

**The Ecstasy of Consumption: The drug Ecstasy as a
Mass Commodity in a Global Market.**

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**The London School of Economics and Political Science,
submitted for the award of PhD at the University of London.**

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the drug, ecstasy. The central objective was to investigate the people who used the drug, where they used it and how it was dealt. In pursuit of this I undertook two empirical pieces of work, a series of interviews and an ethnography. The interviews were of two sorts, firstly a set of longitudinal interviews of middle class ecstasy users, first contacted when they had just began taking the drug and again when they had stopped. These interviews were supported by one-off interviews with three other groups with similar class backgrounds.

The other part of the study was a nine month ethnography of a large London night-club, where the author worked first as part of the bar staff and secondly as part of the security team. This involved participant observation with an occupational culture which is hard to gain access to and observation of an under researched environment.

The two studies are linked, as the club was typical of one that my respondents visited and both groups were linked by their intense involvement in drug subcultures. In the first half of the thesis I concentrate on occupational culture and illuminate how criminal activity was structured within the club. In the latter section I concentrate on how the respondents subjectively felt about their drug use.

In the last part of thesis I put the rise of ecstasy into the context of British popular culture. On the one hand I argue that it could be posited as part of new dystopian trends, on the other I argue against this, instead characterising its rise as something more positive and more inevitable. However, I conclude that our current methods of regulation are antiquated and unequal.

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Dedicated to Joshua Silverstone.

1. Introduction

Prologue

In my thesis I have looked at the use of ecstasy as an example of a modern commodity chain. I have tried to look at the drug from a variety of perspectives: the history of the drug, the way it is distributed, the way it is consumed, where it is consumed, and the way its use is regulated or controlled. In doing this I have hopefully amalgamated the two theoretical approaches most likely to be applied in isolation to the subject matter.

The first and most obvious is criminology. This discipline empirically underpins my thesis, and provides a wealth of ethnographic and interview material, which I have drawn on in my two chapters that contain these two respective methodologies. It also provides the theoretical context for the current debates over motivation for drug use, frequency of drug use and the way drugs should be, and fail to be, effectively controlled.

However, the rise in drug use by several different sectors of society as part of a wider increase in crime in western societies has created problems for the part of the discipline still influenced by positivism, and prey to universal theories addressing the causes of crime. Put at its simplest the volume of drug takers raises problems for the viability of the positivist tenets of difference, differentiation and pathology.

Meanwhile the huge differences between some drug takers and other criminals means that one overarching criminological theory cannot suffice. Fortunately, the consumer driven desire for goods has also been integral to the modern criminological project and consumer theory though deficient in empirical evidence does provide the theoretical tools to position these changes in drug consumption both into wider society and into the wider changes being experienced elsewhere

in it. In particular, it has been¹ and still is² aware of the links between illegitimate and legitimate consumption within the city, something that is crucial in understanding crime in its modern context. To put the argument succinctly, the emergent popularity of ecstasy is less surprising in an affluent global society, driven by rapid technological change where most interaction is mediated and made manifest by consumption. On these foundations I want my thesis to build.

More specifically, hopefully both theories can be incorporated into Ben Fine's proposal for the study of consumer objects, "The commodity chain". This idea provides my theoretical grounding as contained within it, is an empirical agenda. It can be summarised in the sentence: to understand consumption it is not enough just to look at the object at the point of purchase but to illuminate the chain of factors which give rise to it. In his own words, this has three facets: firstly, "explanations around consumption must be specific to particular commodities or groups of commodities". Secondly, "each commodity should be analysed in the context of the chain of horizontal factors that give rise to it, production, distribution, retailing, consumption and material culture surrounding it". Finally, each "consumption good will be linked to its own differentiated chain of activities, which will form an integral unity and will be termed a system of provision³". An almost identical concept is proposed, by Paul du Gay, who uses the label, a "circuit of culture". His circuit includes the following five categories, "production, consumption, regulation, representation, identity⁴".

My idea is to take the drug ecstasy as example of a particular commodity and then analyse it, in precisely the way Fine recommends, examining the five horizontal factors that give rise to it. I hope this will have a number of

¹ See, for example Chapter O, (Prostitution, Gambling), in Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London :The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

² Ruggerio, V. (2000) *Crime and Markets: essays in anti-criminology*. New York; Oxford University Press.

³ Fine, B. (1995), 'From Political Economy to Consumption' in D. Miller, (ed.) *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*. London: Routledge, p 42.

⁴ du Gay ,P. Hall ,S. Jones, Mackay, H. Negus, K. (1997), *Doing Cultural Studies: The Study of the Sony Walkman*, London: Sage in association with Open University Press, p. 3.

advantages. Firstly, as a novel way of looking at any consumer object, as Lee⁵ mentions later in the same book, it has the advantage of exposing our fetishism of commodities. As it forces us to consider both production and consumption, the researcher must delve beyond the image and the use of the product, to reveal the forces and labour present in its construction. This is useful, as du Gay et al., (1997, 17) states in his study on the Walkman, as “ what makes the Sony Walkman a part of our culture, we argued earlier, is not only the ‘work’ which has gone into constructing it meaningfully, but the social practices with which it has become associated”.

