



Research paper

Turn on, tune in, but don't drop out: The impact of neo-liberalism on magic mushroom users' (in)ability to imagine collectivist social worlds

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ABSTRACT

Background: Between 2002 and 2005 fresh or unprepared psilocin-based 'magic' mushrooms were legal to possess and traffic in the UK, and commercial sales demonstrated a significant market for this hallucinogenic drug. During and after this time there has been relatively little analysis concerning how magic mushroom users accounted for their drug use, nor on the wider political and cultural discourses that might have shaped this sense making.

Method: In this paper we present a critical analysis of contemporary discourses around magic mushroom use in the UK through a multi-level discourse analysis of focus group data from 20 magic mushroom users (13 male and 7 female, mean age 25 years), taken at a time when magic mushrooms were being legally sold in the UK.

Results: Locating participants' use of magic mushrooms within the context of a culture of intoxication, neo-liberalism and the legacy of 1960s psychedelic philosophy, we identify six interpretative repertoires in their talk, which were subsumed within two overarching discourses. The first discourse drew on neo-liberal rhetoric, constructing participants as rational risk managing subjects engaged in a form of calculated hedonism that was legitimated as an act of personal freedom and consumer choice. The second discourse, identified as 'post-psychedelic', both celebrated and problematised a collective, connected 'hippy' form of spirituality.

Conclusion: The paper analyses the relationships between identity, consumption and citizenship by arguing that people's ability to imagine collectivist, spiritual or interconnected social worlds has been contained within neo-liberalism rhetoric.

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Introduction

Psilocin-based 'magic' mushrooms (PBMMs) in prepared forms (e.g. dried or extracted) have been illegal in the UK since the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act. But fresh or unprepared PBMMs were legal to possess and traffic until the 2005 Drugs Act, UK. Between 2002 and 2005 commercial traffickers exploited the legality of fresh/unprepared PBMM, selling them in shops and on the internet. And commercial sales in the UK demonstrated a significant public appetite for this hallucinogenic drug (Letcher, 2006; Riley & Blackman, 2008). A similar pattern occurred in Japan and the Netherlands where fresh PBMMs were sold until 2002 and 2007 respectively. Little research has focused on the meanings of PBMM for users. In this paper we address this issue by employing a multi-level discourse analysis of how four groups of UK magic mushroom users made sense of their PBMM consumption.

PBMMs are creamy-bluish in colour. Although indigenous in the UK, a larger variety originating from countries such as Thailand (*Psilocybe Samuiensis*) and Mexico (*Psilocybe Cubensis*) were grown for commercial sale during 2002–2005. PBMMs affect information processing and produce a range of sensory and perceptual affects. Although the effects of mushrooms are context dependent, users tend to report certain patterns at high doses, including a sense of connection with all things (both human and non-human) which may be experienced as a transcendental or mystical (Griffiths et al., 2006, 2008; Letcher 2008). Such spiritual associations that have led some researchers/activists to argue that the category 'entheogen' ('manifesting the divine within') better defines PBMM than 'psychedelic' or 'hallucinogen' (for a review of PBMM research typologies see Letcher (2008) and Thompson and Riley (submitted for publication)).

In recent Western history magic mushroom use entered public discourse in the late 1950s, triggered by an article in R. Gordon Wasson in *Life* magazine in 1957 and more generally by the psychedelic 'hippy' counter culture. A significant figure associated with psychedelic counter culture was Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary, who in the late 1960s created the now famous

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phrase 'turn on, tune in, drop out'. 'Turning on' referred to using psychedelics and practices, such as meditation, to create new levels of awareness of oneself through altered states of consciousness. 'Tuning in' was the subsequent shift towards aestheticism, morality and spiritual fulfilment. 'Dropping out' was a politicised move to an alternative spiritual life free from capitalist values (Wells, 1973).

'Psychedelic philosophy' was assimilated into the 'hippy' counter culture of the time as part of a complex interplay of drug use, challenges to dominant cultural values and politics, and alternative life styles that included an ideology of connectedness with others and the natural environment (Hedgepeth & Stock, 1970; Wells, 1973). PBMM received public interest through its associations with 'hippies' so that by the 1970s when the 'hippy' movement itself was in decline, aspects of 'hippy' culture, including music, style, and perspectives on the consumption of hallucinogenic drugs had entered popular culture in Western societies.

