterned the lives of the young men in his research, there is plenty of evidence to show that structured inequalities and patterns of economic marginalization still make a powerful difference to the choices and decisions that those involved in popular drug cultures make (Foster, 2000; MacLean, 2005). But drug styles, the construction of drug repertoires, taste hierarchies and risk management strategies cannot be reduced to these dimensions. Life in late modern capitalism is routinely insecure in diverse ways for most people. Some social actors from distinct social positions may employ particular substances as 'coping strategies' that help them to deal with 'ontological insecurity' but plenty will simply want to have 'fun'. These choices are not made by individuals in isolation, rather by social actors embedded in particular local and mediated relationships, drawing upon local, mediated knowledge, but also with an awareness of the more generic symbolic frameworks organizing the representation of substances, reproduced by mainstream media, and of the multiplicity of drug discourses in circulation through 'old' and 'new' media.

The techno-determinist interpretations of new media discussed in Chapter 5 of this book fail to fully grasp the dynamic social and cultural context into which 'new' media began to emerge in the 1980s and 1990s. This book may explore only a very particular and narrowly defined dimension of the arrival of new media during the last three decades but it is enough to underline the point that there is nothing 'pre-scripted' within new media technologies. How they get used is certainly to do with the technical possibilities

they offer, but technical use is determined by the perceived needs and practices of social groups and communities who are participating in mediated cultures, including popular drug cultures. Thus, the arrival of new media has not 'determined' the emergence of a set of new threats, any more than the arrival of a techno-utopian golden age (Chapter 5, this volume). Rather, those using the Internet usually try to employ a range of critical and evaluative skills to make sense of both on-line information about drugs and on-line symbolic constructions of substances and intoxicative practices. They are not alone when they engage in these critical and evaluative processes because they usually talk to friends and peers in 'real time.' But even without this localized 'real' social context, the Internet provides a mediated and social dimension. Perhaps, not always the harmonious and deliberative democratic forums imagined by techno-utopians but nonetheless spaces where drug information and drug discourses are discussed and evaluated by others.

This however is not a Panglossian argument. As Bauman sees liquid modernity as a lonely place in which experts no longer command authority, so there are numerous commentators who express concerns about the implications of the capacity of the Internet to further erode and dissolve bodies of expertise. Do we really wish to rely upon the enthusiasm of citizen journalists rather than those who are professionally trained? The darker 'flip side' to the age of the 'amateur expert' is that traditional benchmarks for certainty in life disappear (Charles, 2012; Curran, 2012; Zittrain, 2008). The strategies for mass-mediated drugs education developed during the high modern age in the twentieth century (Chapters 2 and 3, this volume) were inspired by a modernist confidence in the ability of the technical and political apparatuses in the center to manage populations; they did not work at the time and offer little hope of working effectively now. We know that contemporary mediated campaigns, particularly those harnessed to the War on Drugs, are often prompted as much or perhaps exclusively by political objectives rather than the hope that mediated drugs education would 'work'. Mass mediated drugs campaigns offered the political advantage to governments and administrators who wanted to be seen to be 'doing something' about the problem of drugs.

There is a role for mediated drugs education but a successful strategy has to acknowledge the dynamic way in which those involved in popular drug cultures engage with media and the ways in which drug discourses are circulated through media. Such a strategy would firstly acknowledge the point that drug cultures are mediated; knowledge and ideas about drugs at the local level cannot be untangled from the circulation of ideas and representations of drugs driven by both 'old' and 'new' media as they interact and converge. Secondly, it has to start with the recognition that the arrival of new media has produced an infinitely more complex network of horizontal and vertical information flows. Thoughts of 'controlling' drugs information, 'targeting' drugs information, or preserving one intended,