Secondly, by dwelling on distribution, the study can be focused on who is part of the sales process and how a particular commodity is sold. This is especially interesting when addressed to an illicit commodity like ecstasy. It also forces us to examine where the commodity is sold, to look at the actual physical space where it is on offer, in my case a club. These spaces can be important, as Glennie comments on the centrality of the department store in the 19th century. “Department stores were pivotal sites of cultural appropriation and identity construction, through their ability to create the meanings of commodities and consumers⁶”.

Thirdly, in Paul du Gay’s incarnation it includes the stipulation that regulation must be considered. Again by looking at both distribution and consumption, this immediately directs the researcher to the crucial question that regulation is unlikely to be uniform in theory or practice. This insight leads to macro questions about the general enforcement of law but also to micro concerns. Thus my study

⁵He asks why, ‘when a commodity arrives in our shops, it should show no manifest trace of all the labour that was invested in it during its production’. He goes on to show how ‘surplus value revealed in the exploitation of labour, is concealed in the fetishism of commodities and how the commodity form is the mask hiding the expropriation of value of one class at the expense of another’. Lee, M. (1993) *Consumer Culture Reborn: the Cultural Politics of Consumption*, London: Routledge, (p. xii), quoted from Jackson, P and Thrift, N. (1995) ‘Geographies of Consumption’, in D. Miller, (ed.) *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*. London: Routledge, p.220

⁶Glennie, P. (1995) ‘Consumption within historical studies’, in D. Miller, (ed.) *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, London: Routledge, p185.

also took account of a specific place and I looked at the way it was regulated in detail.

Finally, by using the idea of a commodity chain rather than traditional criminological theory another advantage was gained. Firstly, it immediately de-pathologises the subject and puts ecstasy as an illegal drug into the much broader category of a commodity. Then, following from this, it allows it to be viewed as subject to the same sorts of scrutiny which are applied to legal objects. This is important, as it is part of my argument that crime and/or deviance cannot be divorced from the broader technological and political changes so important for other aspects of society.

The disadvantages with this idea are that the empirical programme is an extremely demanding one, which I could not complete in the case of ecstasy. As ecstasy is an illegal drug it proved impossible for me to provide details about its manufacture beyond the fact that much of it is made in Eastern Europe and Holland. Secondly, the representation of ecstasy use, in today's multi-media world would also have proved problematic. It has attracted so much diverse press that to collate it would have been a massive task. I have included a small section on the use of the media by my respondents but I have not been able to complete a thorough search as that would produce a PhD by itself.

In my thesis, by completing an ethnography and a series of longitudinal interviews, I hope I have added to our overall empirical knowledge of the use, distribution and regulation of the drug. However I also have something more ambitious at heart. That is, by combining the two literatures with this empirical base I also hope to use ecstasy as an example with which to illuminate wider trends and dynamics in our society.

Subsequently, the thesis is divided into three main sections. Firstly an ethnography which looks at where ecstasy is most often consumed and also the

way its distribution and regulation are organised. This took place two years ago, but due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the possible repercussions I felt it was astute to leave its writing up for some time. Secondly, in a series of interviews, which I started at the same time as the ethnography, I examined the consumption of ecstasy, which shows how it is used, where it is used and why people take it. Finally, in the last section I will compare and contrast these two empirical sections and place them into a theoretical and historical context and illuminate the dialectical processes that have both produced and are consequence of large-scale ecstasy use. This entails locating ecstasy into a series of meta-narratives concerning crime, consumption and resistance and my last section has been divided into three sections, Utopia, Dystopia and a Postscript.

How it happened

It started as an exercise in refreshment, as I had not been in the club world for over three years. I had been an infrequent participant in the first place, in the free rave scene in 1990 and the more mainstream house scene from 1993 to 1996. Three years is a long time in youth culture and I had little knowledge of several genres of club music. Therefore, before interviewing ecstasy users I knew it would be invaluable to spend some time in a club. This would prevent me from being perceived as a cultural dinosaur when it came to asking questions and understanding answers about my subjects' drug use. I started in the belief that my work would be a quick immersion in contemporary club mores but the maelstrom that surrounded me proved much more complicated than that.

In a big new night-club in inner city London, the entire spectrum of ecstasy related clubbing was present. We had Jungle/Drum and Bass nights, Garage, Trance, Deep House, Techno and Electro. I started work as a bartender from where I had a good vantage point to observe the sociological make up of the diverse crowds and an opportunity to get accustomed to the new vocabularies of

clubbing. Unfortunately, my social interaction with the punters was limited to getting them two bottles of water and supplying them with the right change. This did allow me to conduct a pretty conclusive comparative study of drinking habits and relative standards of politeness. However, I had little idea about the types of substances the punters were consuming until it came to sweeping the floor at the end of the night, where the debris after some nights would be more awash with drugs or drug paraphernalia⁷ than others. If working on the bar supplied only surreptitious information on what was going on 'out there', it did yield a 'rich' return on what was happening 'within the club'.