From the 1970s to the present day aspects of psychedelic philosophy have been re-appropriated by various UK subcultures, including the free music festivals of the 1970s and the New Age traveller and Acid House movements of the 1980s and 1990s (Letcher, 2006). A similar pattern emerged in the general population, with psychedelia becoming part of popular culture (for example, 'acid' colours were fashionable in the 1980s) whilst the consumption of hallucinogenic drugs remained low despite an overall increase in drug use (Shiner & Newburn, 1997). For example, British Crime Survey statistics demonstrate that of the 16–59 year olds surveyed in England and Wales between 1996 and 2004, between 0.5% and 1.1% reported PBMM use within the last year, compared with 9.5–10.7% reporting cannabis use and 1.5% and 2.2% reporting ecstasy use. This pattern of low consumption of PBMM compared to other substances is consistent across available data from the BCS (Hoare, 2009).

In 2002, when magic mushrooms began to be openly sold in the UK, the cultural landscape in Britain had changed significantly since the original psychedelic movement. Illicit recreational drug use and high levels of alcohol consumption had become normative for many young people causing analysts to talk of a 'culture of intoxication' (Measham & Brain, 2005). Particular drugs were no longer so tightly associated with specific youth subcultures, and subcultures themselves had fractured into a kaleidoscope of contemporary youth styles and practices. And a new set of meanings had emerged, which reconstituted drug use, subjectivity and citizenship through the rhetoric of neo-liberalism.

Neo-liberalism is a form of governance that has come to dominate British politics and common sense notions of subjectivity (Kelly, 2006). Neo-liberalism was a response to the sense of risk produced by deindustrialisation, globalization and deregulation in late modern economies (Harris, 2004). Neo-liberalism constitutes the ideal self as an autonomous citizen who is free to make rational choices in order to survey and improve themselves (Rose, 1990). Citizenship becomes reconstituted from a set of rights the state provided for its citizens to a set of responsibilities the citizen has to the state, in particular, to be responsible for his/her own welfare through economic participation and appropriate forms of consumption (Riley, Morey, & Griffin, 2010). Neo-liberalism is inherently contradictory; one must understand oneself as making free choices, whilst choosing only 'appropriate' choices. The compulsory individualism of neo-liberalism also constrains the possibility of collectivist discourses (Walkerdine, 2003). Neo-liberalism therefore stands in direct contrast to the collectivist discourse of the original psychedelic philosophy.

Neo-liberalism is evident in UK government policy on illicit drug use, which reconfigured drug takers from addicts who were unable to exercise free will, to autonomous choice-makers who choose to 'use' or 'misuse' drugs (with misuse being constituted as harming the user, other people or the user's economic participation)

(O'Malley, 2002). This emphasis on individual responsibility resonates with harm reduction philosophy, an approach supported in government policy that seeks to lessen the dangers of drug use through a range of practices often associated with informed, limited and controlled drug use (O'Hare et al., 1992; O'Malley, 2002).

Drug users also draw on neo-liberal rhetoric by constructing their drug use as a form of consumer choice (Riley, Morey, & Griffin, 2008). But, drug users also draw on discourses that have the potential to challenge neo-liberalism (Riley, Morey, et al., 2010; Riley, Griffin, & Morey, 2010). And the very nature of the magic mushroom 'trip', which is weighted towards connective experiences, may also increase users' likelihood of seeking alternatives to neo-liberal individualism to make sense of their experiences, particularly as survey research suggests that it is these communal and spiritual experiences that magic mushrooms users enjoy (Riley & Blackman, 2008). Analysing how magic mushroom users negotiated this contradictory discursive landscape, at a time when mushrooms were legally available and thus 'untainted' by associations with criminality, offers us a way to explore how understandings of drug use, identity, consumption and citizenship may be negotiated.

There has been almost no analysis concerning magic mushroom users' accounts of their drug use during this time, nor on the wider political and cultural discourses that might have shaped this sense making. Instead research has focused on examining the psychological, pharmacological or therapeutic effects of magic mushrooms (e.g. identifying core dimensions of altered states of consciousness such as the experience of oceanic boundlessness (Hasler, Grimberg, Benz, Huber, & Vollenweider, 2004; Vollenweider, Vontobel, Hell, & Leenders, 1999)). Two notable exceptions are papers by Letcher (2008) and Riley and Blackman (2008). Letcher (2008) employed a Foucauldian discourse analysis on published texts to identify parameters for the historical and contemporary theorising of consciousness under the influence of psychedelic mushrooms. These included discourses legitimated by the scientific and political establishment (pathological, psychological and prohibitionist) and user generated discourses (recreational, psychedelic, entheogenic and animistic). In exploring the ways that these discourses allow people to understand mushroom produced experiences, Letcher (2008) concluded that users accounts, such as animistic experiences, become unthinkable within dominant discourses.