'preferred' message within mediated drug resources, were always problematic and now warrant the deepest skepticism. Instead, it is necessary to acknowledge the point that the materials produced by an official mediated drugs education strategy will arrive as just one more stream flowing to a much bigger ocean. The key is to understand that particular messages will be remediated through the complex networks of vertical and horizontal information flows; they need to be prepared with this point in mind. In other words, the 'virality' of new media has to be acknowledged. Thirdly, such a strategy has to abandon 'deficit' models of drugs education, which start from the assumption that those involved in popular drug cultures are necessarily lacking in knowledge, critical skills or awareness. As we have seen, rather what should be assumed is an uneven distribution of critical skills, knowledge, digital competence, and resources. In late modern contemporary capitalism old certainties and traditional knowledge hierarchies have eroded. Social actors must rely more upon themselves and their peers to navigate their way through competing claims about substances and experiences of intoxication. While many of those accessing on-line information, discussions and representations will have the critical skills and knowledge to exercise a critical discernment, a mediated drugs education strategy appropriate to the contemporary world should place as much emphasis upon equipping young people, and perhaps older people too, with critical skills, as upon the dissemination of drugs information. Some of these critical skills need to foster a critical understanding of the processes through which drug discourses and popular drug cultures are mediated through both 'new' and 'old' media.

Notes

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. This was the conclusion drawn by the criminologist E. M. Schur in his comparative doctoral thesis, 'Drug Addiction in Britain and America', London School of Economics, 1959, cited in Downes (1966: 135). Downes comments that ideas and language circulated through jazz subcultures had probably already begun to introduce working class adolescents living in the bigger cities, particularly London, to the symbolism and probably the availability of drugs.
2. See, Joint honours: US cannabis college teaches the best ways of cultivating marijuana, *The Guardian*, November 21, 2009, p. 29.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. See the Liam O'Brian Trust, the Chantelle Bleau Memorial Trust, and Solve It, which was established by Barbara Skinner who lost her own child through VSA-related death. Maryon Stewart established the Angelus Foundation to campaign for more effective drugs education following the death of her daughter after using a 'legal high' GBL.
2. See, 'Cannabis row drugs advisor sacked', *BBC News*, October 30, 2009. Accessed October 9, 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8334774.stm.
3. See, 'Policeman Arrested over Murders of Rio Street Children are Freed', *The Times*, overseas news, July 26, 1993; and 'Fergie and the Glue Sniffers—Duchess Meets Russia's Sad Street Kids', *Daily Mirror*, July 12, 2002, p. 25.
4. See 'Hell of Mother at her Wits End', *The Mail on Sunday*, May 2, 1993, p. 28.
5. See, 'Don't Take Crystal Meth—This Woman Does and She's Only 23', *The Sunday Sport*, June 1, 2008, p. 9.
6. See, 'The Rise and Danger of "Party Drug" Ketamine', *The Daily Telegraph*, May 29, 2011. Accessed October 16, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/8544166/The-rise-and-dangers-of-party-drug-ketamine.html.
7. See, 'Medical Student dies After Taking Party Drug GBL that Home Office Failed to Ban', *The Daily Telegraph*, April 28, 2009. Accessed October 16, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/5238846/Medical-student-dies-after-taking-party-drug-GBL-that-Home-Office-failed-to-ban.html. and also 'Brighton Cheerleaders's Death Linked to Party Drug', *The Brighton Argus*, April 28, 2009. Accessed October 16, 2012, http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/4327414.Brighton_cheerleader_s_death_linked_to_party_drug/.

