

THE PORTRAYAL OF MARIJUANA ON VICE.COM
DOCUMENTARIES

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to examine the representational attitude of vice.com (or VICE) documentaries covering marijuana, in the context of normalization. In this respect, this thesis mainly descriptively analyses three VICE documentaries covering marijuana in the setting of recreation, medicine and industry. VICE is a United States based media outlet which uses hybrid form of journalism combining conventional form of media operations and new media techniques. Normalization is a sociological concept for describing the the scale of social acceptance as a norm which was disseminated from the

margins of the society towards mainstream scale. To implement descriptive analysis on vice.com documentaries, normalization and drug representation in the United States media has been evaluated in the socio-historical setting, and examined. As a major finding, even though vice.com documentaries represent marijuana as normal, the normative references of normalization of marijuana is not clear. In this respect, in the conclusion, the determiners and normative background of normalization of marijuana are tried to be discussed.

Keywords: Documentary, Marijuana, Normalization, Stigmatization, VICE

ÖZET

VICE.COM BELGESELLERİNDE MARIJUANANIN TASVİRİ

Özsu, Gökçe

Yüksek Lisans, İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü

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Bu tez, marijuanayı konu edinen vice.com (veya VICE) belgesellerinin marijuanayı temsil etme şeklini normalleşme kavramı bağlamında incelemeyi amaçlar. Bu bakımdan, vice.com'da yayınlanan marijuananın eğlence, sağlık ve endüstriyel kullanımı konu edinen üç belgeselin betimsel analizi yapılmıştır. VICE, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri merkezli bir medya kuruluşudur ve gazeteciliğin hibrit formunu uygulayarak geleneksel tarz medya operasyonları ile yeni medyanın tekniklerini birleştirmektedir. Normalleşme ise sosyolojik bir kavram olarak uyuşturucunun sosyal kabulünün sınırlarını

ve bunun toplumun eperlerinden ana akıma doęru yayılmasının bir norm olarak belirtilmesini konu edinir. vice.com belgesellerine betimsel analiz uygulayabilmek iin Amerika Birleřik Devletleri'ndeki medyanın uyulřturucu temsilini sosyo-tarihsel olarak ele alır. Bu tezin en temel bulgularından biri olarak, her ne kadar vice.com belgeselleri marijuanayı normal bir řekilde temsil ederken, marijuanadaki normalleřmenin normatif referansı aık deęildir. Bu bakımdan sonu olarak normalleřmenin normatif arkaplanı ve normalin belirleyicilerini tartıřılmaya alıřılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Belgesel, Marijuana, Normalleřme, Stigmalařtırma, VICE

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INTRODUCTION

The media representation of drugs, more specifically marijuana has been changing in the United States. This might because of the expanding legalization campaigns, but this change has been occurring in terms of social values. Drugs was depicted as criminal activity, but today this attitude seems changing towards normalization.

By the beginning of criminalization of the plant in the late 1930s, the use of marijuana had represented as a criminal activity. The drug use sociology literature mostly refers to the Marijuana Tax Act in 1937. However, by the beginning of the 1960s, marijuana and other kind of illicit drugs have started to be represented as a pleasure seeking activity. In this sense, not only marijuana but also other kind of drugs such as LSD have started to appear on the screen. The films produced in that term such as *Easy Rider* represented these kind of drugs as a behavior through pleasure seeking and evaluated this behavior in subcultural settings. Emerging subcultures in the context of social transition can be evaluated as the very first attempts of

normalization, in terms of extracting drug use from stigmatization of criminality. This change has a sociological background derived from Howard Becker's criticism in the 1950s, on criminalization of drugs. Howard S. Becker, one of the major critiques from Chicago School of Sociology, was leading this new perspective which is also called 'labelling theory' that opened a discussion space for emerging subcultures in the 1960s. It can be argued that normalization, which is the main focus for this thesis, has theoretically initiated from this perspective by claiming that criminological approach labelled the drug use as a deviancy and this new perspective emphasized this behavior labelled deviancy as a social construct. The term of emerging subcultures in the 1960s and 1970s was also the term that the mass media had a great interest on drug users. This media attention had a prominent impact on public visibility of drug cultures, by not only news media but also numerous films that have been produced. In that term, one of the major social critiques from the United Kingdom, Jock Young, stressed the role of media as a 'deviant amplifier' as the media were "*propagating stereotypical images of deviance*" (Young, 2011: 249. revised from 1972). The 1980s was a dramatic turn of drugs policy in the United States and this caused a theoretical reinterpretation of criminology. In the retrospective manner, 'War on Drugs' concept in the 1980s is still controversial in terms of mass incarceration and segregation in the political scale. In theoretical context, these policies targeted black communities while media created "*criminal other*" (Davies, Francis & Greer, 2007: 36) by representing crack cocaine related crime and victim stories. The 1980s was also the term when

the media depicted the general drug use as a source of moral panic by the rising of 'epidemic' crack-cocaine. Various crime related television programs, such as COPS appeared on television. For this decade, Young's emphasis on the role of the mass media provides an important insight on the issue.

The social consequences of these policies, have been replaced with "*legitimation crisis*" (Blackman, 2010) in the normalization term starting with the 1990s. In the 1990s, as the surveys conducted by Howard Parker and his colleagues (1995. revised by Aldridge, Measham & Williams, 2011) showed that the number of cannabis, LSD, methamphetamine users and so on among young adolescents has been increasing in the semi-private settings, they predicted that non-drug triers will become a minority in the near future (Parker, Aldridge & Measham, 1995: 26). This opened a normalization debate on illicit drug use. Normalization is simply a concept that which describes disseminating the values that are located from the periphery of the society towards the margins. For the very first time it has been conceptualized in the early 1990s in Britain, by Howard Parker and his colleagues. In their conceptualizations cultural meaning of using drugs, mostly marijuana, has been evaluated in parallel with the youth culture in the semi-private settings by disregarding possibility of stigmatization which the users might face with. Increasing number of users', especially of young people, attribution of marijuana as normal, instead of a source of stigma, as opposed to the conventional social values. Even though this argument was originated in the United Kingdom, it has been an orthodoxy in drug use sociology, so that I

considered this debate applicable for examining the normalization into vice.com documentaries, in terms of norm settings and cultural accommodation and the criticism on them.

The 1990s was also the term that marijuana represented on one hand as pleasure seeking activity attributed for celebrities and on the other hand as a part of moral panic derived from past fears of the 1980s. This was due to the widely accepted consideration that which regarded marijuana as a highly addictive substance and a stepping stone towards heroin and crack cocaine which are described as 'hard drugs'. Using marijuana as a treatment for some forms of cancer such as leukemia has also started to be discussed in the same decade. From then on, legalization campaigns for recreational and medicinal marijuana have been started to be covered more and more by the media. However, in the 'green rush' term the new kind of media outlets such as VICE Media, or rather vice.com depicts marijuana in highly positive settings. Association with the positive representation of marijuana and expanding legalization in the United States might not be quite applicable, in terms of discussing the relationship between drug use and society.

The media attention on legalization of marijuana is neither positive nor negative since it has been depicted both with its so-called negative and positive traits. The general focus on these debates revolve around its medicinal traits or the economic benefits of the plant. Current economic estimations on marijuana industry are also on the attention of the news

media in the United States. Furthermore, recreational marijuana is one of the major topics of popular culture that which being represented by films, music and so forth. However, these representations have a long historical background in terms of the ways of which marijuana has been covered so far.

VICE Media is one of the leading media outlets among which covers the use of marijuana positively. VICE is covering marijuana mostly as a lifestyle, cultural product, highly beneficial for both medicinal and economical, and in a way, something that has become mainstream. It is possible to see this situation in the most news stories they published and also in a large number of documentaries they broadcasted on its YouTube channel, web site and cable channel named VICELAND. These documentaries have been viewed by millions of the Internet user. My personal view on this situation is that the VICE documentaries have adopted a normalizing role towards current situation of marijuana. In this respect, VICE's marijuana representation is worth analyzing in order to locate VICE in the context of normalization.

In this thesis, I tried to investigate these questions which are focusing on the location of VICE in terms of positive representation of marijuana; the scale and settings in which normalization is created, and the role of VICE in terms of producing normalization, the scale of normalization according to vice.com documentaries, the techniques that VICE used for producing normalization.

Normalization concept has been used as major base for examination of vice.com documentaries. Normalization debate has a strong criminological

root accompanying with sociology. In this thesis, normalization debate and its early historical roots have been used, in order to provide a socio-historical context. One of the another reason of this kind of usage is about dominance of normalization concept in this field. By doing so, I intend to follow a socio-historical approach in the context of normalization and the role of the media. In this respect, I compose this thesis consisting of two major parts. The first chapter evaluates changing perspectives on drug use; from its historical background of drug prevention towards normalization debate in order to provide a theoretical base for analyzing VICE documentaries. The second chapter consists of two main section, the first is a general overview of the media representation of drugs but mostly marijuana, in the United States, and, the second is descriptive analysis of VICE documentaries. By evaluating the general overview of the media representation of drugs, I used the academic sources rather than analyzing them. The reason that I used secondary sources is that analyzing each material could limit the conceptualization. Instead of analyzing, I intend to use the sources analyzing the key characteristics of the media depiction.

By doing so, I selected three documentaries made for VICELAND, which are under the main series named Weediquette, and made available on VICE's YouTube channel. Weediquette is one of the series which made for VICELAND's launch in 2016. The documentaries are selected from VICELAND, as their number of view, comments, likes and dislikes that they take. One of the another reason that the documentary selection for the

analysis are from VICELAND is about VICE's approach on journalism and media operations which are considered as hybrid form.

For this procedure, here my aim is to address visual and textual representation of marijuana on vice.com documentaries to describe their location in the context of normalization and to interpret the codes and messages of the documentary selection by discussing with normalization concept. Therefore, the research that I conduct is structured around the examination of the concept of 'normalization'. The application of textuality, visual elements and music have been evaluated, thus normalization concept and VICE's approach on marijuana has been examined by interpreting this analysis which covered in the second chapter.

All of the documentaries that I selected are available on vice.com's YouTube channel named VICE, except *Stoned Kids*. In this respect, I prepared the analysis regarding this documentary based on the notes that I took when it was available on YouTube. These documentaries are not only aired on YouTube, but also on several pages of the main web site of VICE, which is named vice.com and their cable network named VICELAND which is not available in Turkey. Even though the documentaries that I selected from VICE have not been questioned yet in terms of their quality of being documentary, but these videos can be described as documentary. This has several reasons to consider them documentary.

According to Bill Nichols (2001), one of the major scholar working on documentaries, describes documentaries as “*a representation of the world we already occupy*” (p. 20). Even though this definition is applicable for all of the documentary modes, all of them marks non-fictions. VICE documentaries are non-fiction in terms of their non-fictional representation of the facts and events, even though ethical criticism is remained in terms of immersive nature of VICE documentaries. It can be evaluated that VICE documentaries that I selected can be classified as documentaries that include both expository and performative modes. This is because of that expository mode of documentaries, as Nichols (2001) identifies, allow verbal commentary and argumentation, as we see in the television news (p. 33). On the other hand, performative mode of a documentary allow the filmmaker engaging the subject (p. 34). In my opinion, VICE documentaries contain these two types of documentary mode, because they have journalistic approach which aims news reporting, and also immersion style is used as a technique.

The main reason for my usage of descriptive analysis is interpreting the meaning of VICE representation of marijuana in the context of normalization. Implementing descriptive approach in media studies can be considered as qualitative research. According to Jensen (2002), one of key scholar in media methodologies, there are three feature in a qualitative research. The first is “*the concept of meaning [...] which serves as a common denominator for different schools of thought.*” (p. 236). The second is

that 'naturalistic context' which provides 'the native's perspective' for the researcher. The third one is that makes the researcher an 'interpretive subject'. From all these features, I aimed to implement concepts of meaning which provides a theoretical discussion space for this thesis.

CHAPTER 1

DRUGS: FROM CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE TO NORMALIZATION DEBATE

In this chapter, I review the changing approaches on drug use from sociological perspective, which are worth emphasizing the most prominent concepts for drug use, in the historical context. These concepts help us to implement them into the descriptive analysis on portrayal of normalization on vice.com documentaries, which will be covered in the next chapter.

Here in this chapter, I intend to follow a historical root of sociological perspective on drug use in the context of normalization. In the next chapter, normalization will be the most important theoretical framework while I investigate the documentaries on vice.com. However this concept has a remarkable sociological background. The sociological literature on drug use highly agree with the fact that by the beginning of 20th century, drug use is subjected to criminology. This was applied by not only the federal government of the United States, but also the western European countries as

well. The mass media, both the press media and the cinema industry in the United States have amplified this stigmatization. In this climate of thought, drug use has been labelled as individual pathology. This has derived from such major assumptions, one of which is that drugs have a withdrawal effect that is considered as a proof of addiction. This might be considered as a case of stigmatization of drugs and a matter of individual pathology in the 1930s.

1.1. Historical Roots of Drug Prevention in the United States

Even though I evaluated criminological perspective as a starting point for theoretical framework of this thesis, this perspective has a long historical and political background tracing back to the 1840s, which is worth mentioning as a supplementary brief.

Drugs, primarily opium, were being legally traded from Philippines and China to the United States and the Great Britain. Control on opium trade and distribution was assigned to the British East India Company. Britain and China got into a conflict, which was also called the Opium Wars, between the years 1840s and 1850s. (Jakubiec, Kilcer & Sager: 2009; Blackman: 2004; Brook and Wakabayashi (Eds.): 2000) The Spanish-American War had the same reason which the revolutionary First-Philippine government decided to regulate opium market and the American reaction on this decision was the implementation of a suppression policy which included an exception

regarding the medicinal needs (Jakubiec, Kilcer & Sager, 2009) of the Phillippinian people. After Hague International Opium Convention held in 1912, the Harrison Narcotic Act which predicted drug taxation would put into effect in 1914. This was the first prominent shift of drug policy of the United States, because using cocaine and heroin were banned by this Act except for medicinal purposes. Alcohol was added into the list in 1920, marijuana was included in 1937. (Duke (n.d.), 2009) Prohibition for alcohol in the United States was nation wide. It was totally and highly restricted but there were exceptions such as industrial, medicinal and religious purposes and in home use. (Phillips, 2014: 261)

Prohibition for alcohol has been removed by a constitutional amendment and also become one of the most referred case in the cultural and political history of the United States. This is why public discussion on prohibition for both drugs and even cigarettes is being held in the context of the consequences of prohibition such as high crime rates and corruption (Duke, 2009: 3) which will be mentioned under the subheading of 'war on drugs'.

Marijuana has been added to the 'list' in 1937 by 'The Marijuana Tax Act' which premised tacit form of the prohibition. This is because of the fact that the Act did not predict a total ban to use however, made it almost impossible to produce or distribute. Still, this Act is prominent by evaluating marijuana criminalization, even in retrospective approach because of being a milestone

of prohibition in terms of been one of the most cited Act in the United States policy, even though it was repealed in 1970.