Riley and Blackman (2008) used interpretative phenomenological analysis to analyse qualitative data as part of a survey study of 174 PBMM users' patterns of, reasons for, pleasures and problems with mushroom use. The study indicated that non-marginalised young adults engaged in infrequent but intense mushroom use, which was located within a wider recreational drug and alcohol culture. Popular reasons for PBMM consumption were laughing, hallucinations, altered perspective and feelings of connection, such as being closer to nature (41–74% of participants). Negative experiences reported including paranoia (35%) and anxiety (32%). In this paper we analyse the qualitative data from the Riley and Blackman study in greater depth to address the following questions:

How did users understand their PBMM consumption at a time when PBMM could be freely sold commercially?

What can this tell us about contemporary understandings of drug use, identity, consumption and citizenship?

Method

Four focus groups were held in 2004 with 20 participants (13 males, seven females). Their mean age was 24.7 years with a range of 16–42 years, 18 described themselves as 'white-British' or 'white-Other' and two as 'mixed race'. Eleven were employed or self-employed, five were in education, two were travelling, two were unemployed and one was a home carer. They were

asked to complete a short questionnaire on their drug use which showed that on average participants consumed approximately 10 g of bought mushrooms per session or 40 indigenous mushrooms (range 10–80). These amounts are enough to give a 'high dose effect', which can produce open and closed eye visuals, intense emotional feelings and spiritual awakenings (Riley & Blackman, 2008). In the past year all the participants had used alcohol and other common drugs such as cannabis or ecstasy. Two participants described using less common drugs, 'Rebrov' (25 years) had used fly agaric mushrooms and Derek (42 years) heroin and ibogaine. The focus group demographics and drug/alcohol use patterns were similar to those of the wider survey study (Riley & Blackman, 2008).

Participants were recruited via 'head' shops in the South West of England and at a drugs information centre in Edinburgh, which was located near shops that sold mushrooms. Focus group 1 (seven participants) and 2 (four participants) were held in a private room at the drop in centre. Focus group 3 (three participants) and four (six participants) were held in participants' homes. The focus group schedule asked about patterns of, reasons for, pleasures and problems with mushroom use. Participants chose their own pseudonym. Focus groups were used because they allow rich data to be obtained on the discursive sense making that participants may jointly and individually draw on. The study was approved by the relevant University Research Ethics committee.

The data were analysed using a multi-level form of discourse analysis that drew together aspects of discursive psychology, interpretative repertoires and Foucauldian discourse analysis. There is a body of work that supports synthesising forms of discourse analysis (e.g. Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Riley, 2002; Willott & Griffin, 1997). Advantages include being able to draw on discursive psychology to analyse the interactive accomplishments of talk, such as managing facts, interest and accountability; and locating these accounts in the socio-historic context in which the discussion is situated, either in terms of the common sense ways that we have about talking about objects and events in the world (interpretative repertoires) and/or wider discourses that are often associated with institutions (such as government policy) (Foucauldian discourse analysis). Our conception of subjectivity is that people draw on a set of (multiple, contradictory and culturally specific) repertoires from which to make sense of their world. These repertoires gain their explanatory power by being located in wider discourses and through the specific ways in which they are deployed in interaction.

Thematic coding was used to identify interpretative repertoires and once a body of evidence for each repertoire (in the form of extracts) was formed, a deviant case analysis was conducted to explore any occasion when this repertoire was contradicted. These contradictions allowed us to either reject the repertoire or understand its discursive workings better (see analysis of extract 5 as an example). Having identified a series of repertoires we explored whether they could be made sense of within broader discourses based on our reading of relevant literatures, thus allowing us to ask questions in keeping with Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (and with Tupper's (2008) argument that drug users sense making reflects the broader ideological regimes in which they live).