8. See, 'Dead After Taking Just One Tablet of Ecstasy', *The Sun*, May 19, 1999, p. 15.
9. See, 'Jade 10, Youngest Victim of Ecstasy', *The Daily Mirror*, July 16, 2002, p. 5 and 'Girl 10, Believed to be the Youngest Victim of Ecstasy', *The Guardian*, July 6, 2002, p. 2.
10. See, 'Weep for Her Weep for Our Country', *The Sun*, July 16, 2002, front page; and 'Pal's note to Ecstasy Girl', *The Sun*, last updated July 31, 2007. Accessed October 16, 2012, http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/151878/Pals-note-to-ecstasy-girl.html.
11. Jane Moore, 'Drug Takers Today Feel No shame and No Fear. That's Why Jade Died', *The Sun*, July 17, 2002, p. 11.
12. See, 'Real Life: The Chemical Generation', *The Observer*, January 24, 1999, p. 26.
13. See, Max Pemberton, 'I Took Mephedrone and I Liked It', *The Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 2010. Accessed October 17, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/7481469/I-took-mephedrone-and-I-liked-it.html.
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34. 'Sweets to the Sweet', *The Hidden Truth*, Redifusion, August 27, 1964.
35. *Crossroads*, Central Television, February 18, 1985.
36. 'Screen Two', *Death of a Son*, BBC, 1989.
37. *Nurse Jackie* was produced for the US channel Showtime. Season one started in June 2009 with the show now in season five.
38. *Breaking Bad* (Sony Pictures Television) was first shown on the American cable channel AMC in January 2008. Despite relatively low audiences and only one season being broadcast on UK mainstream television, it has won a string of industry awards with a fifth and final season being commissioned.
39. *Breaking Bad*, episode one, 'Breaking Bad', season one.
40. *Breaking Bad*, episode seven, 'A No Rough Stuff Type Deal', season one.
41. *Breaking Bad*, The Complete First Season, 'Inside Breaking Bad', special features, DVD.
42. *Breaking Bad*, The Complete First Season, 'Inside Breaking Bad', special features, DVD.
43. *Ideal* (Baby Cow Productions) was first shown on BBC Three in 2005.
44. *Ideal*, episode one, season one.
45. *Ideal*, episode two, season one.
46. *Ideal*, episode seven, season one.
47. *Ideal*, episode one, season one.
48. *Ideal*, episode one, season one.

49. *Ideal*, episode eight, season one.
50. *Weeds* (produced by Tilted Productions and Lionsgate) was first broadcast on Showtime in the US in 2005.
51. *Weeds*, episode one, season one.
52. *Weeds*, episode six, season one.
53. *Weeds*, episode nine, season one.

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3. See, for example, *How They Work* (1935) for Boots Ltd., *Birth of a Drug* (1950) produced by the ICI Film Unit, *Glaxo in Britain* (1961) promoting Glaxo pharmaceuticals, and *The Endless War* (1968) produced by the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries. Source: British Film Institute Database.

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18. See, Ice Ice Jewy, ~typical 5-Me)-DMT experience, 14th March, 2011. Accessed 26th June, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnzEqUJwQLo&feature=related.
19. See, Christina Rochen, All About Savia Divinorum By BitchWABishi, 6th February, 2009. Accessed 26th June, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5fqUm2Q2To.
20. See, NeuroSoup, NeuroSoup YouTube channel. Accessed 26th June, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/user/NeuroSoup?ob=0&feature=results_main

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. See, The Victoria Climbie Enquiry, The National Archive, VC 2/2. Accessed April 7, 2013, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ero/browse.aspx?id=3121&level=5&entrypoint=VC/2/2/Evidence/p2subs/pdfs/sem5/invited/Bess Herbert 2.pdf.
2. D.A.R.E. is one of the leading, US government-approved drugs education campaigns in the US. It is based primarily around school and community-based peer education, and widely criticized by supporters of 'harm reduction' approaches. See, the D.A.R.E America website, http://www.dare.com/home/default.asp, accessed April 9, 2013.
3. 'Hi, I'm Hi with a Giraffe' has now been withdrawn. When it was last accessed on April 12, 2012,it had been viewed 11,367 times. It was available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nPuGBH-Gzw&feature=g-rec&context=G2e86af9RVAAAAAAAAA.
4. Also discussed in Chapter 6. Lubyy25, *Ecstasy.*, January 9, 2008. Accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6Qvp3sF4cM&feature=endscreen&NR=1.
5. Also discussed in Chapter 6. QuoteTheMadRaven, *Crystal Meth*, January 31, 2009. Accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRxVKSON9z0&feature=related.

6. Also discussed in Chapter 6. Contobaloth, *Ketamine King*, November 5, 2007. Accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daiw1J90hJA.
7. See, knowGBH, *The Effects of GHB/GBL*, June 7, 2008. Accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJyVzbbr8F8.
8. See, MrSmith356, *Frank-Brain Warehouse*, February 16, 2007. Accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Rwd0cIHYVc.

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