The Act did not designate marijuana at the federal level as medically useless or unusable. Nevertheless, the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 did not make marijuana illegal, to buy or sell, but the Act did make it difficult to produce, market, and distribute cannabis through the imposition of a prohibitive tax. [...] Nevertheless, in 1937 things changed abruptly in American drug policy discourse. This period was a time of building tensions associated with public policy on medicinal and recreational marijuana. As a result, the way by which America's health and criminal justice systems viewed marijuana underwent transformation. (London: 2009. p. 61 - 63)

Federal government established an agency entitled Federal Bureau of Narcotics in 1930. One of the key political figure, Harry Anslinger who was the first chairperson of the agency, prepared series of policy among drug prohibition but especially marijuana. According to Jakubiec et al. (2009), by referring Isralowitz (2002: 133-134), Harry Anslinger did not aim to prohibit marijuana until the year which the Act went into effect. Anslinger's way of using propaganda techniques and stimulating the segregative fears among minorities caused a link between marijuana and crime:

Anslinger used a combination of speeding unfound claims against marijuana through propaganda, and playing on the public's fear of minorities, by associating marijuana use with "low-class Mexican Americans and African Americans who had initiated use of the drug and made the drug even more dangerous to the white middle-class. (Isralowitz: 2002. pp. 134 retrieved from Jakubiec et al, 2009: 3)

1.2. Criminological Perspective and the 1930s

One of the texts written by Anslinger has been cited in order to show the aspects of this perspective in the 1930s. This text entitled “Marihuana: The Assassin of Youth” (1937) claims that the users of marijuana were intended to commit crimes as Hassan-i Sabbah did. This allegation which assumes the marijuana users to have individual pathological traits was also appeared in the text entitled “Marihuana as a Developer of Criminal” (Stanley, 1931). Even though there were counter arguments stating that there were no direct correlation between crime and use of marijuana (Bromberg, 1939) in that climate of thought. This kind of arguments did not considered as applicable. One of the key argument on this allegation emphasizes this perspective in the context of racial segregation. In this argument, it is stated that marijuana was one of the most prominent product in the United States, when slavery was legal.

In sum, Anslinger’s way of policy making has always been associated with racism and xenophobia. (Blackman, 2004; Jakubiec et al, 2009; Shiner: 2009) In this respect, Anslinger’s approach on drugs but especially on marijuana is considered as a historical root of ‘War on Drugs’, in terms of criminalizing black and hispanic minorities. However, this perspective was going to be criticized in the 1950s, in the context of labelling.

1.3. 'New Deviancy' Approach and the 1950s

Criminological approach in the 1930s which considered drug use as a personal characteristic and individual pathology has been criticized by Howard Becker, who provided one of the most influential approach in drug use sociology. Becker simply emphasizes drug use as a "*result of a sequence of social experience*" (Becker, 1953: 235). This criticism has not become the only theoretical base criticism among subcultural debates in the 1960s and 1970s, but also one of the most adopted perspective in drug use studies today. One of the major theoretical manner which Becker challenged was that drug use was not a result of a psychological disorder or because of the peculiarity of the user him/herself. In this respect, Becker's influence on drug use sociology is highly remarkable. One of the prominent scholar, who reviewed Becker's works, stated that "*Becker's theoretical contributions [...] led to a considerable body of subsequent social-process*" (Hallstone, 2002: 822).

Becker's criticism is based on his sociological analysis on jazz clubs, dance musicians and marijuana users which were considered as deviants by conventional social values. However, he seeks the rules/values in the group settings, rather conventional moral values which considered deviance as inherent. (Becker, 1966: 5-6) Instead, his manner on the attitudes which individuals behave were as a result of "*the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender*". (Becker, 1966: 9) Therefore, his definition of

‘deviant’ is a kind of response from the other people who are the determiners of the common rules. This criticism became a challenge against the criminological perspective in the 1930s.

In a retrospective view, this criticism provided an initiation to discuss subcultures, which were the emerging topics in the beginning of the 1960s, because of his analysis on ‘marihuana’¹ users, jazz culture, and dance clubs, by constructing his theory (Hathaway, 1997).

Constructing the definition of ‘deviance’, Becker focuses on the social groups who make the rules, instead of social factors which assign the action. This suggestion paves the path of his ‘marihuana career’ theory which will provide subcultural analysis later. This is because, it also provides a subjective normalcy: “[T]he person who is labeled deviant, may be the person who make the rules he had been found guilty of breaking” (Becker: 1966. p.15)

It is also worth noting that Becker criticizes the positivist approach which was remarkably dominant on the field at that time by claiming statistical oriented approach “simplifies the problem by doing away with many questions of value that ordinarily arise in discussion of the nature of deviance”. (Becker: 1966. p. 5) The reason is that he locates deviancy in the context of rule-breaking and committing a behavior which is identified as deviancy. However, definitions are relativistic and also the way that we associate with those ‘deviants’ can involve the behaviors of those people who did not commit. Becker treats to it

¹ In the original text, Becker calls ‘marihuana’. Both ‘marijuana’ and ‘marihuana’ are applicable for this case, however, it is claimed that this pronunciation has been altered to show the Hispanic origins and traits of the plant. (London: 2009. p. 57)

as a mixture and argues that “the mixture contains some ordinarily though of as deviants and others who have broken no rule at all. The statistical definition of deviance, [...] is too far removed from the *concern with rule-breaking*” (p. 5). The ones that have been evaluated with their number of members determine which is the deviant and also normal, which is equal to say that majority means everything. This argument is still discussing the context of normalization debate in 1990s, because the leading theoreticians in this debate, Howard Parker and his colleagues widely use statistical methods, which was going to be criticized for exaggeration, by Shiner and Newburn (1997).

What Becker criticizes as the sociological conventions at that time has actually two methodological branches: Medical approach and group member. These approaches both have a strong connection with drug use analysis methodologically, especially they provided post-structural approaches on subcultures in the 1960s. Medical approach, which is mentioned under the name of ‘medical analogy’ in the original text, simply derives from physiological disorders that occur in the human body. Mental disease basically relies on disorganization of functions on the human physiology. Actually, the disease has been defined as a ‘disorganization’ which causes disfunction of the human body. According to Becker, this is too simple to define since it is unknown if the physical and mental disorganizations are diseases or not, additionally, using this method on behaviors is not applicable because there is no agreement on which behavior is a sign of a disorder. Becker does not discredit ‘mental analogy’ but instead offers a new context.

Therefore, Becker's manner on 'medical analogy' has been replaced on political structure, instead of a symptom of a disease. "*The behavior of a homosexual or drug addict is regarded as the symptom of a mental disease just as the diabetic's difficulty in getting bruises to heal is regarded as a symptom of his disease.*" (Becker, 1966: 5-6).

Becker's approach towards the marijuana usage is mostly based on the social learning process that in which an individual becomes "*the proper user*" by learning how to enjoy, i.e get high, smoking marijuana. So, the user "*must pass in order to be left 'willing and able to use the drug for pleasure when the opportunity present itself*" (Becker, 1963: 236; Hallstone, 2002: 822) Becker's proposal consists of three stages. All users have to learn these stages, otherwise they will not be able to become a proper user, because the people will not be motivated to continue to smoke, unless they are able to learn to do so pleasurable.

1.3.1. Becoming an User: Marihuana Career

As I mentioned before, Becker analyzes deviancy by his sociological observations from marijuana users, jazz clubs and dance musicians. For theoretical framework of this thesis, I considered "marihuana career" as one of the major concepts of Becker's and it is still considered as prominent in normalization debate. The reason is that the 'career' can be useful when

analyzing our media case in the context of portrayal of normalization of marijuana.

Becker finds marijuana an interesting thing to analyze, because he emphasizes marijuana use as an individual experience oriented activity which has a purpose of reaching pleasure, *“instead of deviant motives leading to deviant behavior, it is the other way around; the deviant behavior in time produces the deviant motivation.”* (Becker, 1963: 42). Because of this reason, he denies the substance’s addiction effect because marijuana is not as addictive as alcohol and opiates are. He also denies the drug prohibition in the same manner. Becker asserts in an interview that “I knew the method would have to be altered because marihuana is not addictive” (Galliher, 1995: 170; Müller, 2014) and it has got no withdrawal effect as well. This may also a prominent point that marks the differentiated manner of marijuana in the normalization literature. Becker argues:

The marihuana thing didn’t arise as a research problem or a researchable problem in the context of the literature on drugs. [...] But after, I did the research, then of course I had to go with the literature. The literature on marihuana was almost nonexistent, so that was good since I was not a great scholar I read the La Guardia Commission Report and I read whatever there was on the literature, which wasn’t much. [...] I was a looking for a book to hang this on and it seemed obvious these all these theories were theories about personality, that there was a kind of personality that was addiction-prone. (Müller, 2014: x)

The scale and definition of addiction is hard to define psychologically, but Becker’s approach on it is very comparatively similar with his quantitative

analysis on drug research and deviance theories. This is simply arguing that it is not so possible to assert what is the determinant of being an addict. This also stresses the different value and meaning of marijuana, by comparing with other substances such as opiates, cocaine, methamphetamine. This is why Becker analyzes marijuana in the context of social learning process by disregarding addiction narrative.

Becker proposes three stages of social process to make the individual a proper user. If all stages will be done, the 'marihuana career' will also be completed.

a- Smoking the drug properly.

b- Detecting that they are intoxicated from the drug.

c- Defining this stage of intoxication as a pleasurable event. (Becker, 1963: 58)

It is better not to think of these stages as a pathway to move straightforward but rather an experience process in which the user involves.

This has also another meaning through social learning process that creates a proper user of marijuana. In this respect, it is better to evaluate this process "where the individual is socialised into certain behaviors and stages of mind" (Becker, 1953: 242; Jarvinen & Ravn, 2014: 134). This makes marijuana use as an acceptable behavior. However, in order to make a

distinction among the stages through this career, social control is highly prominent in terms of preventing them from being user.

1.3.2. Social Control Against Deviancy

Becker drives with the basic questions: He simply asks which experiences motivate the individual in order to break the social conventions that restrain from being a marijuana user. Becker asserts three kinds of social controls that inhibit an individual to become a user. If an individual achieves to become a user by passing these these stages of social control, the social settings, which work to prevent these activities, will be replaced by the norms and social settings of the subculture.

The first stage is derived from drug supply. This is because of the fact that drug supply is illegal just like drug use and also growing. So, for a beginner user, purchasing the drug is highly difficult. She/he needs to find a stable way to obtain, in order to pass to the next stage. In the second stage, the user is not on the beginner level but now, is an occasional user. So the user needs to keep his/her usage secret. This is because of his/her motives to avoid possible moral reactions from non-users. This stage also provides users to have more contact with another users as well. The third one is named as "*more emancipated view*" on drugs and also creates a point that makes the user to regard marijuana as a safer substance than alcohol and tobacco.

(Becker, 1955-1956: 41-41; retrieved from Jarvinen & Ravn, 2014: 134)

Deviancy is being morally compared with the social factors. It is released from the “*processes by which people are emancipated from the larger set of controls and become responsive to those of the subculture.*” (Becker, 1966: 35). Being emancipated from the moral social values is the basic element of using marijuana. So, the user’s purpose is to be emancipated from social construction, even though he/she knows very well that he/she may face enforcements not only legally but also morally. This can also creates a ‘counter’ set of rules which help to rescue him/her from the social setting that labels him/her.

Therefore, it is also worth noting that Becker’s theory on deviancy is highly related with the use of marijuana and has been a starting point that provides a discussion on it, in the normalization context. This is not only because of the fact that the increasing number of use as Parker, Aldridge and Measham (1995) asserts in the normalization thesis/debate in the 1990s but can also be considered as a sign of normalization through moving from the periphery of the society to the centre, in terms of not only providing a new horizon to mainstream criminology field, but also to bring a subcultural perspective into conventional sociology.

1.4. Emerging Subcultures and the Role of the Mass Media as Moral Panic

By emerging subcultures in the 1960s and 1970s, conventional social values opened to criticism in the context of subcultures. In that term, media attention on subcultures has been remarkably high. In that climate, Jock Young, British sociologist, provided a criticism on conventional perspective on crime.

Young's key concepts from his theory such as "moral crusaders" and "deviant amplifiers" are both directly about media representation on subcultures which have been considered as a stereotype. However, what is distinctive for this thesis is that his critical approach on the role of the media as a deviant amplifier or producing moral panic aside from his invention on critical criminology. This is not only because of his emphasize on critical criminology is originated in British, but also that I will evaluate his approach on the role of the media as a supplementary framework with Becker's approach that I reviewed in the previous section. But before moving on to review the role of the media, it is worth mentioning his manner of relativity of addiction.

1.4.1. Relative Social Meaning of Addiction

Young emphasizes addiction as a deviance in the context of social meaning. Thus, drugs create the same solution with tobacco and alcohol by seeking a social meaning in the act of their usage, instead of focusing on their effects on body, which is seen as a determiner of subterranean behaviors so far, in the conventional behavior and social researching. This is because of the fact that being abnormal can be differentiated with the norms that we implement. So, he basically argues that using psychotropic drugs, which include tobacco

and alcohol, is limited, for both 'respectful citizens' and 'hippies', but they are at the inner of everyday life instead. (Young, 1971: 10; retrieved from Shiner: 2009. pp.24) Therefore, inherent deviance has not been accepted at all.

To act in a certain way then can be simultaneously deviant and normal depending on whose standards you are applying. In this perspective, the smoking marijuana may be normal behavior amongst young people in Notting Hill [the place in which Young conducted his ethnographic survey with heroin users in London] and deviant to, say, the community of army officers who live in and around Camberley. (Young: 1971. pp. 50; retrieved from Shiner: 2009. pp.24)

This perspective on criminology was highly inventive where the extensive social transitions occurred in the 1960's Europe. This is not only because of his denial of academic misrepresentation, which objects the users for being pathologic, but also his approach on binary relationship between the conventional wisdom and subterranean values. This is not only a cultural juxtaposition that provides an explanation among societal relationships, but also a theoretical background which is a highly political-economy oriented approach that provides a space to discuss the term of late modernity.

Political economic circumstances of a given society highly determine the conventional wisdoms. However, Young stresses the association between conventional wisdoms and subterranean values, in terms of their meaning which derives from productivity. This Neo-Marxist orientation of the approach is highly applicable to give prominence to hedonism. Hedonism may be evaluated as pleasure seeking, as a need for being rewarded in consumption

based economic model and obtains its meaning in the leisure time. (Marcuse: 2009) Young paves the way to define both the conventional moral settings and the subterranean values in the consumption base. It is very similar with the narrative that “[...] it must constantly consume in order to keep pace with the productive capacity of the economy. They must produce in order to consume, and consume in order to produce. [...] [H]edonism, [...] is closely tied to productivity.” (Young, 1971: 128) This means that the conventional moral values and subterranean values are highly and mutually depended on the production processes of the post-industrial society.