In our analysis we identified two distinctive overarching discourses, which we entitled 'neo-liberalism' and 'post-psychedelic'. Each of these discourses subsumed three interpretative repertoires. Extracts that were selected to represent these repertoires were then subjected to an analysis that drew on discursive psychology to explore situated accomplishments of this talk (e.g. Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007). Transcription notation is as follows:

- (.) A short pause (less than 0.5 s approximately)
- (..) A longer pause between 0.5 and 1 s
- = no gap between speakers' talk

[speakers talk simultaneously]

Underlining represents emphasis

u>

↑ rising intonation

[] Additional information provided in brackets

Analysis

Neo-liberal discourse

The right to exercise personal freedom

A tenet of neo-liberalism is that individuals are constituted as being able to make free and rational choices. In our data this understanding enabled a repertoire, 'the right to exercise personal freedom', which constructed PBMM consumption as a legitimate individual choice. See extract 1 below, in which Max is responding to being informed of legislation banning magic mushrooms.

for a lot of people [mushrooms] is part of their culture so I don't see why (.) because somebody wants to make a rule to now ban this culture I don't see that it's right (.) I think that's imposing upon peoples' rights (.) if you're over eighteen (.) if you're an adult (.) you can make your own decision we're adults (.) why do people want to just impose more (inaudible) upon us it's like censorship we're adults we can handle it, we can deal with the consequences these are our choices (.) these are our lives I mean (.) eventually we're not gonna be able to smoke, smoking in public is banned in most places (.) we're not going to be able to eat red meat it's just gonna get completely controlled dominate society where you have absolutely no freedom (.) outcasts as well (.) you get security (.) but absolutely no freedom (.) I mean we're not actually kids right (.) we're actually real all adults (.) everybody else is adults and that's what we're doing (.) these are our choices (extract 1, focus group 2, Max, age 20)

Here Max initially constructs the legislation against PBMMs as legislation against a culture. This move is constructed as illegitimate through the repertoire of 'the right to exercise personal freedom' ('you're an adult (.) you can make your own decision'). Shifting from the generalised 'you' to a more personal 'we', the participant defines himself and his friends as adults and decision makers who should be free to make choices and be responsible for those choices. Max develops his argument by drawing on real and fictionalised examples of state control (smoking, meat eating), creating an extreme case formulation of the logical outcomes of state intervention on individual choice ('it's just gonna get completely controlled dominate society where you have absolutely no freedom').

The extract finishes by positioning Max and his friends as having adult status and thus a right to exercise choice, reasserting the repertoire of the right to exercise personal freedom. This repertoire was frequently deployed across the focus groups, positioning magic mushroom use as one example of a normative expectation to exercise individual choice in consumption practices. Within this repertoire state intervention that prevented people from 'freely' consuming was constructed as illegitimate. Participants identified a need for government involvement only in providing users with the opportunities to make informed choices, constructing magic mushroom use as a calculated risk activity made safe(r) by the provision of appropriate information.

PAULA: it's the same thing with all drugs (.) there should be gurus (.) there should be professionals (..) and that's why you should legalise it (.) even though-it's always going to be around (.) you can't ever get rid of it (.) but at least have professionals↑ (.) like that are in charge (.) so that they can give (.) the guidance and you know (.) [laughs] if that was the case they might not

have so many problems with crack because like (.) you know you'd have specific people in certain places that (..) you wouldn't you wouldn't just be dosed out and (.) random (..) it would be controlled↑ (..) which is what needs to happen (extract 2, focus group 4, Paula, age 22)

In extract 2 Paula calls for experts to give guidance, people defined first with the counter cultural term 'gurus' and then repositioned within more managerial language as 'professionals'. Paula argues that for all drugs there is a need for professionals who are both in charge and who can offer guidance. She uses what is often considered a problematic drug, crack, as an example of the positive difference such professionals would make. The difference they make gives us an insight into what is being constructed as an appropriate form of drug use, namely drug use that is 'controlled' rather than excessive or chaotic ('dosed out and (.) random').

Controlled consumption is appropriate consumption

Neo-liberalism constitutes subjects as responsible for the choices they make. Whether one uses or misuses drugs becomes an outcome of an individual's in/ability to self-manage. We argue that it is such sense making that allows Paula (above and with Lara in extract 3) to locate problematic use within the individual.

Paula: yeah (.) it's all about the person it's never about the drugs it always always comes down to the person and I hate it when (..) like when they say "oh it's the drugs" its not [laughs]
Lara: it's about self control (extract 3, focus group 4, Paula, age 22 and Lara, age 17)

In extract 3 Paula uses emphasis, repetition and bottom line arguments to construct individuals as the source for potential problematic drug use ('it's all about the person ... it always always comes down to the person') whilst drugs are positioned as unproblematic ('it's never about the drugs'). Lara then supports Paula with an argument for individual responsibility ('it's about self control').

