

The legacy of 'normalisation': The role of classical and contemporary criminological theory in understanding young people's drug use.

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Review

The legacy of 'normalisation': The role of classical and contemporary criminological theory in understanding young people's drug use

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Abstract

Since it began in the mid-1990s, the debate surrounding the normalisation of adolescent recreational drug use has attracted considerable attention and has tended to polarise opinion within the field. In this article two of the main protagonists in the debate come together to discuss its legacy. Focusing on the twin themes of continuity and change the authors begin by considering the relevance of early developments in the sociology of drug use, noting that this earlier work anticipated much that has recently been written on the subject, including the emphasis on hedonism and consumption in leisure lifestyles. From here they go on to critically reflect on the role that structure and agency

lifestyles. From here they go on to critically reflect on the role that structure and agency have played in the normalisation debate, suggesting that the original thesis underplayed the role of structural influences in favour of a rational action model of adolescent drug use. In their more recent work, both authors have come to emphasise how drug use is shaped by an interplay between social structure and human agency. While some areas of disagreement remain, they agree that normalisation is best understood as a contingent process negotiated by distinct social groups operating in bounded situations.



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Keywords

Normalisation; Situated choice; Structured action; Structure and agency

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