1.4.2. Moral Panics, Deviant Amplifiers in the Late Modernity

Young’s emphasis on deviancy depends on late-modernity, even though he created this context as a revision in 2011. Late-modern societies create experts and specialized agencies which later become the determiners of the societal conventions. Because of the fact that these kinds of experts decide which behavior is normal or vice versa, therefore the knowledge among society will be produced by these experts as well. According to this approach, these experts have mediative roles between those who were labelled and the conventions which the community highly agrees.

Moral crusaders and deviant amplifiers are defined as some sort of guardians of social construction. They both have a vital aspect among drug users.

Moral crusaders are experts and law enforcements, while mass media plays the role of deviant amplifier. Young argues:

The police, psychiatrists and other 'experts' mediate contact between the community and deviant groups, leaving 'normal' citizens with little direct contact with such groups and dependent on the mass media for information about them. This introduces an important source of misperception because the mass media is shaped by an institutionalised need to create moral panics. The media, along with 'moral crusaders', experts and law enforcement agencies play a leading role in initiating social reactions against drugtakers. [...] Consequently social reaction is 'phrased in terms of stereotyped fantasy rather than accurate empirical knowledge of the behavioural and attitudinal reality of their [deviant] lifestyles. (Young: 1971. pp. 182. retrieved from Shiner: 2009. pp. 25)

On the other hand, Young stresses social transition in terms of continuity of the Vietnam War (1955 - 1975) as "the collusion between the generations in the university and in the street, gave way to a profound skepticism on mass media. [...] For crime and deviance are a major focus of the media yet time and time again the journalists persist in getting the wrong end of the stick." (Young, 2011: 249) In this respect, Young asserts that the media has a prominent role in producing moral panic. According to this argument this involves three ways:

- a. Propagating stereotypical images of deviance
- b. Creating rising spiral alarm
- c. Propelling the process of deviancy amplification. (Young, 2011: 249)

These three methods used by the mass media cause a fabrication of huge moral panics by distorted knowledge. Young continues his argument: “*the media carry a great deal of distorted knowledge - feral youth, crack mothers, binge drinkers, gang wars; direct knowledge would inevitable take the steam out of them.*” (Young, 2011: 249)

As a consequence, one of the most fundamental points that distinguish Young from Becker is, Young’s understanding of social mediators such as experts, police, media, and so on. While Becker’s approach puts social learning in the center as users create their career to use marihuana, Young finds this in the centre of stereotypical portrayal of the mass media which produces moral panic by the moral crusaders and deviant amplifiers. This approach is highly remarkable in terms of discussing the war on drugs in the 1980s in United States, because of its crucial social consequences.

1.5. War on Drug Policies in the 1980s as Moving Back to the 1930s

As mentioned earlier, in the climate of 1930s, drug use was criminalized legally and normatively and crime got associated with personal traits.

Afterwards, both Becker and Young have invented criticisms among the approach that drug use inherently deviant. Even though they both did not provide a specific insight on marijuana, this might be reason of that climate of thought as a monolithic manner on drugs as being illicitness. By the

beginning of 1950s and emerging subcultures in the 1960s, illicit drugs appeared widely in public and on the mass media (Manning, 2013: 94), though the federal governmental response in the United States was crucially criminological. One of the reasons for that was new kind of drugs such as crack cocaine and amphetamine, got released into the market (Isralowitz, 2002), so with the rise of crack cocaine usage in the 1980s, drug use has started to be linked with criminology again.

In this respect, I evaluate the changing perspectives on illicit drugs for the 1980s, as revisiting the 1930s' criminological perspective which is still highly historical.

However, I will evaluate this in two context: The first one is the social consequences such as mass incarceration. The second one is the official medicinal discourse on illicit drugs which is highly related with building War on Drugs policies. The drug prevention policies of the United States have played a leading role in making these policies to expend to other countries such as the United Kingdom. (Blackman, 2004; Betram et al., 1996 and Jensen et al, 2004) On the other hand, I emphasize that the official medicinal discourse is highly related with structuring the prevention policies.

1.5.1. 'War on Drugs' Policies and Their Social Consequences

'War on Drugs' can be defined as a concept which includes political battle against drugs. Even though, it was announced by the President of the United States, Nixon in 1972, its social and political consequences continued till the 2000s. (Jakubiec, Kilcer and Sager, 2009; Musto, 2002) This is because of the major point, which makes 'war on drugs' as one of the most controversial policy in the United States. According to Jensen, Gerber and Mosher (2004), Jakubiec, Kilcer and Sager (2009), Duke (2009) and Nunn (2009) American criminal justice system has mostly been shaped by 'War on Drugs', because of its social consequences such as mass incarceration, militarized police operations against African-American communities and employment policies.

Crime and public response on crime became a major policy for the governments of the United States. Besides, drug use has been regarded as a major topic of national security. A similarity between prison industry and military industrial complex was drawn. "[C]rime has replaced communism as the external evil that can be exploited by politicians, the most striking similarity between the two is the need to create policies that are more concerned with the economic imperatives of the industry than the needs of the public [...]" (retrieved from Jensen et al., 2004: 104) This means that American foreign policy, on one hand, focused on drug trafficking from Latin American countries into the United States and saw it as a threat to national security (Friesendorf, 2007: 88). On the other hand, the United States government funded the new measurements against drugs.

For this thesis, American criminal justice system provides a supplementary background to create a framework for 'War on Drugs' concept due to the public approach on drug use. It may be argued that rise of crack cocaine and, public and political response to it in the 1980s was not out of this framework. However, public and political gaze on crack cocaine has been associated with black communities. The reason is that the usage of crack cocaine intensified in crowded cities and associated with those people who are either African-American or Hispanic origin. (Bourgois, 1995) The crack form of cocaine is easy to prepare and intoxicate, and also cheaper than cocaine in powder. (Inciardi, 1987) Besides, the punishment system became strikingly segregative for black communities, which originated from the assumption that Afro-Americans use crack while whites use powder. Nunn (2002) indicates:

Federal sentencing rules for the possession and sale of cocaine distinguish between cocaine in powder form and cocaine prepared as crack. A person sentenced for possession with intent to distribute a given amount of crack cocaine receives the same sentence as someone who possessed one hundred times as much powder cocaine. This difference in sentencing exist notwithstanding the fact that cocaine is cocaine, and there are no physiological differences in effect between the powder and the crack form of the drug. (Nunn, 2009: 5)

Population in the the United States prisons has always been largely consisted of African-American black man after the 'War on Drugs'.

(Winterbourne, 2012: 98; Nunn, 2002; Blackman, 2010; Jakubiec, 2009)

According to Winterbourne, by citing Banks (2003), this was because of the selective measurements and disproportionate searches which was being held by the police against African American man, who supposedly are "five

times more likely to enter prison than their white male counterparts[,]" and created a disparity against ethnic minority groups by being sentenced for drug abuse in court. In fact, according to the statistical calculation which Nunn conducted, from 1979 to 1989, population of African-Americans who got arrested for drug offenses had increased from 22% to 42%, arrests went up to over 300%. According to the same article, by citing a report prepared in 1992 by the US Public Health Service Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, only 14% of drug abusers were African-American and 8% involves people who are Hispanic. When it comes to cocaine, the total number of the users of both African-American and Hispanics was 33,5%. This is why Nunn identifies this disproportionate measurements as a "mass incarceration". (2002: x)

As a consequence, 'War on Drugs' concept was pursued by Nixon's successors, Ford, Reagan and Bush, as one of the most controversial policy of the United States. However, there are prominent criticisms which focus on the social consequences of the policy against the legacy of 'War on Drugs', in terms of 'mass incarceration', and social schism. According to Jakubiec et al. (2009), as drug prohibition has institutionally become the measurements for deterrence, the major aim of the war has been neglected, in terms of social schism, mass incarceration and the occurrence of black markets. In this respect, 'War on Drugs' is being regarded as 'a pyrrhic victory'. (2009: 8-9) This also opened a space which provides a theoretical debate on drug normalization. The debate had been constituted in the context of legitimization

crisis which has revealed from the social consequences of 'war on drugs', but on the other hand, a new kind of legitimation had been produced in the context of late capitalist commodification which also provided the normalization process.

1.5.2. Scientific Discourse on Marijuana and Its Impact on Legal Classification

Anslinger's assumption on drugs, especially marijuana, had segregative and xenophobic traits, scientific discourse on marijuana and other kinds of illicit drugs has been controversial, in terms of their historical impact on legal classification.

Regardless of the purpose of use, marijuana is researched, challenged and defined by the legislature and governmental reports and schedules.

According to Winterbourne's overview (2012), by referencing Mathre (1997), "between 1840 and 1900, more than 100 articles about the therapeutic value of cannabis were published in Europe and North America." (2012: 96) Their chemical components and the possible health risks they include, are the main focus for the researches conducted by governmental and legislative commissions. Illicit substances are classified in the licit schedules, sorted with their ranks from 1 to 5, in order to describe their legal status, in the United States. According to Controlled Substances Act Schedule (2017),

Schedule 1 is the highest rank which indicates the highest level of addiction and possible abuse. Marijuana is on the list since 1972, even though it is now legal in more than 25 states in the United States, it is still classified as Schedule 1 drug. Some popular substances are summarized and listed for their scheduled rank below, according to the current legal status:

Schedule 1	Schedule 2	Schedule 3	Schedule 4	Schedule 5
marijuana	cocaine	Tylenol	Xanax	Robitussin AC
heroin	meth	ketamine	Soma	Lomotil
LSD	oxycodone	anabolic steroids	Darvocet	Motofen
ecstasy	Adderall	testosterone	Valium	Parepectolin
magic mushroom	Ritalin		Ambient	
	Vicodin			

Figure 1: Some popular drugs classification, according to current Controlled Substances Act, in the United States. (retrieved from <<https://www.vox.com/2014/9/25/6842187/drug-schedule-list-marijuana>> access date: 26 June 2017)

Public debate on prohibition has cultural characteristics rather than medicinal. In that term, Anslinger was a prominent political figure who had an opportunity to shape drug policies (Womack, 2010). However, public health has been a major justification of marijuana criminalization. Marijuana is known for it's use to cure diseases and for treatments for the ones in need throughout the history. Medical experimentations in the beginning of 1900s, invented highly specified medicals and treatments, "such as aspirin, vaccinations, and public health measures, which reduces the need for opium

and morphine as therapeutic agents.” (Currant & Thakker, 1995: 80). This caused marijuana to be debated in the context of public health discourse, in a way that have two-fold: The first is the prohibition for public health and the second is the legalization for medicinal purposes.

Public health perspective created a major discourse for prohibition. It may be argued because of the scientific awareness focused on these: Addiction, side effect, withdrawals and gateway, also called stepping stones hypothesis. It has been argued that cannabinoid pills which are used for several medicinal purposes such as reducing the pain and cure for cancer, are less effective than the native plant. (Earleywine, 2002) Gateway/stepping stone hypothesis has been popularized by many scientific researches on marijuana conducted in 1970. According to Kandell et al. (2006) in one of these scientific articles which was published in *Science* magazine in 1975, drugs have developments and use of the hard drugs such as heroin has been associated with use of marijuana as a early stage.

One of the major reference of the legal status of marijuana, other substances or other drugs, is scientific researches. Currant & Thakker (1995), argues that medical treatment was on the center of the issue. This means that medical inventions and researches determine the scientific discourse on marijuana. However, on marijuana issue, ideological settings surround these researches. This is why we added the current drugs classification. Shepherd (1981) argues: “Legal positions taken on the marijuana issue are made

appealing to the degree that they are supported by scientific evidence on the psycho-active character of marijuana.” (1981: x)

After the prohibition of marijuana, controlled medicines replaced marijuana, even though it's widely use for treatments for over a thousand years.

However, medicinal quality of the plant has been explored again as its popularization among subcultures in 1960s and 1970s. According to Boyd's (2014) brief, contemporary medicinal use of marijuana has been started in the late 1980s in California, by the activists who struggled and those people who were living with HIV. (2014: 167) and still maintains it's controversy.

1.6. Legitimation Crisis of War on Drugs: 'Stepping Stone'

Towards Normalization

The 'War on Drugs' which started in the late 1970s, and remarkably became a major political concept in the 1980s has arguably been replaced by contemporary normalization thesis/debate in the 1990s. The crucial social consequences of 'War on Drugs' is subjected to public debate because it led to legitimation crisis, as I stated before. Even though it is difficult to create a direct connection between normalization process and legitimate crisis, we can consider legitimate crisis as a theorization of public debate and mass media representation on the social consequences and the legacy of 'War on Drugs'.

'Legitimation crisis' is a concept which can be used for normalization. (Blackman, 2010: 348) It is adapted from Habermas in order to make a theoretical explanation of the failure of 'War on Drugs'. Even though Blackman embraces this concept for its application in the United Kingdom, my personal aim is to apply this concept for the social consequences of War on Drugs in the United States.

Blackman stresses two key arguments for legitimation crisis: The first ones are moral and political values which are institutionally established. The second is scientifically constructed truth. Both of these arguments are highly linked to each other in terms of producing preventions. Blackman also highlights Habermas' such assertion that "[w]hat is controversial is the relation of legitimation to truth." (Habermas, 1975: 97) and in order to prove his assertion, Blackman gives many examples from key press news such as The Wall Street Journal, CNN and The Guardian covering 'war on drugs' stories as an example of the negative representation. (Blackman, 2010: 348) Although, we will additionally overview media coverage and representation of drug use in the next chapter, we will not emphasize them with details in this chapter. However, it is worth mentioning that one of the major subbranches that gives a meaning to the fall of legitimation of 'war on drugs' is the discourse of 'war on drugs has failed'. Blackman stresses that the prohibition resulted by the justification of power derived from diminishing authority.

Discipline and punishment are the ways to respond to this fall. This is the crisis of legitimation.

With referencing Habermas' approach, Blackman also gives a way for normalization in the context of late capitalism. This involves multifaceted content which has a positive representation of drugs as a contradiction with the laws, producing cultural commodities and technologies of identity formations and capitalist mass consumption. Blackman argues:

For Habermas, one of the key conditions of the legitimation crisis is the failure of democratic states to rectify the contradictions engendered by the late capitalism. Since the 1990s, we have seen how capitalism has become more explicitly linked to representation of drugs within society, resulting in a contradiction in that drugs are illegal, but these images are exploited by corporate companies to sell commodities for profit. (2010: 349)

The alternative sources of the information about the drug use. Starting from the 1980s, self-help and DIY culture has been emerged and governmental agencies lost their monopoly on the source of the information. Blackman here stresses DIY drug representation and experiences in terms of amplifying deviant's 'own story' via the Internet. What makes DIY experiences remarkable in this context is highly applicable for the term that neoliberalism has emerged since 1980s. Neoliberalism altered the everyday life with the concepts and values it brought, such as self-governance and self-help. Thus, 'DIY' can be emphasized in the same context. In this respect, both the concepts mentioned above and Blackman's approach, provide us the manner

of legitimation crisis in the context of alternative sources. Besides, Blackman sees the alternative sources of the information in the context of legitimate crisis:

What is significant about drug information on the internet is not just the question of accuracy or misinformation, but that we may have reached what Habermas (1975) calls a crisis in sources of legitimate information. The authority of the prohibition message derives from the governing structures, but the growth of alternative sources of drug information means that the state is unable to demonstrate the function for which it was instituted, that is, to achieve drug prevention. (Blackman, 2012: 349-350)

Blackman, therefore, highlights cultural commodification in terms of changing normative structures. The reason is, legitimation crisis also means an administrative failure of 'war on drugs' for the governments. This resulted in "*lack of authority*". (Blackman, 2010: 350) Cultural commodification caused this lack of authority because companies succeeded in submitting their messages of 'cool side' of their products which involve lots of products which include cannabis content, such as shampoo and skin care creme. By means of this, Blackman argues that business uses infinite marketability in spite of the contradiction between drug prohibition and drug imagery they represent. This is, as argued by Blackman by referencing Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 286), normalization process in terms of drugs turn into a part of everyday life, cultural commodification and capitalist mass production. (Blackman, 2010: 351)

As a result, we may consider cultural commodification and capitalist mass production as the normalizing manners of drugs. If we consider these points which will be mentioned below in the context of identity formations, stable subcultures and moral regulations we can also consider that changing legitimization is as applicable as drug normalization. Still, Blackman did not discuss the specific manner of marijuana through normalization. However, in the next chapter, we will evaluate specific manner of marijuana in terms of identity formations, stable subcultures and moral regulations.