Participants usually constructed their own drug use as a form of controlled and thus appropriate consumption. Drawing on aspects of harm reduction philosophy 'controlled consumption' was constituted as taking a considered perspective and moderate amounts.

there's two (.) sort of different (.) types of people though isn't there↑ (.) there's people who will go out and drink (.) ten pints of lager at the weekend and then maybe on top of that take five ecstasy and (.) think that's (.) what you do (.) then they might go and buy some mushrooms (.) take a bag of mushrooms and think that's (.) the thing to do (.) whereas there's people who will go and do (.) research and see that you should only take this amount or that amount (.) for this side effect (.) some people will research it (.) some people just won't (extract 4, focus group 1, Talula, age 25)

Here Talula constitutes two types of people: those who use drugs and alcohol inappropriately (and who are associated with ignorance and excessive consumption) and those who use appropriately (associated with restricted and informed use). Appropriate use is thus linked with neo-liberal values of self-management and control. Talula's support for self-management is built up through a range of discursive rhetoric. She creates exclusive categories of people (*there's two ... types of people*, *some people will research ... some people just won't*). And having gained the implicit agreement of the other participants with this dichotomy (since no one disagrees with her hedge (*isn't there*↑)), she expands her argument through imagined examples of excessive consumption (*'drink ten pints of*

lager at the weekend ... take five ecstasy's on top'), which is constructed as inappropriate through a repeated phrase that implies that such thoughts are incorrect (*'thinks that what's you do'*).

Extract 4 is an example of a dominant form of sense making in the data. Often the repertoires of 'the right to exercise personal freedom' and 'controlled consumption is appropriate consumption' were used together. Occasionally participants described their own use as excessive. These accounts had the potential to challenge the repertoire of 'controlled consumption is appropriate consumption'. However, as in the extract below, this talk was usually deployed in ways that upheld the values of self-management and control. For example, excessive use was constructed as having negative consequences or as highly unusual.

there is (.) one time that erm (..) it was after we'd been out clubbing (..) and so we'd taken other things as well and (..) decided just to (.) go for everything that was in the house and we'd had some mushrooms sitting in the cupboard that had been dried out on the radiator (..) about three, three four weeks before (..) and we decided to eat those as well (..) and that (..) just turned out to be quite nasty for a couple of people (..) I enjoyed myself (..) but er another two people that were there didn't have a very good time at all (extract 5, focus group 1, Talula, age 25)

Talula's story is of excessive consumption, in which a quantity and variety of drugs are taken. Other than mushrooms, these drugs are not named, but implied through the phrases '*taken other things as well*' and '*go for everything that was in the house*'. These phrases normalise drug use within the clubbing context and create an understanding that those living in her house had a cache of drugs that had been there for up to a month. This context sets up an account of self-control (drugs are kept unused over a period of time) and of excessive use (at times '*everything*' will be consumed). The tensions inherent in these accounts are resolved as the story unfolds into a morality tale since, despite the speaker enjoying herself, it '*turned out to be quite nasty for a couple of people*'.

Economic citizens

In the 'economic citizen' repertoire participants linked controlled drug use with economic participation, constructing magic mushroom use as an occasional leisure activity, in a context in which paid work was normalised and took priority over hallucinogenic drug use.

but I think it's got such (.) if you take them [mushrooms] (..) you've probably got about 8, 10 hours (..) depending on the quantity (..) I think that's why it's a celebration thing (..) you need to take some time out (..) if you've got anything to do the next day (..) like for example if it's mid week (..) you had to go to work the next day (..) you would not take mushrooms (extract 6, focus group 3, Joanne 38)

Joanne associates the longevity of the effects of mushrooms (*you've probably got about 8, 10 hours*) with the need to limit their use to occasions that provide time out from everyday responsibilities (*a celebration thing ... you need to take time out*). Arguing that you need to take 'time out' implies that there is something people are typically 'in', this subtly constructs economic participation as normal, an understanding then made explicit with a direct link between drug use and economic participation (*if ... you had to go to work the next day*).

