

Vänskap, värden, vandel

Avvikelser och återhämtningsstrategier hos
Göteborgs första generation ungdomsnarkomaner

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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Abstract

Title: *Friendship, Values and Morals. Deviance and Strategies for Recovery Among the First Generation of Young Drug Addicts in Gothenburg*

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The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how and why a sample of young people who were criminals and drug addicts in the 1960s – Gothenburg’s first generation of young drug junkies – could get up on their feet and then sustain an orderly life.

The empirical material consists of recorded and transcribed life history interviews with 15 individuals, 10 of whom had rather central positions within Gothenburg’s first generation of young drug addicts. Three of the remaining five have had close and lasting contacts and relations with the same social circle, while two have had similar experiences from other places. Several of these persons were interviewed both in the 1980s, when they had been drug-free for ten years, and then again in the 2000s, when they were about 60 years old. The connection between relationship and dialogue becomes methodologically important, since several of the interviewees have been the author’s friends and acquaintances. Autobiographical literature and the author’s own memories supplement the transcribed interviews.

In the dissertation, the individuals’ entry into the circle of drug users is explained by the cultural environment and spirit of the times, and by the material conditions and situations that surrounded them in Gothenburg in the 1950-60s, but also by broken families and deficient parental attachment. The interviewees’ recollections indicate that they were provided moral cornerstones as children, which in combination with a demanding and exhausting lifestyle fuelled their willingness to break away from their drug-saturated existence. The conflict between internalised ethics and a deviant lifestyle has in such stages of transition often manifested itself in experiences of burnout and psychotic breakdowns. Their recovery has in many cases been characterised by a series of relationships with partners leading a more organised life, and these periods have served as effective training.

Rather than resulting in a new lasting period of deviance, the interviewees’ possible relapse attempts have provided dull and dreary experiences. In fact, they have reinforced their recognition of themselves as ‘normal’. Their lasting and intensive drug use has not led to a life-long identification or ex-role as drug addict, compared with their class and gender roles or other deep roles. During the years following their recovery period, most of the interviewees have had longstanding family commitments and partner relations as well as decent working and housing conditions. At the time of the interviews in the first decade of the 21st century, all of them displayed a distanced and controlled relation to drugs (apart from tobacco).