1.7. Normalization Debate in the 1990s: Orthodoxy of Drug Researches

Normalization is the main focus of this thesis. The debate has been initiated by a number of researchers in Britain, mostly originated from Manchester, in the 1990s, (Parker, Measham & Aldridge, 1995; Parker, Aldridge, Measham, 1998; Parker, Williams & Aldridge, 2002) and its legacy has reached towards today. (Parker, Measham & Shiner, 2008) In this respect, I will try to apply this and it's early theoretical sources that I reviewed throughout this chapter. In the next chapter, my emphasis will be to critically implement these into my empirical analysis.

Normalization was used for the first time as a sociological term in order to provide a theoretical conceptualization for integration of socially

disadvantaged groups such as those people whom are disabled, starting from the 1950s in Europe, and it is argued that this conceptualization was “purportedly applicable to any social group who are devalued or at risk of devaluation in any society.” (Emerson, 1992. retrieved from Parker, Williams & Aldridge, 2002). For my personal account, this statement is also applicable for the marijuana case.

Contemporary comments on the debate predict this approach. This is because the debate can be evaluated as a reinterpretation/re-application of the ‘new deviancy’ theories. One of the major claims of the debate is that the cultural taboo attracted to illicit drug use had all, but collapsed among the younger generation. Now, drug use is so prevalent that people no longer feel the need to hide their activities or to even deny that they engage in them. Parker and his colleagues have already assumed that “*drug cultures have become assimilated in to and now partly define mainstream youth culture.*” (Parker, Measham & Aldridge, 1995: 25)

The starting point of this debate was the drug researches which held in Britain that Parker and his colleagues conducted. The researches are showing drug availability and it can be seen that the drug use had dramatically increased. Marijuana, ecstasy and LSD have a primarily importance for this case. (Parker, Measham & Aldridge, 1995) Even though, normalization of marijuana is our major focus, normalization debate is much vital to review because of it’s conceptual dominance on this field. This is

because of the assumption which was predicted by Parker and his colleagues that “prevalence of drug use will be sustained and normalized towards the year 2000. [...] Over the next few years, and certainly in urban areas, non-drug trying adolescents will be a minority group. In one sense, they will be deviants.” (Parker, Measham & Aldridge, 1995: 26)

1.7.1. The Scales of Normalization

This prediction was going to be conceptualized in the 2000s, by the same researchers. They created definitions of normalization as a concept, based upon changing definitions of norms and well indicators of how the norms are changing. This is because of that stigmatization “*is not the case for young recreational drug users.*” (Parker, Aldridge & Measham, 2000: 943) Parker and his colleagues also asserts that this is caused by the loss of moral and social authority of the law and the governmental agencies. (2000: 943) This argument proves the legitimization crisis, which occurred as one of the major social consequences of War on Drugs, such as mass incarceration in the United States.

Another crucial topic in terms of methodology rather than theory itself, is the remarkable increase in the number of young people who use illicit drugs. This was developed in the context of youth culture and rave culture which got revealed in the beginning of the 1990s. (Parker, Aldridge & Measham: 1998)

However, they Parker subsequently states that they are concerned that this activity derived from the margins of the society to the center of the society was becoming a norm. However, this approach also implicitly provides a conditional acceptance in terms of the places that they are being consumed. This is because he agrees the term that “*normalization of ‘sensible’ recreational drug use*” is not considered as normal out of the “*semi-private setting*” (Parker et al., 2002: 941) such as places like rave clubs, even though they are on the process of normalization as they are migrating into the mainstream setting. This has five dimensions: Access and availability, trying rates, rates of drug use, attitudes to ‘sensible’ recreational drug use and degree of cultural accommodation. (Parker et al., 2002: 944) For this thesis, I do not intent to evaluate these dimensions intensively, but instead, it is remarkable to stress the normative traits of normalization. In this nature, ex-triers and abstainers attribute an accommodation in a way, towards their encounters and peers, so that, cultural attribution for drugs has been extended into the center of the society.

In the cultural attribution for drugs, marijuana is strikingly prominent. Parker and his colleagues find that marijuana and ecstasy users and abstainers are condemning the use of hard drugs such as heroin, crack cocaine and their excessive use (Parker et al., 2002: 948). Positive attribution for ‘soft drugs’ like marijuana can be a major topic for the conceptualization. This situation is located in the center of the conceptualization. In this respect, marijuana is an

illicit but soft drug, by being alongside with licit ones such as alcohol (Parker, Aldridge & Meashman, 2002: 947). This cultural attribution blurs the lines between licit and illicit drugs.

1.7.2. Normifying Marijuana in the Normalization Context

This approach is criticized for exaggerating both the number of users and the scales/meaning of the numbers, by Shiner and Newburn (1997). Their statements are in the same manner with Parker and his colleagues and they have conceptualized the normalization as the part of the youngster culture; and had a very limited attribution of normative context of the behavior of using drugs. This might be a reason of this explicit assertion from Parker et al. that non-tried users will be a minority in the near future. But above all, contemporary normalization debate is considerably important for conceptualizing drug use of adolescent people. Even though this debate did not reach a consensus on the contextualization of normalization, this concept has succeeded to become an orthodoxy, that is one of the most challenged argument of the debate, by disregarding the normative context of the drug use.

Increasing drug use and 1990s are highly linked to each other. But before evaluating it's scales, it is better to indicate that the importance of the surveys about drug use by constructing this approach. Both sides of normalization

debate, Parker et al. and Shiner et al., are agreed on these surveys indicating the increased drug usage among young adults, not only for marijuana but also other illicit substances such as amphetamine, ecstasy, LSD, and so forth. Marijuana is still been recognized as the most widely used substance, but the need for a new perspective is asserted by numerous scholars like Ruggiero, South, Shapiro because of the diverse form of drug use (Shiner, 2009: 27).

Normalization, in the marijuana case, can be considered as in a different scale of this normalization context. If normalization occurs, it brings it's norms and normative scales. However, as we mentioned before, contemporary normalization thesis/debate did not moved beyond being re-application/ reinterpretation of Becker's conceptualization.

Last but not least, it may be reasonable to assert for this debate that normalization thesis as it has been argued so far has been distracted from the context of normativity which can be used for producing the norm. Besides, it investigated the discursively increasing number of drug users and level of usage and also the reasons of it. However, normalization has broaden meaning and context in terms of producing norm and the 'normal', as well as separating the 'normal' and 'abnormal'. By doing so, marijuana has been examined in order to prove this increase number of usage but the conceptual meaning of marijuana has been left behind. This is to say that marijuana is the most common widely illicit substance which is being used

has presumptively conceptualized. That is the point that we try to embrace marijuana in the context of the normal itself and produced norms of it, instead of the sociology of ever increasing usage of drugs.

One of the theoretical criticism on normalization thesis/debate, from Canada, which examines the basis of normalization in the context of narratives of stigma and management of risk, in the case of marijuana. Hathaway (2004) agrees with the argument that recreational use of marijuana has been seen as a tolerating behavior in Western countries and started becoming a part of the mainstream culture (2004: 560) The reason of the specification of marijuana, in Hathaway's approach, is that the illicit drugs other than marijuana are not used rarely and also there is a difference among the attitudes of the users because of the risks that they have to cope with. He asserts: "Drug abuse is condemned by both users and abstainers, and a hierarchy of risk is employed in drawing the distinction." (2004: 561) This is because Hathaway suggests to examine "the boundaries of normality" (Hathaway: 2004. p. 561) in order to define the scale of control among drug use.

Using marijuana is still being considered as a stigmatized behavior in Hathaway's manner. (2004:573) This suggestion is caused by finding that Hathaway conducted, which is the majority of the users in the survey hide their use by "references [referencing] to stigma [which] were primarily related to 'informal' sources of control" such as condemnation from the authorities.

(Hathaway et al., 2011: 458) By doing so, he suggests the distinction between 'normalization' and 'normification'. The user of marijuana, as it is in the case, normalizes their usage, although they still keep it as a secret performatively. By doing so they perform the expected behaviors, which can be considered as normative behaviors. He indicates, "[c]onforming presentation of oneself as ordinary is not the same as normalizing stigmatized behavior. Full 'normalization', [...] requires that others be accepting of the stigmatized individual the treatment of such persons as if they have no stigma." (Hathaway et al., 2011: 465)

CHAPTER 2

THE MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF DRUGS IN THE UNITED STATES

In this chapter, I focused on the media representation on drugs, but primarily marijuana. The media in the United States have depicted drugs in many different ways. The media representation of drugs has a long historical background from criminological approach in the 1930s, towards normalization. Changing attitudes on drugs provides a structure in terms of a historical process towards normalization.

This chapter consists of two major subheadings. The first one focuses on the media representation of drugs, especially marijuana, as a general overview, in the context of changing sociological and political perspective from the 1930s to the 1990s. In this historical continuum, it can be seen that how social norms had been changed. The second subheading focuses on vice.com documentaries that I selected for analysis. vice.com documentaries

will be provided as examples for the media portrayal of marijuana normalization.

In the first subheading, I overview the media representation on drugs. Even though marijuana is the major focus of this thesis, other kind of illicit drugs such as LSD, crack cocaine are more visible by different terms. For instance, while the framework of the overview starts with marijuana in the 1930s, LSD is more considered in the subcultural term, in the 1960s and the 1970s. By beginning of the 1980s, rising of crack cocaine 'epidemic' has become more prominent in terms of both media attraction and producing moral panic, comparing with marijuana. In the 1990s, it can be said that heroin and crack cocaine has pursued to depict with their addictive traits because of news media attraction on celebrities who were using drugs. Towards today, marijuana legalization process in the United States attracts news media attention, for evaluating the economic and medicinal traits of the plant.

For overviewing procedure, I used the academic sources which analyze new media and film depiction of drugs in the narrowed scope. I have two main reasons for using the secondary sources:

The first is empirical researches analyzing news media depiction on drugs until the 1990s is limited for evaluating media representation of not only marijuana but also drugs in general. Quantitative researches on how news media approached on drugs seems to start evaluating after legalization

process in the United States has been increased. Evaluating public debates and news media attraction is highly important for this thesis, in order to provide a journalistic perspective for the issue.

The second is that about popular culture which have had a leading role for normalization of marijuana. This is to say that, especially in the 1960s, drug representation on films has gained to normalization, for their drug depiction as pleasurable. Normalization on drugs can be taken account as pleasure seeking activity, thus disregarding criminalization can be evaluated as a major characteristic toward normalization. In this respect, popular culture in the 1960s can be seen as the first step towards normalization. Exploring the key characteristics of popular culture as having a leading role for normalization is evaluated. According to Paul Manning (2007), “drug consumption have always been lived elements of popular culture” (p. 4) so that, it can be argued that the leading role of popular culture in the context of normalization has become representing the subcultural values which extends towards a mainstream scale by constructing a popular culture associating with drug consumption. This is a some sort of similar approach on normalization of drugs as Blackman’s argument on normalization (2010), that is, creating cultural commodification among drug consumption has also leading role towards normalization.

In the second subheading, vice.com documentaries is analyzed. Portrayal of normalization on vice.com documentaries is the main focus of this thesis.

This is not only because of my assumption that VICE's journalistic style would represent the settings of normalization today in the United States, but also their role of generating normalization in many aspects.

Exploring the key characteristics of VICE's way of journalism, which is called immersive journalism and hybrid form of journalism even though it is still not reached a consensus that if they are a sort of new genre, their way to use this way seems applicable for portraying normalization on marijuana. Key characteristics of editorial policies of VICE has tried to be evaluated, in order to create a link between VICE's approach on the another topics such as Gezi Park protests and VICE's depiction of marijuana. This is because of the fact that VICE's way of use hybrid form of journalism which provides activist traits into their news coverage by using citizen journalism techniques.

Therefore, it might not be reliable to make a comparative analysis between a specific selected material and vice.com documentaries, in terms of seeing the sociological background of normalization in historical context, so that a general overview in popular culture, in a qualitative basis was given.

2.1. From *Reefer Madness* to YouTube: A General Overview

In this section, the academic sources about drug representation, more specifically marijuana, which analyze various media depiction such as films,

music, news media and also the Internet are used as examples in the context of normalization. However, as I reviewed in the previous chapter, normalization is a concept which was formulated in the 1990s, in the United Kingdom, but its antecedent approaches such as criminological approach, Becker's new deviancy approach and Young's approach of role of mass media as deviant amplifier are worth implementing into the media representation of drugs in the United States.

It is possible to see sociological perspectives on drugs in the media representation of drugs in the same way. However, it is also hard to provide the media representation according to each term and each sociological perspective, so that I focused on giving the key characteristics of the drug representation history. For this historical approach, the starting point is considered as the 1930s, and the final point is considered as 2012. This has two main reasons. The first reason is that Colorado has become the first state which legalized recreational marijuana in 2012. The second reason is that the academic sources that emphasized the media representation of marijuana which was used for this thesis covers the drug related videos which were uploaded on YouTube in the early 2012. All the academic sources used for this thesis are the United States based. In order to give the key characteristics of drug representation of the mass media in the United States, normalization is the major focus and the framework. By doing so, the sources which used for this section are not analyzed, except the film named *Reefer Madness*, because of sources which analyze this film are very limited.

Criminalization of drugs by starting with the 1930s, became a key concept until the normalization in the 1990s. It can be asserted that the construction of criminalization of drugs in the 1930s was remarkably monolithic, in terms of both using and selling drugs, however, this attitude has started to change by emerging subcultures in the 1960s. In this term, using drugs and selling drugs have been separated. This is to say that using drugs have been considered as social issue rather than inherent deviancy, on the other hand selling drugs has evaluated as a evil and stigma. That is why my approach on it is relatively normalization.

This approach has been vividly remarkable in the 1980s, by forcing the War on Drugs policies. In addition, drug use has been normalized, or even responded as a curable mental disorder, rather than associating with crime and terrorism.