Economic activity is thus constructed as normative and as taking priority over hallucinogenic drug use that may negatively impact on work. An alternative account was raised by some participants, but as in extract 5, such apparently deviant cases were

mobilised in ways that served to reinforce rather than challenge neo-liberal sense making.

the majority of people who take mushrooms in their lifetime (..) won't do it for any great length of time (..) for a short period (..) maybe their teenage years or (..) early adult hood and then (..) you know (..) go and get a job and (..) calm down (..) and drink beer for the rest of their lives (..) the majority (..) certainly most of my friends (..) erm have gone back to that way (..) of (..) living (extract 7, focus group 1, Rebrov, age 25)

Here Rebrov associates mushroom use with a specific point in the lifespan, namely, something that young people do before they take on adult responsibilities. In this extract paid employment, calming down and consuming alcohol are associated with adulthood. In stating that he has taken a different path Rebrov opens up the possibility for a positive construction of the non-economic citizen. But, rather than expand positively on his choices he reasserts the economic citizen repertoire by normalising work and positioning himself in relative social isolation (*certainly most of my friends ... have gone back to that way*).

The three repertoires outlined above, 'the right to exercise personal freedom', 'controlled consumption is appropriate consumption' and the 'economic citizen' can be subsumed within an overarching discourse of neo-liberalism in which inappropriate magic mushroom use is constructed as an individual risk management activity by self-controlled economically active people. Users were not positioned outside of society. Instead, participants drew on neo-liberal discourse to construct their use of a hallucinogenic drug as congruent with responsible citizenship.

Post-psychedelic discourse

A counterpoint to neo-liberalism was identified in a discourse that we entitled 'Post-Psychedelic'. 'Post-Psychedelic' is our term to express a contemporary re-working of the original psychedelic philosophy. Within this discourse three interpretative repertoires were identified, 'revelation of connectedness', 'reverence for mushrooms' and 'Hippies as a distanced ideal'.

Revelation of connectedness

Participants described how their mushroom use produced altered states of consciousness that included a sense of connectedness with other people and the natural world.

Daniel: it was like everyone in the room just stopped talking (..) like "what is going on" and it was just like a free flow of concepts and ideas (..) if you just like send something across and you'd just (..) receive it (..) send something back (..) and it was kind of like (..) proof (..) in a way that separation's an illusion (..) if you know what I mean (..) that we are all linked on some level

Lara: yeah (..)

Paula: there's no doubt about that (..) I think that most of our friends have really come to that conclusion (extract 8, focus group 4, Daniel, age 20, Lara, age 17, Paula, age 22)

Daniel's story is of telepathic communication that occurred when he and his friends took magic mushrooms. The situation is marked as an unusual event through the active voicing of the participants involved who ask ('*what is going on*'). Marking an event as unusual is a way of establishing credibility of what might be considered an incredible story (Wooffitt, 1992), whilst active voicing can create a stronger sense of the authenticity of a story (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007). The connectedness described by Daniel is thus

constructed as a strange phenomenon, but also as revealing a truth about the world (*it was kind of like (..) proof (..) in a way that separation's an illusion*). In this account the separation of individuals into distinct, autonomous entities is constructed as a normative, but false, perception. Daniel's claim is supported by two other members of the group, Lara and Paula, with Paula making both a bottom line argument '*there's no doubt about that*' and a case that this experience is normative within their friendship group (*I think that most of our friends have really come to that conclusion*).

[magic mushrooms] help you feel like a complete connection with everything around you though (..) you actually feel plugged in for a change (..) still like walking outside the door (..) and looking at the shitty grey weather or the shitty grey buildings shitty red streets and the shitty red cars (..) you know it just sort of makes you see 'ok well there is actually some use in there' (extract 9, focus group 2, Max, age 20)

Above, Max draws on the 'revelation of connectedness' repertoire to argue that magic mushrooms can '*help you feel like a complete connection with everything around you*', creating a sense of feeling '*plugged in for a change*'. This latter statement implies that isolation is a perceptual norm, a norm problematised by Max's repeated description of selected features of the everyday world (cars, buildings, streets) as '*shitty*'. Instead, connectedness inspired by mushroom use is constructed as giving people a sense of meaningfulness (*it just makes you see 'ok well there is actually some use in there'*).