On the other hand, I intended to use describing the role of media in the context of the major concepts asserted in the 20th century historical continuum. Therefore, my personal approach on the mass media representation on drugs is that using the context of changing approaches on criminological terms, rather than analyzing the using the methods as also using in the film theories.

2.1.1. Criminological Legacy of 1930s

In the political climate of the 1930s in the United States, portrayal of drugs in media was not different from criminological aspects for both users and dealers. In order to give the key characteristics of this term, I selected a specific film entitled *Reefer Madness* (Hirleman & Gasnier, 1936), which obviously provides the major traits of the criminological depiction of marijuana.

Reefer Madness is a cult propaganda film, its popularity has been reached today, with ironic public response in the 1970s towards today. Even though, it is asserted that this film produced by the support of Federal Narcotic Bureau in the United States (Boyd, 2010), a few sources indicates it was produced as without neither Hollywood system, nor governmental support. Still, Federal Narcotic Agency was highly important as regulating Marijuana Tax Act in 1937, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Harry Anslinger, the first chairperson of this agency and prominent public figure for initializing marijuana prevention. According to Susan C. Boyd and Connie Carter (2014), Canadian social criminologists, Harry Anslinger was highly remarkable figure to construct the criminological discourse for marijuana and other kind of illicit drugs on media by using “radio, print media [...], and film to “educate” Americans and others about the horrors of drugs like marijuana and concomitant dangerous drug dealers.” (2014: 47) [quotation marks belong to the authors]. Shane Blackman (2004) claims that Anslinger’s impact on drug depiction in media was not only about his support for anti-marijuana films, but

also his regulatory influence on “a periodic decline in the focus on drug consumption within the film industry” (2004: 56).

In order to show the stigmatization approach on marijuana in the United States, in the 1930s, this film is highly remarkable not only for its way of portraying marijuana as triggering violence, sexual harassment, crime, murder, insanity and hysteria; but also its ‘educational’ language and didactic traits.

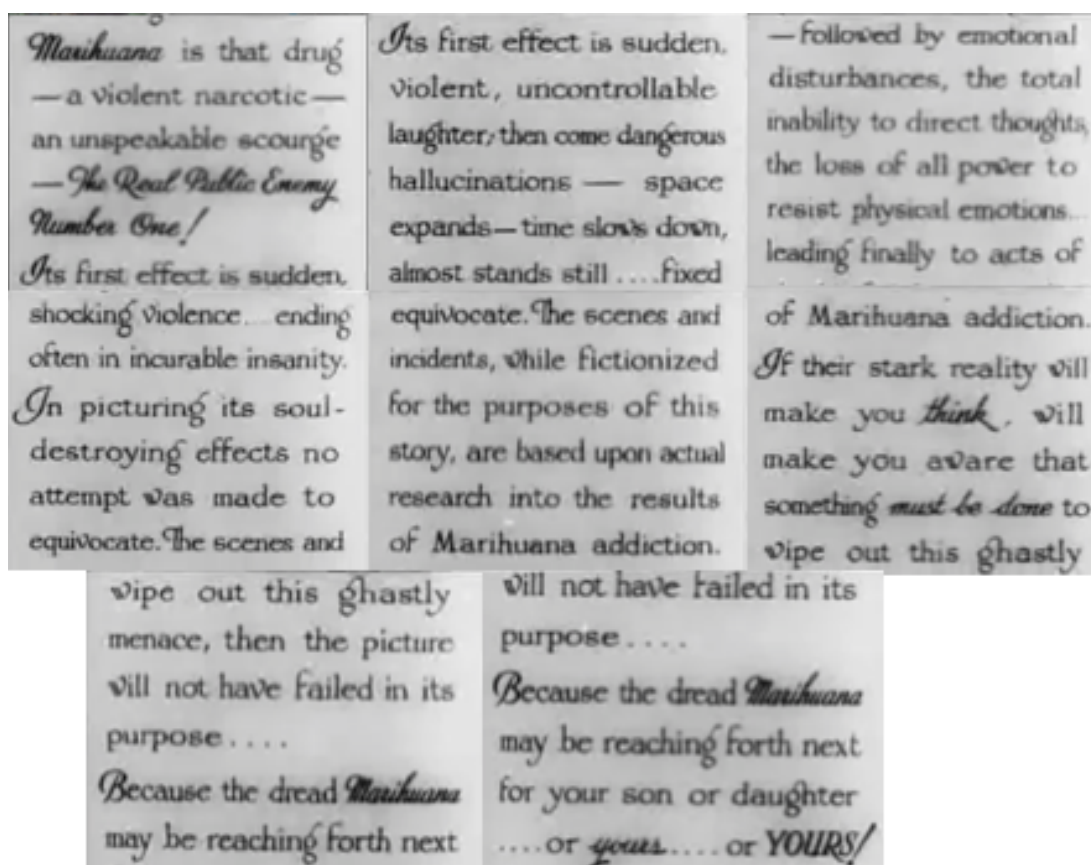


Figure 2: On the foreword of *Reefer Madness*, marijuana is described as “public enemy” which needs to be prevent from children.

Educational addressing towards audience and its didactic traits are immediately appeared on the screen. On the foreword of the film, it was

indicated that the scenes and the script were purely fictional but based upon the researches on marijuana, by sorting physiological effects and addictive traits of marijuana, which were dominant scientific discourse at that time.

Marijuana was described as “the Real Public Enemy Number One!” and the film call upon the audience to prevent their children from marijuana.

In the opening scene, a guest named Dr. Carroll, in a school meeting addresses the parents of the students, in order to warn them about the addictive and crime related traits of marijuana and how deadly marijuana is comparing with the other drugs such as heroin. After his didactic speech, Dr. Carroll tells a story that he witnessed, in order to tell them the harmful traits of marijuana is not an exaggeration. The story that he tells is the central theme of the film, later the story would appear on the screen until the last scene of the film. At the final scene of the film, Dr. Carroll, is shown again while addressing the parents and the audience. He warns the parents by claiming “the next tragedy maybe that of your daughter... Your son... Or your... Or your... Or your.”



Figure 3: Heroin explicit depiction in *Man With the Golden Arm*

The film portrays marijuana as crime triggering, highly addictive and the most deadliest drug. It is possible to assert that propaganda techniques were used in term of the didactic voice of the character named Dr. Carroll. The film can also be described as film noir, in order to show the marijuana as crime related. Marijuana users are portrayed as a devil characters whom are criminal, murderer and sexual assaulter in a stereotypical way. Although this film do not represent the young characters as inherently deviants, but victims. This stigmatization can be evaluated as a consequence of the dominant political climate for drugs in the 1930s, in the United States. The film also a well applicable example for depicting the criminological discourse on drugs, as it was disseminated by 'educational' narration.

This film did not screen on the theaters because of the Production Code which prohibited explicit contents including drugs. In 2005, *Reefer Madness: The Movie Musical* has been produced as an adaptation, and this shows its popularity throughout the decades.

However, this has been started to change in the mid-1950s, in terms of drugs representation of drugs in cinema. In 1955, the Production Code has been abolished which was including the films produced in the past. *Man With the Golden Arm* (Preminger, 1955) is the first film which represents heroin explicitly for the time it was produced. The plot is not to be mentioned, yet it can be argued that the way of representing heroin is located as against social

norms such as family. According to Paul Manning (2007), journalism sociologist and film scholar at the University of Winchester, argues that this representational shift has been caused because of Hollywood's declining audience and the unconstrained availability of European art cinema. The rise of subcultures at that time was also one of the another major reasons of this change. (2007: 118)

2.1.2. The 1960s, Emerging Subcultures and Relatively Normalization

In the era of emerging subcultures in the 1960s, drug users started to be depicted as pleasure seeking people with using pleasurable characteristic of marijuana. It can be argued that this depiction derived from the dominant climate of social transformation in the 1960s. In that decade, young people from white-middle class were interested in drug experimentation and film industry in the United States was agile to produce films which have drug themes, not only for marijuana, but also LSD, heroin, cocaine and other kind of illicit drugs. In that term, *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969) has become the iconic in terms of not only its location in subcultural traits, but also "its contemporary drug iconography and rock music soundtrack, which were integral to the narrative" (Blackman, 2007: 64) This terms also became that films had a leading role towards normalization because of their unstigmatized representation of drugs.

By starting with the 1960s, LSD has become visible on screen. Few of these are; *The Trip* (Corman, 1967), *Head* (Schneider, Rafelson: 1968), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968), *Easy Rider* (Fonda, Hopper, 1969). Even though these films will not be analyzed, it will be contented with arguing that their portrayal of LSD was “fairly benign, even celebratory” (Inannicelli, 2001)

On the other hand, news media attention on LSD focused on a well known psychiatrist’s named Timothy Leary’s trial case in 1969. As he believed that LSD was applicable for curing psychiatric diseases, news media in the United States published his claims by considering him as a scientist with either negative or positive attitudes. His claims were published by Los Angeles Times with a title “LSD Ties with Happiness Declared Hokum” and New York Times published his assertions with “LSD: A Fascinating Drug and a Growing Problem” (Siff, 2015: 146) However, the news media lost its attention on LSD by the end of the 1970s, as crack epidemic increased. (2015: 185)

It can be argued that jazz music, and later pop music contributed for marijuana to make normalized. This is due to the assumption that marijuana was widespread among jazz musicians. Besides, according to Müller (2014), Howard Becker’s intention on jazz music as a professional pianist alongside of being a sociologist, has influenced him to make an analysis on marijuana users (2014: 580). Manning (2007) claims that the culture specific practices such as illegal drug usage had been crucial in terms of reaching towards

broader audiences for “jazz and popular music, beat poetry, new fiction, and to an extent, cinema” (2007: 49) which had extended the the scope of the very practice, to beyond sub-cultural networks.

2.1.3. Moral Panic and Crack ‘Epidemic’ in the 1980s

The climate in the 1980s’ America was an actual pick for media depiction on drugs. Crack cocaine has been the most remarkable substance for regarding the 1980s. The term of ‘moral panic’, as discussed in the previous chapter, was one of the most controversial concepts which was discussing in the media professionals. Not only news media, but also cinema and television industries’ depiction on drugs have been exposed by crack cocaine and the themes which was assumed as relevant with crack cocaine, such as crime, robbery, murder, sexual assault, and also ethnic discrimination. This reminds the assertion on the role of the mass media as deviant amplifiers, as Young claimed it in the late 1970s.

It can be argued that the major themes of media depiction on drugs was surrounding the relationship between the crime and crack cocaine. However, as crack cocaine usage was increasing among white-middle-class youngsters, the media coverage on the issue had have the stigmatizing characteristics, in terms of generating a moral panic among society.

Even though users were generally representing as victims, dealers were depicting as criminals. According to Boyd (2002), the way of the media, both television and cinema, construct the drug dealers “as guilty in the eyes of law enforcement and society, and therefore, deserving of the brutal treatment handed out to them by criminal justice vigilantes, family members of the victim, and justice seeking police officers.” (2002: 398) As it was described in the previous chapter, this depiction had a relationship with the ‘War on Drugs’ policy of the United States by starting with the late 1970s. Even though, I do not intend to give specific description on the social consequences of the way its implementation because it was given in the previous chapter, moral panic debate is highly prominent.

‘War on Drugs’ policies and its social consequences were both debating throughout the late 1980s and the early 1990s, in the United States, as one of the most prominent political topics. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, prominent criticism on ‘War on Drugs’ was focused on the political agenda of the federal government of the United States, and drug ‘epidemic’ was considered as equal as communism (Schlosser, 1998. retrieved from Jensen et al., 2004: 104). According to CBS public surveys, changing public attitudes on the question that the most prominent problems of the United States which were polled have dramatically changed. Reinerman and Levine’s evaluation on public surveys provide an insight on the mass media depiction on drugs which was discussed in the context of moral panic, which was introduced by Jock Young.

In January 1985, 23% answered war or nuclear war; fewer than 1% believed the most important problem was drugs. [...] In September 1989, [...] 54% of those polled believed that drugs were now the most important problem, and only 1% thought that war or nuclear war was most important. [...] In short, by the end of 1989, America's latest drug scare was still going strong. (Reinarman and Levine: 1989: p.537)

The debate surrounding 'moral panic' is two fold. The first was claiming that the mass media produces this moral panic in order to stigmatize and misrepresent the drug issue. The second was asking that whereas the mass media stigmatizes the drug issue, what is the location of depiction of rave culture in the music press. In this criticism, it was argued that the way of the news media coverage of crack cocaine, and other kind of 'hard' drugs and the rate of usage were disproportionate. Murji (2000) asserts that "There was eventually much press attention paid to the 'rave' scene in the summer of 1988 and throughout the early 1990s. [...] just as, well before the death of young people being linked to ecstasy." (2000: 79)

The impact of 'War on Drugs' on popular culture is worth emphasizing. For instance, crime related Reality TV shows such as *COPS* and *Miami Vice* became most popular television programs in that time. Those programs focused on crime and victim stories by arguing that they illustrated the reality. As Cavender and Fisher (1998) argues that this pick could be a result of the anxieties' of the society in the United States, such as drug 'epidemic', satanism scare, missing children issues let to increase public fear on crime, produced by 'War on Drugs' (1998: 6). Fishman & Cavender (1998) also

cites Stark (1987): “as the public in the 1980s endorsed a crime control model of law enforcement, television crime shows came to be more about order than about law” (1987: 280 - 282. retrieved from Fishman & Cavender, 1998: 6) They means that crime related Reality TV shows, such as *Cops* reinforced disseminating police’s perspective through audience, in the social context of ‘War on Drugs’ policies in the United States, in the late 1980s.

2.1.4. Marijuana in the 1990s: Privileged Normal, Medical Normal and Recreationally Legality

The 1990s was the decade that media attention on drugs has been complicated, in terms of covering drugs in negative, positive and neutral way. On one hand, social consequences of ‘War on Drugs’ were remaining, on the other hand, popular culture was remarkably incorporating drugs into the everyday life. Moreover, public debate on legalization of marijuana, for more medicinal purpose, has been covered by the news media. However, it can be sorted two major characteristics determined marijuana representation of media. The first is media’s privileged attention on celebrities using drugs, but especially marijuana. The second is that public debates on legalization of marijuana, both recreational and medicinal.

As it was mentioned before, music press coverage on rave culture, celebrities and music festivals were covering drugs explicitly. This aspect

argued by Murji (2000), as a counter argument for moral panic debate. It can be also indicate soap operas and situation comedies on television which were covering drugs have been considered as a key process of normalization as incorporating drugs through popular culture, by their populist manner. (Blackman, 2007: 139)

It can also be considered that the media representation of celebrities who were using drugs are two folds: The first is associated with moral panics which was caused by musicians using heroin. The second is that hip-hop artists promoting marijuana in public, by their music products.

In the early 1990s, the relationship between heroin use and the celebrities like Kurt Cobain was the major attention of press media. For example, one of the articles published by *Los Angeles Times* in 1992, was drawing attention to the “alarming number” (Denham, 2008: 951) musicians who were using heroin. However, some celebrities using drugs have been ‘privileged’ in terms of their drug use.

As Hainnes-Saah and her colleagues (2014) claimed that press media coverage on celebrities’ marijuana use has pulled away from the conventional moral values. From this point of view, they researched Canadian news press’ depiction of marijuana for ten years, from 1997 to 2007, and conceptualized their findings. Accordingly, marijuana use has been considered as normal which has “a type of moral double standard” (1997: 52)

for celebrities such as musicians. Lyrics and song titles of hiphop musicians and bands such as Snoop Dogg and Cypress Hill explicitly refer marijuana use. Thus, Hainnes-Saah and her colleagues assert that “celebrity social circles and Hollywood culture symbolically linked with wealth, success, and fame” (2014: 52) From this point of view, they conceptualized this symbolic relationship between marijuana and media coverage on celebrities have become privileged aspect.

News media depiction on marijuana in the 1990s in the United States, on the other hand, focused on the public debates on decriminalization of marijuana, either medicinally or recreationally. Medicinal marijuana more attracted the news media by beginning the 2000s. It can be argued that media depiction on marijuana has been shifted from negative attitudes which was derived from moral panic in the 1980s, towards focusing medicinal values of the plant. According to a quantitative research, nearly 64 percent of the media content in 2008 and 2009 positively approached to medicinal marijuana (Stringer and Maggard, 2016: 431).

Another quantitative research analyzing anti and pro legalization argument from news media in the United States, in 2010 and 2014. Accordingly, 20 percent of pro-legalization arguments postulate that it would reduce the cost of criminal justice system, 19 percent of them supposed that it would increase the tax revenues. On the other hand, 22 percent of anti-legalization

arguments posited that legalization would be harmful for youth, 7 percent of them argued that it would attract crime. (McGinty et al., 2016: 115)

As a consequence, from the 1930s towards the present day, the media representation on drugs has been highly controversial in terms of not only being shaping public opinion, but also campaigning for anti or pro legislation. Even though, the major topic of this thesis is not analyzing how the media depiction on drugs shaped the public opinion, overviewing the way of drug depiction with the changing attitudes from anti-campaign, towards today's legalization movement in the United States is with mentioning. Today, either recreational or medicinal marijuana is legal in twenty eight states and Washington D.C. and it is estimated that marijuana industry will grow up to thirty billion dollars by 2021, according to recent researches. (Borchardt, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/debraborchardt/2017/05/08/the-marijuana-industry-is-getting-super-sized/#4f052ba5126e>) In this respect, my personal assumption is that media attraction on marijuana will more regard the economic and industrial values of the plant, and this kind of media coverage may be analyzed, in the near future.

2.1.5. Age of New Media and Online Consumption of Marijuana as Normalizing Trait

In the age of 'new media' or the Internet based platforms, dominant narratives on drugs and also marijuana has started to be challenged. In the

first glance, the Internet has become the medium in which both drug trading and alternative drug narratives has emerged. According to Walsh (2011), the Internet contains online drug trade and also drug forums where alternative discourses on drugs have been arisen (2011: 60). Even though this study do not clarify that how these drug forums produce an alternative discourse, it can be assumed that the Internet is also the medium in which the legalization activists could primarily adopted into the Internet and they produce alternative discourse for marijuana. This assumption is applicable for Blackman's account, as I mentioned before, Blackman emphasize these alternative sources in the context of legitimation crisis derived from construction of truth in the age of late-capitalism (2010: 348). This assumption can be considered as applicable because of the nature of activists in terms of their way of adoption into the digital technologies. According to Tufekci (2017), a prominent techno-sociologist, "[a]ctivists *generally are among the earliest adopters of digital technologies*" (2017: 13).

Aside from the discussion of what makes new media 'new' and its activist traits, this section stresses the multiple discourse produced on marijuana by being emerged of the notion of new media. By new media, it is meant that Web 2.0 based digitally online platforms such as YouTube, which allow the user to generate contents like digital video, graphic and text freely. This section has two major aims. One of them is providing a historical continuum while going through VICE documentaries which will be analyzed in the next section, because of the fact that VICE documentaries mostly run via YouTube. Another is that YouTube's characteristics which allow circulation,

discourse on public health, stigma and normal, politics, activism, mainstream ideas and so forth. This distinct characteristic of YouTube is a cause the network architecture of the site which provides interactiveness, which is derived from Web 2.0. In this respect, evaluating multiple discourse on marijuana in the age of Web 2.0/social media is highly important before moving on the analysis of VICE documentaries.

As I mentioned before by citing Blackman's argument on 'alternative sources of knowledge on drugs', (2012) because of the fact that the users started to generate contents regarding their use of drugs and also their experiences about drugs, no matter it was positive or negative. Even though, social media provided the user to publish and also circulate their contents in the scale of interactivity. According to Fuchs (2014), since the beginning of the 2000, the Internet has transform from static and linear layered content container, towards a multilayered platform which is often called Web 2.0 in which the user generated content platform and also allowing the users interact in a multiplied structure by sharing digital contents. However, as one of Manning's study on drug discourse of YouTube videos clearly indicates that such platforms can be used in the scale of 'old' medium by drug agencies. This is to say that the possibilities of being interactiveness and the major characteristics of social media platforms like YouTube can be overlooked by users. This point is highly important in the context of drug education which may contain the elements regarding stigmatization of drugs. Indeed, YouTube has become a platform in which official messages and alternative

ideas are intersecting. This factuality is derived from YouTube's nature of dynamic cultural system. (Burgess & Green: 2009) According to

According to a discourse analysis conducted by Manning (2013), there were near to 320 thousand drug related videos available on YouTube, in the term from December 2011 to March 2012, and 41,7 percent of these videos were related with 'Class A' drugs ² (2013: 158). Moreover, Manning's discourse analysis which is conducted on 750 sample drug related videos, there are eleven discursive category including news, documentaries, satirical, celebratory, reflective, cautionary and DIY. (2013: 159) Marijuana related videos seems becoming prominent for the section of 'Consumer DIY' and 'Legal High Ads', because marijuana related videos constitute 26 percent of the total DIY videos (2013: 167). The videos with this category generally provide technical and consumption related tips such as how to cultivate sativa seeds and smoke marijuana properly, and advertisements for legal/licit substances. What is more important for normalization of marijuana is that this kind of videos were generally named as 'review', so this kind of 'reviews' seems equalizing marijuana with other kind of commercial commodities which were provided by consumerist discourse. Consumerism can be considered as applicable tool for normalization, in terms of producing a commodity. As mentioned before, there is a strong link between consumerism/commodification and normalization.

² Class A, B and C is a kind of classification describing the legal status of illicit drugs in the United Kingdom. In the United States, marijuana is classified as one of the most illicit drugs, although in the United Kingdom, marijuana is located in Class B.

One of the another major point provided by Manning's study is that the impact of legalization of medicinal marijuana in some states of the United States. According to this study, 34,6 percent of the marijuana related videos in the category of DIY were uploaded from the United States. This study do not provide any further information about neither the question that from which state these videos were uploaded nor the correlation between the states in which medicinal marijuana is legal and the videos with DIY category. Yet still, for the discursive manner, Manning (2013) argues: "these videos frames cannabis as a product to be assessed in much the same way as other on-line goods, ... Cannabis in these discourses becomes akin to a hobby, ... just as those brewing wine at home" (p. 167)

Consequently, in the age of emerging new media, social media platforms such as YouTube can be an intersection point of hegemonic dominant cultural attribution such as stigmatization of drugs from governmental agencies and the alternative knowledge produced by the users via user generated contents. As Manning's study indicates that drug culture has been multiplied in the way that it was attributed in the age new media. Whereas governmental agencies try to be incorporated into multiplied characteristics of new media for certain reasons, 'ordinary' users have achieved to produce an alternative discourse which seems normalizing marijuana consumption.

2.2. VICE Media Inc. and vice.com Documentaries: Portraying Marijuana Through Hybrid Form of Journalism

Before starting to the analysis, an introductory information about VICE Media Inc. needs to be given briefly. What make VICE significant for this thesis are both its journalistic techniques and the topics that it cover. In this introductory section, I approached VICE as a media outlet which uses hybrid journalism as a journalistic technique, and as having such editorial policies which includes the topics not been shown on the conventional media outlets such as CNN. The documentaries relocating marijuana towards mainstream scale made by VICE can be considered in this context. In order to clarify this context, it is better to examine the main themes of VICE's editorial policies which determine the topics to be covered, the ways of covering the topics.

However, as I indicated before, academic sources which discuss VICE are quite limited and VICE has no editorial policies at least in the conventional sense. That is why the way that I cover VICE has a narrowed scope. Despite this situation, VICE is a new phenomenon for journalism which is worth investigating. Although this section is more about a supplementary information regarding VICE, this section also functions as an examination of the meaning of marijuana normalization.

This section also aims to provide an answer for such question that why this kind of documentaries of VICE, rather than CNN which has produced and

broadcasted one of the most popular marijuana related documentary named *Weed*.

This section does not aim to make a comparison between CNN and VICE, in terms of the documentaries which these both media outlets broadcasted, but instead, to examine the major characteristics of VICE's marijuana documentaries in terms of their role towards normalization.

VICE Media Inc. is a United States based media outlet that its roots go back to the mid-1990s. Their very first initiation took place as a punk/youth magazine which was freely available in coffee and clothing shops, in 1994 in Canada. Their coverage was focusing on music, sex, drugs, graffiti, fashion and so on which primarily targeted the youths. VICE moved to New York in 1999 and reorganized the brand as a "*global youth media company, engages in print, event, music, online, television (TV), and feature film business activities in the United States and internationally*" (Bloomberg, 2017). Today, there are these sub-brands which broadcast online under the main website named vice.com: VICELAND, VICE News, VICE docs, VICE video, noisey. Today, their news, coverages, videos and digital contents are not quite different from their early works, in terms of containing the elements from their subcultural roots.

According to VICE Digital Media Kit (January 2016), their audiences mostly consist of the millennials and forty four percent of whom are college graduated. In the same report, VICE's audiences are identified as, thirty five percent of the audience are 18-24 year old, forty one percent of the audience

are 25-34 year old. These data are at the center of shaping VICE broadcastings because VICE is allegedly known as dedicated to entertain the millennials.

Their broadcasting operations mostly run on YouTube, and all the YouTube channels under the same brand have more than 11 million subscribers. VICE has also the highest watching time according to all of the original YouTube channels, as it was indicated the same report. However, VICE has broaden its media operations towards cable networks. VICE initiated a cable channel named VICELAND, collaborated with HBO, and selling stocks with five percents to Rupert Murdoch, founder of 21st Century Fox Media Company, in 2013. (Quinn, 2013, August 16) This situation worth discussing in terms of their way of broadcasting. In this strategy, VICE documentaries are available on vice.com webpage, on their YouTube channels and VICELAND cable channel. However, VICELAND is not available in Turkey.

2.2.1. Do the Activist Traits of VICE Revolve Around Normalization?

VICE is known as combining citizen journalism techniques and conventional media operations. In order to emphasize this situation, VICE's approach on the controversial issues and its editorial policies need to be evaluated. By doing so, I send an email to VICE and VICELAND's official email addresses which includes several questions regarding the link between VICE's editorial policies about Gezi protests, Islamic State and legalization of marijuana and

VICE's way of marijuana representation. However, I did not receive any reply. In this respect, my examination on VICE's editorial policies has expanded towards VICE's activist traits while covering Gezi Park protests in Istanbul in mid-2013.

VICE's activist traits became prominent by live video streaming which covered the Ferguson unrest in 2014 and its well known documentary named *The Islamic State* in the same year. This Emmy awarded documentary has been one of the most well known and controversial documentary made by VICE. The discussion about it revolved around both arguments that it was a journalistic score and it was an illegal activity due to explicitly depiction of extremist traits of ISIS members. In order to understand the meaning of portrayal of marijuana for VICE, this documentary needs to be mentioned, in terms of denoting VICE's journalistic style and traits and also its broadcasting policies.

An Al-Jazeera correspondent named Medyan Dairieh, who collaborated with VICE for this documentary accompanies with ISIS members including the top press officer Abu Mosa, interviews with the people who migrates to the areas controlled by ISIS and the people jailed but expressing their loyalty to the organization and also the children holding kalashnikov guns and shouting jihadist slogans during the documentary, including a threat to Turkey, which was that if Turkey prevents the water flow in the Euphrates, ISIS would "liberate" Turkey. The public response on this documentary encapsulated different arguments either negative or positive. Positive responds was about

journalistic quality of this documentary which “would make any ambitious reporter or news organization envious, and a feat now almost impossible for Western journalists after the executions of James Foley and Steven Sotloff” (March, 2014). On the other hand, negative responses were about the possibility of being illegal of this documentary over coordinating the ISIS members who were shown on the screen. This is because of the fact that Dairieh, the correspondent, embedded to ISIS to make this documentary for three weeks. Apart from a discussion about the ethical and legal issues of embedded journalism, in terms of possible violations of neutrality on showing propaganda because of its requirement of making collaboration with armed forces includes terrorist organizations, in order to avoid the high fatal risks of war zones.

In addition to all these, can this documentary be considered as normalizing jihadism as long as showing armed members of ISIS by holding guns and shouting threats? Likewise, can the documentaries that I analyze in this section be considered as normalizing marijuana which has been stigmatized before, by depicting it as a ‘normal’ and ordinary? In order to clarify this problematic, it is better to mention the other key documentaries covering Ukraine unrests in 2014 and especially Gezi Park protests in Turkey in 2013. This is not to assert that VICE is normalizing what it shows by its way it shows. But instead, it can be asserted that VICE’s approach on showing the jihadists is not different from showing the ‘stoners’. Even though VICE has no such a guidebook indicating editorial policies/principles as BBC’s editorial

guidelines, for its online contents. Still, it is possible to draw an inference on it by evaluating another kind of documentaries.

I would like to stress VICE's mini documentary about Gezi Park protest in 2013, named *Turkey's Civil Revolt: Istanbul Rising*. This documentary is especially considerable for me because Gezi Park protests have let me to meet with VICE for the first time. This is also because of the fact that VICE's way of covering the protests has been prominent by comparing with conventional news media in Turkey. I do not aim to follow a discussion on how Turkish mainstream news media covered the protests or the reasons to be shot down of the news media during the protests, but instead stressing the location of VICE. The documentary named *Turkey's Civil Revolt: Istanbul Rising* covers the protests begun on the last days of May in 2013 in Istanbul. In this stance, the mainstream Turkish news media has been criticized for not been covering the protests. Social media has been prominent in terms of not only being monitored the protests but also disseminating the political demands of protestors. During the protest Turkish mass media turned a blind eye to the events regarding the protests. Actually, this was a political background. According to Tufekci, a techno-sociologist, this was not a surprise in terms of a censorship in a broaden scale since the large media blockage on Roboski bombing in 2011. So, "social media became the place where real news circulated, and many people learned the importance of documentation by ordinary citizens" (2017, 47), as the censorship oppressed Turkish mass media.