Reverence for mushrooms

Our second repertoire, 'Reverence for mushrooms', constructed magic mushroom use as a spiritual activity of the ancient past. Druids or non-specified 'tribes' were evoked to construct a legendary time where mushroom use was a reverent, spiritual activity. Within this repertoire contemporary hedonistic consumption is compared unfavourably with past spiritual use.

there probably ought to be a bit of reverence for them but there probably isn't [Sarah: hmm] you know in some ways that sort of (..) the amount of of changing and and playing with your head (..) there ought to be some sort of (..) sort of build to it (..) some sort of context for doing it (..) whatever and this sort of thing (..) and there probably was back in the past you know you'd only take them at certain times of year (..) or whatever and perhaps the whole tribe the whole village would take them or something as er unifying thing or what have you (..) but I think that these days (..) they're probably groups that do that (..) but I think most of it is just (..) its another way of getting off your head [laughter] (extract 10, focus group 3, Ben, age 30)

Extract 10 starts with a call by Ben for people to use mushrooms with reverence because of the effects of the drug ('*the amount of changing and playing with your head*'). Ben constructs contemporary use as being irreverent and initially struggles to imagine what a reverent form might take ('*some sort of context for doing it (..) whatever*'). He overcomes this problem by taking a historical perspective, constructing reverent use in a past in which mushroom use was seasonal, communal and motivated by connectedness ('*certain times of the year ... the whole tribe ... [a] unifying thing*'). His following statement that there '*probably are groups that do that*' both constructs and questions the existence of such contemporary collectives, absenting the various contemporary movements (e.g. 'psychonautic', entheogenic) who focus on the ritualised use of drugs to explore the mind and spirituality. He concludes that contemporary mushroom use is one of a range of irreverently used

intoxicants ('just another way to get off your head'), an understanding apparently shared by the other participants since it elicited laughter.

A similar pattern is also apparent in extract 11, where Derek constructs the use of magic mushrooms for 'spiritual purposes' as appropriate use ('the right thing to do'), but one associated with the past and lost to contemporary users ('I think we've lost that').

Sarah: you've just come in while people have been talking about using mushrooms (.) for sort of spiritual purposes

Derek: yeah (.) totally I believe that's the right thing to do (.) and er (.) I think we've lost that (.) really (.) in this (..) sort of chaotic society erm er I if there was some way to get back to it I would (.) certainly be in there but (..) erm I don't think its healthy to take hallucinogens (.) in (.) the way that we live (extract 11, focus group 1, Sarah (interviewer) and Derek, age 42)

Hippies as a distanced ideal

Within post-psychedelic discourse appropriate use was not about self-management, but about engaging in 'unifying' or spiritual practices, that were often associated with 'hippies'.

but I know where people pick it and stuff but mushrooms (.) I've been shown the methods (.) erm about ten twelve years ago (.) erm by an old hippy (.) and I've stuck to it ever since (extract 12, focus group 1, Rebrov, age 25)

Above, Rebrov starts with a claim for personal knowledge in relation to indigenous mushrooms ('I know where people pick it and stuff'). He then shifts footing from himself as the site of knowledge to 'an old hippy', which works as an authoritative claim since the hippy is able to show him 'the methods' that have stood the test of time ('I've stuck to it ever since'). Participants often constructed hippies in positive terms, as engaging in valued or appropriate mushroom use. However, ambivalence emerged when the 'hippy' identity was applied to the participants themselves.

Sarah: did you have something you were going to say about spirituality?

Ben: I think there are probably (.) I mean (.) I'm probably more of a hippy (.)

Joanne: you're definitely a bloody hippy

Ben: yeah but yeah I'm not=

Joanne: I'd like to be but I'm not (.) no you're not

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Ben: like the sort of the Glastonbury hippies (.) you know a flake or whatever (extract 13, focus group 3, Sarah (interviewer), Ben, age 30, Joanne, age 38)

Here Sarah raises the issue of spirituality she thought Ben had wanted to talk about, but Ben struggles to articulate a clear response to her question. Ben's apparent difficulty with the topic orients around identifying as a hippy, ending with a somewhat distanced claim ('I'm probably more of a hippy'). Joanne then makes a definitive claim for Ben as a hippy in pejorative terms ('bloody hippy'). Ben responds by both identifying and distancing himself from this identity, which Joanne meets with a softening statement that constructs being a hippy as potentially a valued identity ('I'd like to be'). The extract ends with Ben's problems with identifying as a hippy apparently being associated with different typologies of hippies, constructing an understanding that whilst Ben may be a hippy he is not one of the problematic ones like those associated with Glastonbury, a town associated with 'new-age' spirituality.