Citizen journalism has been started to be experiencing for the first time. Many protestors have started to receive news from social media. On the other hand, in the VICE's documentary, VICE's correspondent named Tim Pool made a video streaming to broadcast the protests by using digital media tools such as streaming applications, Google Glass and real time online chat streaming. In the situation that the protestors have explored the 'benefits' of new media, VICE has been stressed. VICE, on one hand, used citizen journalism techniques, on the other hand, seems supported the protestors in spite of being a media giant, by covering the protests among the protestors. For example, Tim Pool introduces the barricades with details, which was multiply constructed in order to prevent from police intervention; covers the arguments from activists led to establish citizen journalism; and also covers a scene among the protestors who throw molotov cocktails through police.

What makes VICE interesting for this case is that its usage of both conventional and contemporary news coverage techniques. In doing so, guerrilla type of news coverage techniques are being used on the Internet and its cable channel named VICELAND. It can be said that VICE disseminates alternative type of news coverage towards mainstream scale such as cable network. On the other hand, VICE has not been classified, this locates VICE in somewhere between BuzzFeed and CNN, in terms of the medium that VICE uses.

Even though VICE's broadcastings can be considered as hybrid, in terms of their usage of both conventional and contemporary news media techniques, it is still hard to classify their way of broadcasting which are expanded into wide range of online content. This hybridization also means that news broadcasting and holding magazine roots together. According to Henrik Bødker (2017), one of the first researchers about VICE, this hybridization is revealed in these both contexts: Hybrid frame of vice.com website and hybrid journalism that used by VICE News. Hybrid frame of the vice.com website allows the news channel named *Vice News* to locate together with the other channels (p. 34). Hybrid journalism is about various techniques used while news covering (p. 35) such as citizen journalism and conventional journalism. These make VICE not only hybrid form, but also moving to a position which remarkably hard to classify, even though classification attempts have been introduced. VICE's broadcastings has not been classified in term of their journalistic methods, recent academic researches on VICE, which are still very limited, describe it in the sense of online journalism and immersion journalism.

Apart from VICE's online journalism, immersion journalism can be also related with this thesis. This is not just because of VICE's description on their way of news coverage, but also early attempt to describe this new phenomenon on journalism. This approach also provides a theoretical address to Shane Blackman's approach on DIY culture that I embraced in the previous chapter.

Immersion journalism is also called as participatory journalism which enables the reporters to “[engage]s *in the activity he or she wants to write about in order to get insider’s look at the subject*” (Hemley, 2012: 55) According to Mosser (2011), this type of journalism is a hybrid form of both news writing and creative writing, as it was identified as ‘*New Journalism*’ which is a challenge for conventional journalism practicing in terms of devastating the lines between fiction and journalism (p. 2). This type of journalism can be considered that was tracing back to gonzo journalism. Gonzo become popular with Hunter Thompson, journalist and writer from the United States. Thompson’s writing techniques are evaluated as determiner of type of journalism. Mosser (2012) asserts that Thompson’s techniques were key characteristics of gonzo such as “the presence of a first person, autobiographical narrator who assumes the role of protagonist; the participation of a male bonding figure” (2012: 86). However, Bødker (2017) disagrees that VICE followed gonzo roots, instead, he sees VICE’s techniques in the scale of ‘DIY aesthetic’ (2017: 37) These both argument can be considered as applicable in terms of the account that this thesis considers, VICE’s way of practicing journalism is evaluated in the setting of normalization, by disseminating activism type of news coverage aesthetics towards mainstream scale of news coverage. This is also to assert that, in the era conventional news outlet try to adapt to digitalization, VICE’s approach on this issue seems quite different, by tracing the contrary such as initiating a cable channel as a online media outlet. Apart from such discussion about what virtues properly represent VICE in terms of its editorial

policies, this situation should be considered in this way: VICE disseminates subterranean values towards mainstream.

2.2.2. Analysis

2.2.1.a. Iconized Depiction of the Empire of a Legal Drug Lord: *Kings of Cannabis*

Kings of Cannabis is the first documentary to be analyzed. This is because of my personal approach on this documentary of being a juxtaposition of the key themes of the history of drug prevention and normalization, such as crime, race, colonization, popular culture. *Kings of Cannabis* is the most viewed marijuana related documentary of VICE, which has 8.466.782 viewers on YouTube and commented by more than 5 thousand users (access date August 15th, 2017). In this respect, *Kings of Cannabis* has been primarily selected for this analysis.

This documentary broadcasted as an episode of a documentary series named Weediquette which is narrated by Krishna Andavolu. Weediquette is produced for airing on VICELAND mainly and vice.com website and on YouTube. Each episode of Weediquette is not a part of the same story, so that the episodes were broadcasted as different documentaries.

In this documentary, the story focuses on Arjan Roskan and his team while collecting marijuana seeds from Colombia. Arjan Roskan who is a

WEEDIQUETTE

Kings of Cannabis



VICE STAFF
Dec 28 2013, 2:00am



You might not know who Arjan Roskam is, but you've probably smoked his weed.

Figure 4 The web page of Kings of Cannabis on vice.com . The documentary covers a one of the biggest marijuana trader named Arjan Roskam.

businessperson, being asserted as the biggest marijuana seeds trader and cultivator in the world for being collecting native cannabis seeds from mostly Latin American countries. On the vice.com webpage, Roskan is introduced

as the person who is beneath the most popular types of recreational marijuana by claiming that “*You might not know who Arjan Roskam is, but you’ve probably smoked his weed*” (VICE STUFF: 2013, 28 December.

Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/kwpe8a/kings-of-cannabis-full-length) This description can be evaluated as an assumption that every VICE audience use recreational marijuana, and also be considered as the normalization is already constructed.

Even though taking plant seeds out of the country is claimed as illegal in Colombia, growing recreational plant is legal under restricted regularity. Roskan and his team pursues their business by going to Colombian mountains which are under FARC control. Their purpose is collecting the very native plant seeds and taking them to Amsterdam, in order to cultivate and trade them. Krishna Andavolu, the narrator, joins the team to explore this business.

The depiction of marijuana in this documentary is multi-fold but highly linked. The first is about the way of representation of Colombia, which is highly problematic, in terms of representing the country as wild, violent and highly criminal. The second is that the way of representing Roskan, the businessperson locating on the central theme alongside his economic success which seems that this depiction of economic success is about of marijuana, by iconizing for popular culture.

Colombia is one of the countries which have been subjected to harsh 'War on Drugs' policy of the United States in 1980s. In this respect, Colombia has been associating with crime, violence and civil war with FARC, since the 1980s. In this documentary, Colombia is represented as the same way with the 1980s and the roots of this narrated 'violence' is linked as a cause of the guerillas. Legality of drugs in Colombia and the United States is compared by this narrative and Roskan is seen on the central theme of the documentary by becoming a colonist drug emperor. The problematic case for this depiction is derived from the normalization approach which is applicable for the United

States, but not for Colombia. This is because of the narrative that marijuana has become normal due to the widening legalization, and the roots of racial segregation in the United States has been over by legalizing marijuana. It is possible to see this situation from Roskan's speech on the documentary, which reminds a question that if the legalization process in the United States is a part of 'War on Drugs'.

I don't understand why governments repress this product so much. It's completely ridiculous. There's absolutely no way that you can say this is a normal way of doing things. If this plant will be legal, many guerrillas and other people would not have money to finance wars against local farmers or other people. (Roskan: Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/kwpe8a/kings-of-cannabis-full-length)

The second aspect for this documentary is about the businessperson who is focused by the documentary. He seems to be iconized by being depicted as selling marijuana as a cultural commodity to the people associated with the marijuana culture. Roskan's milestones through success is highly stressed. His beginning of marijuana business was running a coffeeshop in Amsterdam in 1992, since then, his inventions on cultivation of the most popular marijuana seeds, such as white widow, silver haze, and online seeds trading makes him a legal drug lord. On one hand, his company, named Green House Seed Company, depicted as economically 'true success', and his way of representation is focused on depicting him as a marijuana icon for users. By doing so, Roskan is shown as an adventurer, true successful, highly wealthy and famous person around marijuana culture.

The representation of marijuana is undoubtedly normal. This documentary constructs the normalization by many aspects, as I mentioned before. To sum up, marijuana is represented as a cultural commodity and valuable for recreation. Recreational purpose is evaluated as the most crucial characteristic of normalization. On this documentary, both Krishna Andavolu and Arjan Roskan and the members of his team appear on the screen while smoking marijuana recreationally and getting high many times, while Colombian people on the documentary using cocaine.



Figure 5: Top comments about Kings of Cannabis on YouTube (Access date: August 15, 2017)

According to the highest comments on YouTube, on one hand legalization supporters seems that they had a channel to amplify their demands, on the other hand, industrialization of marijuana seems to bring with its critiques. Even though, commodification provides broadening the scale towards

normalization, this would open a space for discussing the role of the industry. In the second comment, the user's approach on marijuana is highly valuable, attribution on cocaine has highly stigmatization elements. In this comment, normal is the opposite of stigma, by attributing values through marijuana, although cocaine is more expensive and hard to obtain. In this respect, this comment's approach and this documentary's approach seems similar. However, with last comment, the user stresses the extend of legalization. Industrialization of marijuana is one of the major reason for legalization and also normalization, this user's approach on industrialization of marijuana is quiet negative. Actually this kind of response shows that normalization has extend towards a broaden scale in terms of discussing where to buy marijuana.

2.2.b. *Stoned Moms*: A Kind of Normal What Industry Needs More

Stoned Moms is the second documentary to be analyzed. This documentary is broadcasted on VICELAND channel, as the second episode of Weediquette TV show and on the vice.com main website of VICE and also on YouTube in September 2014. This documentary is worth analyzing in terms of including many interesting points in which the way that constructs the normalization in many aspects.

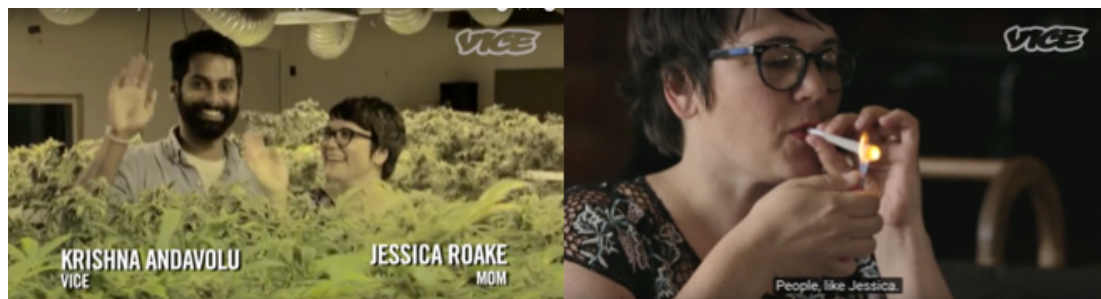


Figure 6: VICE correspondent and ‘Stoned Mom’ Jessica.

The story is concentrated on an ordinary woman’s trip to Colorado which is the first state legalized recreational marijuana in the United States. The woman, named Jessica Roake who is depicted as a mother of two children, although none of them is not appeared on the screen. Roake is introduced as living in a suburb in Washington D.C., from Maryland in which recreational marijuana is illegal. Krishna Andavolu, the correspondent of VICE, accompanies Roake, in order to visit marijuana industry facilities in Colorado, which are economically growing.

According to the depicted story, Jessica was using marijuana recreationally when studying at college. As having children, she quits because of having been dangerous to get marijuana. However, recreational marijuana is being started to legalize in many states, she want to use marijuana agains because legal recreational marijuana is safe. Krishna Andavolu, the correspondant, introduces this situation as ‘cool story’: “Jessica is interested in picking it up again as a safe recreational drug she can use when her kids go to bed.” (’00:56)

The meaning of normalization seems disseminated and shifted from young people towards ‘ordinary’ people. This is quite remarkable point in terms of

understanding the changing scale of normalization. Normalization has been evaluated as a practice in the scale of young people, in the settings of youth culture. In this documentary, the woman, introduced as a mother who uses drugs but in search of safety. This safety may derive from her children, despite of the fact that her children are not shown on the screen. Being a mother is represented as normalizer by showing her while smoking recreational marijuana explicitly. On the other hand, Andavolu's comment on her desire to smoke "*after her kids go to bad*" means the legal situation of recreational marijuana, which is not allowing children to consume. In Colorado, recreational marijuana is only allowed for people who are older than 21 (Article XVIII, Section 16: Personal Use and Regulation of Marijuana, Colorado Constitution).

On the other hand, marijuana industry in the United States, but mainly Colorado, is ever growing. In the first 10 months of 2016, legal recreational marijuana industry made more than one million dollars (Haddlestone, 2016). Additionally, Jessica is also introduced as "she is the kind of consumer the industry needs more of" (01:07). Recreational marijuana industry produces not only smokable plant but also foods, beverages and so on which contain marijuana oil, producing by condensing THC, the most prominent psychoactive chemical compound of marijuana.



Figure 7: Jessica visits a chocolate factory producing marijuana oil contained chocolates. While chocolate dough molding, Gymnopedie No.1 starts playing in the background.

In the another scene of the documentary, Jessica inspects the production process of the chocolates made with marijuana oil, talks with the factory owner about the fact that industry's target group is "people like us" while Erik Satie - Gymnopedie No.1 plays in the background. This depiction on marijuana can be evaluated as cultural attributions on marijuana which has been changed. The relationship between marijuana and music has been extracted from jazz music or psychedelic music, as it was attributing before. Blackman asserts that cultural commodification of drugs would be normalizer element in terms of the companies submitting their messages by bringing the 'cool story' parts of their products. Blackman (2010) argues:

through the commodification of popular culture drug use has become embedded within society as a feature of mainstream consumption. Corporate companies [...] have used images of drugs to market their respective products, irrespective of whether there is any link between their product and intoxication. (p. 350)

This situation seems transformed not only for cultural products but also commercial and industrial products. In this depiction, everyday life usage has obtained the link between the product itself and intoxication which has become normal in the everyday life basis.