This exchange evidences the links between hippies and spirituality (since Ben moves into a discussion on hippies when asked about spirituality) and the ambivalence associated with this identity. The hippy identity is thus troubled, desirable in relation to expertise and knowledge, less acceptable as a personal identity, an issue also evident in the next extract (which was prompted by

an exchange concerning the status of knowledge in magic mushroom use, leading to a discussion of the medical world as financially motivated).

Daniel: it's [the medical establishment] economy driven (.) do you know what I mean (.) the fact remains (.) there's there's a lot more going on than just kind of (..) you take a drug to make yourself better again (.) there are reasons for illnesses and [inaudible]

Paula: hmm

Daniel: that things like mushrooms will sort out the root course↑ (.) if as Paula says if you do it with someone who knows what they're doing↑ (.) but in order for that to become established (..) in the wider community (.) um (.) people need to accept you know (.) that this is a reality (.) it's not just hippy bollocks (.) it's actual bonefide (.) fact (.)

Unidentified male: yeah

Daniel: you know↑

Unidentified female: definitely (..)

Sarah: so on that note [laughs] [inaudible] [laughter]

Daniel: we're not hippies [laughter]

Paula: we're not hippies it's true [laughter] (extract 14, focus group 4, Daniel, age 20; Paula, age 22 and Lara, age 17 and Sarah, interviewer)

Extract 14 begins with Daniel making a critique of the medical establishment (that it is profit driven and limited in its understanding of human health/illness). He then returns to and agrees with Paula's earlier comment about needing gurus/professionals to teach people how to use drugs (see extract 2) arguing that a cultural shift is needed for this to happen. This shift would be one that accepted their perspective as 'reality ... not just hippy bollocks'. Hippy philosophy is thus constructed as closer to reality than dominant forms of knowledge (e.g. the biomedical model), an account strengthened through repetition and emphasis ('this is a reality ... its actual bonefide (.) fact'). But hippy philosophy is also understood as deeply devalued ('just hippy bollocks'), both by the wider community and in the participants' own disidentification with the term. The extract ends with members of the focus group definitively rejecting the identity ('we're not hippies').

Conclusion

In this paper we analysed people's talk of their PBMM use at a time when they could be legally consumed in the UK. We identified two discourses that structured participants' sense making, one that drew on neo-liberal rhetoric and one that both celebrated and problematised a collective spirituality, which we called 'post-psychedelic'.

Three interpretative repertoires were identified for each discourse. The repertoires within the neo-liberal discourse were the 'right to exercise personal freedom', 'controlled consumption is appropriate consumption' and 'economic citizens'. These evoked a rational risk managing subject, embedded in dominant social values, who legitimately used PBMM as an act of personal freedom and self-management. Reproducing neo-liberal and harm reduction rhetoric, the role of the state was reduced to providing information that enabled individuals to manage risk appropriately.

The 'post-psychedelic' discourse held the possibility of destabilising neo-liberal sense making through its repertoires of 'revelation of connectedness', 'reverence for mushrooms' and 'hippies as a distanced ideal'. Within the 'post-psychedelic' discourse magic mushroom use was constructed as a spiritual, connective activ-

ity, which had the potential to evoke entheogenic and collectivist understandings.

However, our analysis suggests that the potential for the post-psychedelic discourse to destabilise neo-liberal sense making was repeatedly disrupted. For example, participants struggled to imagine 'reverent' use or contemporary collective social organisation beyond immediate friendship groups, and they dis-identified with the apparently valued identity of 'hippy'. These moves meant that psychedelic philosophy was always contained within neo-liberalism, so that the ways in which the repertoires associated with the post-psychedelic discourse were deployed simultaneously opened up discursive space for alternative subjectivities to neo-liberal individualism whilst closing them down as either unattainable or undesirable. The difficulty in imagining alternative forms of communal social order can be considered as a loss, creating the logic behind the title 'post'-psychedelic. From this, we suggest that information on entheogenic or use for spiritual purposes is made more readily available; although we note the reclassification of PBMM to a Class A controlled substance limits this move.

We conclude by noting the doubled nature of discourses, in that they both open up some possibilities for thought and action, whilst closing down others. Our analysis suggests that harm reduction philosophy allows drug users (but not 'misusers') to be positioned as acceptable economic citizens. But, its entanglement with neo-liberalism means that what it may be shutting down is the ability to imagine communal possibilities. Thus, people may use magic mushrooms not to drop out, but to snatch temporary moments to tune in and turn on.

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