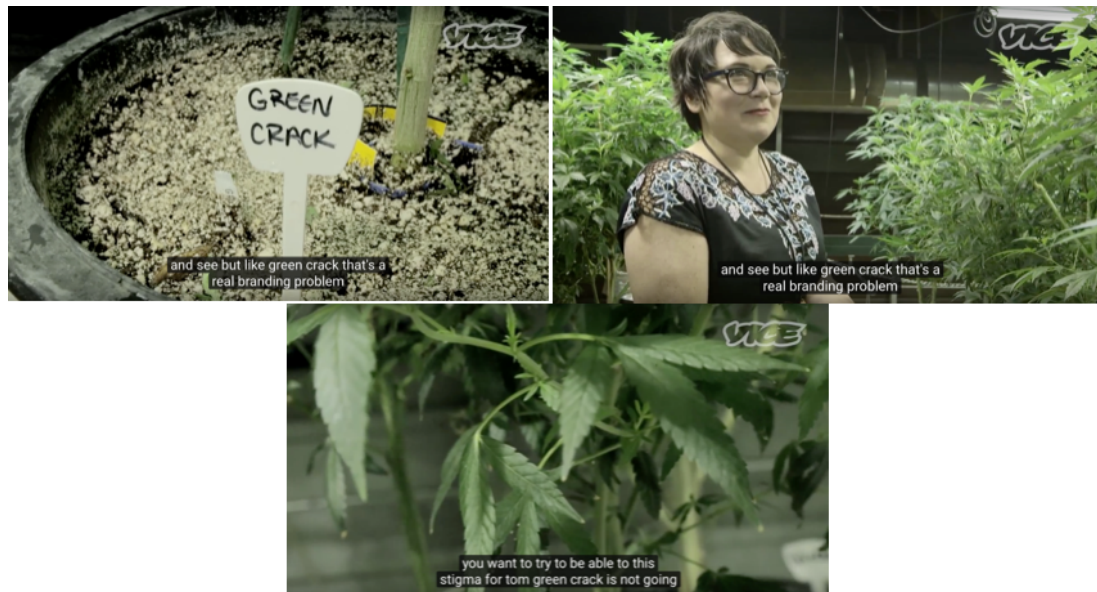


Figure 8: 'Crack' related moral panic is still remained.

On another plant facility, while Jessica talks about the legality of marijuana with these words: "It's like, my adult self, I can't believe I'm taking such respectable kind of tour like this [smells a plant] kind of place. It's all on the up-and-up, it's totally respectable, it's all legal" ('04:04). Afterwards, she picks out a plant having a brand named 'Green Crack'. Her response is a kind of remarkable in terms of highlighting the difference between crack and marijuana in terms of stigmatization. She assumes this brand as 'real branding problem in order to get rid of this stigma'. This shows that 'epidemic' crack related moral panic still pursues. That is why theoretical framework on normalization of drugs has been narrowed marijuana down. On one hand,

marijuana is normalized, as this documentary depicts, on the other hand, moral panic about hard drugs such as crack cocaine is being amplified, in spite of that Jessica mentioned this in stigmatization context by taking this account in marketing setting.



Figure 9: Top comments under *Stoned Moms* on YouTube.

Finally, top comments about this documentary on YouTube is illustrated as *Figure 9*. The most rated comments are about the mothers. It seems that this normalization disseminated for millennials or rather young people, because when taking account the users comment, there is no indication about the mothers of the users commented use marijuana, if it is consider that the commentators would be millennials because of the key characteristics of VICE's audience. Marijuana does not seem normalized for adult people. The tone of these top comments seems a kind of lament for showing how extended normalization. As this documentary shows that the marijuana

industry needs more 'ordinary people' in order to extend their profit, but it does not seem disseminated towards adult 'ordinary' people.

It can be also argued that the last comment illustrated as Figure 9, the response on this documentary has three fold. The first is ironic as it is quite obvious. The second comment seems highly supporting. The third comment is worth mentioning specifically. By the words of "before it was legal" may indicate that normalization is linked with the legal status of the plant. If the plant become legal, the plant can be considered as normal, in this stance. But this user's approach is quite different in terms of supporting legalization, because this user seems uncomfortable with legalization or normalization. This may because marijuana would be extracted from being a space for opposition. In this manner, "before it was legal" means the hardest times for being an activist.

2.2.c. *Stoned Kids*: Curing with Marijuana with Pleasure

This documentary was aired as the first episode of VICELAND's television documentary series named *Weediquette*. It was available on YouTube when it was broadcasted in February 2016. When it was first broadcasted on VICELAND's YouTube channel, it was available to watch. however while writing this thesis it became unavailable. This is why I wrote this analysis based on my notes while it was available to watch. Additionally, VICELAND

channel on the main website of VICE is also unavailable in Turkey. Because of this situation I could not add users comment from YouTube.

This documentary focuses on the children who were treated by using medicinal marijuana. In this respect, in order to refer marijuana with its medicinal traits, the plant and its related substance is called cannabis, cannabinoid, and so on.

I had two reasons to include this documentary in this thesis. The first is the representation of medicinal marijuana is used in order to normalize by being shown with its medicinal traits alongside its pleasure giving and recreational traits. The second is my personal approach on medicinal marijuana depiction. Even though medicinal marijuana can be considered as cure for cancer, treatment standards such as dosage and its potency are still being discussed (Ghosh et al.: 2015), it is worth discussing this issue in the context of the mediative role of mass media, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter.

In the first scene, the VICE correspondent, Krishna Andavolu talks to his mother on the speaker and tells about his new show, while getting high, in a marijuana growing facility. The mother warns him not to smoke marijuana on camera in order to be a good example for children and subsequently Andavolu laughs loudly.

Andavolu interviews the children who are treated by medicinal marijuana and their families and also a cancer researcher who is known with his experimental treatment with medicinal marijuana. The narrator of the

documentary tells that he investigated the medical benefits of marijuana. Even though it is not concretely asserted that marijuana was totally accepted to use for medicinally, its way of representation seems highly positive. For my personal account, it is so obvious, in terms of focusing only on children, instead of adult patients. This situation worth discussing in the context of ethics, but this thesis focuses on marijuana portrayal in the context of normalization. However, the correspondent strongly tells that using marijuana treatment was implemented under the permission of the parents, still specifically focusing on them seems worth evaluating this issue in the context of mediative role of the mass media, apart from the ethics. Jock Young argues in the deviancy context but it seems applicable in the different context. According to Young, psychiatrists and other kind of experts creates a mediative contact between deviants and the community in account for



Figure10: Andavolu tries highly concentrated THC oil using for cancer treatment

'normal' people. (Young, 1971: 182. retrieved from Shiner, 2009: 25) This means that the very first function of the experts was stigmatizing the people whom are labelled as deviants. By doing so, the role of mass media became amplifying this stigmatization.

However, this argument may only be applicable for normalization. This means that the experts, for this documentary cancer researchers contributed for disseminating normalization. My personal approach on experimental marijuana treatment on children is not negative but it can be assumed that if this experiments would become more successful in a broaden scale, normalization of marijuana would become thoroughly disseminated toward mainstream conventions. Therefore, the role of the mass media, VICE for our case, would become normalizer, conversely as it was stigmatizer before.

On the other hand, the narrator, Andavolu, tries highly intensified THC oil which was used for treatment. His first respond is about the its taste by saying that the taste was like bong water. Afterwards, he gets high and spends his day by experiencing very psychedelic moments. This can be evaluated that acceptable medicinal marijuana could make recreational marijuana normal.



Figure 11: Top comments under *Stoned Kids*

Because of the fact that *Stoned Kids* is not available as a full episode on YouTube, I used the comments of the preview version of this documentary on YouTube, with the title of *Stoned Kids: Beginner Dose (Exclusive Preview)*. According to these comments, there is no reference on medicinal purpose of marijuana, despite this documentary evaluating marijuana with its medicinal benefits in the setting of experimental treatment for cancer. This shows that stressing the recreational traits of the plant seems used for representing the medicinal traits of the plant

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, regarding the use of drugs, I have tried to incorporate the prevailing approaches in sociological literature into the depiction of drugs by focusing on marijuana.

Normalization, in the first manner, was considered as a dissemination of the subterranean values towards mainstream scale. By doing so, the scale and the settings of the normalization is not clear. In this respect, VICE's approach on journalism and normalization of marijuana are not quite linked with each other. Still, in this thesis, normalization concept has been used as a base for examination vice.com documentaries. From this point of view, my very first conclusive assumption is asserting the need of a major revision for normalization debate., in terms of examining the determiner characteristics of norm, normal and also abnormal.

For norm producing setting, it can be assert that the current situation of marijuana in the United States, as it is depicting on vice.com documentaries, has been institutionalized. This is also to assert that normalization debate is

applicable for implementing as long as it provides the changing attitudes of dominant social norms on drugs, but it is not quite applicable for providing the scales and settings of the current situation of marijuana.

As *Reefer Madness* showed that use of marijuana was stigmatized by associating with crime and violence. By producing this stigma, political figures seems highly determiner on this situation. This stigmatization went in parallel with legally prevention of marijuana. By starting with the 1950s, this approach started to be criticized. In Howard Becker's argument distracting marijuana use from individual pathology, provided a space to consider marijuana usage as pleasure seeking activity which was learnable. It can be argued that this was the very first step towards normalization in terms of being extracted from stigmatization. However, the media depiction on drugs, mainly marijuana was not depicted as a pleasure seeking activity. The media representation of marijuana in the normalization settings can be considered as started in the 1960s, by the films such as *Man With the Golden Arm*, *Easy Rider* and *Head* which represented drugs by distracting crime related activity and evaluated as a pleasure seeking activity. By the term of emerging subcultures, LCD started to appear on the screen and LCD, marijuana and other kind of illicit drugs became more appearing. It can be argued that popular culture had a triggering role towards normalization, but in a limited scope. Drug use pursued to its attribution of stigma. Jock Young assertion on the role of the mass media in the 1970s, was a prominent argument for the media depiction of drugs in the 1980s in the United States, by means of War

on Drugs policies. In the 1980s, this amplified stigmatization had an impact on television. Crime related television shows such as *COPS* has become popular. This moral panic became a legacy for stigmatization. On the other hand, music press attention on celebrities' drug use was one of the major topic for drug depiction of the media. In that term, on one hand this moral panic was pursuing, on the other hand the press media covered celebrities' drug use in the rave culture settings. The representation of marijuana had a characteristic which was allowing celebrities to use in the privileged settings. In the 1990s, Public debates on legalization of marijuana either recreational or medicinal was on the focus of the news press.

vice.com documentaries can be considered as a part of this historical context. It can be argued based on the analysis that I have made in the previous chapter. On the one hand, while vice.com is producing normalization towards the use of marijuana, on the other hand, it continues to support the stigmatization of the hard drugs. In parallel with the marijuana legalization campaigns in the context of United States, vice.com follows a way in which both the medicinal and recreational use of the plant is being sustained. In the normalization process of marijuana, the first stance is to promote the idea of pleasure seeking. However, as an addition to this idea, vice.com specifically points out the aspects such as cultural accommodation, and economic benefits, which, in turn, contributes to the concept of normalization.

The first aspect of normalization is regarding marijuana consumption as a pleasure seeking activity. vice.com documentaries that I analyzed show that normalization seemed effusing from pleasure seeking activity towards every aspect of everyday life. In the normalization debate, it has been indicated that the users were confronted with the possibility of stigmatization, but this potential stigmatization is not covered on vice.com documentaries.

Therefore, normalization seems to be reached and represented as taken for granted.

The second aspect of normalization is that young people who use marijuana had a pioneering role among normalization by producing norm, in the youth culture setting. The vice.com documentaries that I analyzed also show that these norms have been attributed not only for young people but also for the people whom are not considered as young. Even though VICE's audience consists of young people, but mostly millennials, this attribution might have a purpose that young people would pursue their use of marijuana in the future. As I analyzed in *Stoned Moms*, the marijuana industry seeks for the users who are 'people like us'. So, the role of vice.com documentaries seems promoting marijuana use especially for people who are attributed as 'ordinary'.

Another aspect of normalization is that, as Jock Young argues, the media had a mediative role between the 'experts' and the people whom were labelled as deviants. This mediative role produces stigmatization by the distorted

knowledge that produced by the experts. However, as vice.com documentaries, as it is portrayed in *Stoned Kids*, illustrate that the role of the mass media transitioned into the mediative role which producing normalization for marijuana. On the other hand, the legacy of moral panic on 'crack' is still pursuing.

Therefore, it can be argued that hybrid journalism characteristics that vice.com used, including immersion type of journalism, is quite remarkable in terms of portraying normalization. Immersion type of journalism allows the narrator as a first person of the story. If it is assumed that drug use was a matter of experience, portraying the normalization should be done in the way of amplifying the experience. This means that vice.com as a normalizer media output for marijuana by using transitioning techniques of journalism, is caused of transitioning social values, from stigmatization towards normalization.

However, it can be also asserted that normalization literature do not provide further insight for such question that which kind of societal settings provide this kind of normalization which VICE incorporate. By this question, what is tried to mean that what is beneath normalization as a social norm is not clear. For what kind of 'normal' that VICE serves needs to be clarified in terms of examining the relationship between changing social norms and normalization. Throughout this thesis, my aim was to reveal the normalization of marijuana, an illicit drug which was considered as a stigma in the past, and

how VICE is disseminating this normalcy. In order to create a correlation between these both, I examined the major topics, theories and assertions of normalization literature, for constituting a theoretical base of this thesis. However, normalization literature has provided a limited scope. This scope is more about the scale and extend of using marijuana as a recreational activity which is located at the opposite side of stigmatization. In this respect, societal and normative references of normalization of marijuana is not obvious as long as being assumed as located at the opposite side of the stigma. This is why the VICE documentaries that I analyzed emphasize marijuana as normal in a way it was taken for granted.

In order to understand the normative references of normalization, a prominent text from Jeffrey Matthew London (2010) seems useful for examining normative scale of normalization. His consideration on the current situation of marijuana as 'medicalization' by addressing legalization of medicinal marijuana, rather than 'normalization', in the context of Foucauldian historical approach. In this respect, the powerful forces and the institutions which determine the norms are clearer, by comparing with normalization literature. Even though London's argument on this situation is more related with medicinal marijuana, these normative references which can be considered as useful in the setting of recreational use of the plant. These arguments can be summed with few major points.

London basically argues contemporary discourse on marijuana which has derived from medicalization of the plant has produced official legitimization for the patients. (2010: 118) This means that the user has transformed into the patient as long as he/she uses medicinal marijuana under the permission/control on official agencies. This situation is quite obvious in *Stoned Kids*, in terms of showing the patients who suffer from cancer. VICE's depiction of marijuana showed that marijuana user is constructed as a patient who uses marijuana for treatment of cancer. Legalization of medicinal use of marijuana has an opportunity to assign set of rules such as how to use or who to use marijuana. VICE documentaries seems serving in favor of this kind of set of rules which are assigned by the institutions. Moreover, this situation can be expanded towards consumerist approach. Marijuana user is also constructed as a consumer in the everyday life basis. One of the most major arguments of Becker was about the use of marijuana is learnable activity by societal interaction. In the current situation, these set of rules which also provide to regulate citizens' behaviors as it was occurred while stigmatizing marijuana by the beginning of the 1930s (2010: 121-134) and VICE might provide to disseminate these kind of rules deployed by the institutions. By doing so, it can be asserted that this normative addressing can create its new kind of stigma. According to VICE's representation of marijuana, marijuana is normal in the limited scale and under the limited circumstances. Commoditization of cultural rebellion is another crucial point that London (2010: 133) argues, which can be considered as marijuana activism. Hybrid form of journalism that VICE uses and commoditization of cultural rebellion seems linked with

each other. Even though this concept as in the way that London argues has been discussed in the first chapter (with the notion of cultural commodification) in another context and stressed in the discussion of normalization in terms of occurring in the scale of dominant culture, as a major part towards normalization. Therefore, it can be argued that VICE's way of hybrid form of journalism and cultural commodification of the plant are both consequential situations.

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