Immediately, the internal work environment of the club struck me as incredible. This had two aspects; firstly, the extreme duress the staff endured and secondly, their complicity in the drug culture which the club catered for. Some of the chaos I witnessed during the first four months of the club's opening was to do with its newness, however I soon experienced the realisation familiar to most ethnographers that the chaos belied a number of hierarchies and an organised social system⁸. My status as a barman meant that I was among the biggest occupational culture, the 'staff' which included the rest of the bar staff, the back-bar⁹ and junior management.

However as any experienced bouncer knows numbers do not necessarily equate to power and the 'staff' came a definite second in importance to the security team. They were the most powerful occupational culture in the building and with the exception of the owners, immediate acquiescence was expected. The

⁷ An infrequent but highly esteemed find would be a couple of pills; a more common and more frustrating one would be an empty 'doggy bag' containing only an aroma of weed, or a half open dirty wrap bereft of any of its stimulating contents.

⁸ Whyte, W. (1955) *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. "The middle class person looks upon the slum district as a formidable mass of confusion, a social chaos. The insider finds Cornerville a highly organised and integrated social system". Chicago: London: University of Chicago Press, p. xvi.

⁹ Sometimes called bar backs or bar support. Back-bar is a bar term for the bar equivalent of the Hindu untouchables, these guys (and they are invariably male, except in top restaurants) have to pick up glasses and bottles through the night, throw away rubbish and restock the bars. A tough job, though as I will document later, it does have its advantages.

security team were the power behind the throne and were not just there to decide who came in or not. Instead they provided ample support for the saying, “if you control the door, you control the floor”¹⁰. It was obvious that it was the security team, not the management, who were responsible for the atmosphere in the club on any given night. They were therefore also implicated in the sale/tolerance of any drugs in the club.

Fortuitously after about four months, due to my friendship with a couple of the security team and their inability to turn up regularly to work, I was offered a job with them. My first couple of shifts were completely spontaneous and I just walked off the bar and worked with security. After a couple of weeks this became a regular job and I did this most weekends for the subsequent six months. For a while I held a pre-eminent position in the club as regards the variety of information I was privy to, as I was still friendly with the regular ‘staff’. This, though, could not be maintained for long and I was soon forced to assert my allegiance to ‘security’ at the expense of the ‘staff’ in the frequent internecine struggles that wracked the club. Yet in return I got further involved in the murky world of the security business and what I lost in access to other groups in the club¹¹. I hope is vindicated by my account of their activities.

To be or not to be, that is the question ?

To be or not to be, that is the question¹² that any ethnographer has to answer.

This question has of course, two dimensions. Firstly, is the researcher using the methodology as a “tool to explore their own pasts”¹³ or as an attempt to

¹⁰ Morris, S. (1998), *Clubs, Drugs and Doormen*, Crime Detection and Prevention Series Paper 86, p8.

¹¹ Though I have formally interviewed some members of staff I was not able to interview many people after joining the security team. The area I worked in, was a small world and openly asking questions could be “prejudicial to your health” as McDermott, P.(1993). puts it, in ‘MDMA use in the North West of England’, *The International Journal of Drug Policy*, Vol. 4 (4), p. 211.

¹² Shakespeare. W. (1990), *Hamlet*, London: Routledge, p. 56.

¹³ Hobbs, D. (2001) ‘Ethnography and the study of deviance’: “In ethnographic studies, method and biography often merge in a reflexive soup of experiential reflection, and it is not uncommon for ethnographers to utilise their own biographies in order to gain and maintain access to deviant groups”. in

transcend social distance between themselves and a stigmatised or inaccessible population¹⁴. Secondly, should criminological researchers be partisans, fighting metaphysically if not literally for their protagonist's defence¹⁵, or should they accept that "the pose of the detached intellectual discoverer of a political or even subversive knowledge is merely an elaborate alibi to justify the exercise of power¹⁶".

In the (post)- modern world both these dichotomies are fraught with difficulties. The four modern categories that the researcher and researched could or should share are age, gender, class, and race. In fact very few ethnographers of deviance share with their subjects more than two of these and often not the more contentious categories of race or class. In England, which is an increasingly heterogeneous society, I don't believe this hinders the work, especially concerning class, where despite some authors sharing similar class backgrounds to their subjects, their attainments at higher education often compromise direct comparisons.

Based on my own experiences in the club, I would argue that race is more of a salient factor, especially in America where relations between communities are much more polarised. In working in a racially mixed team in a racially fragmented area I was often conscious of being white. Ethnicity is a constant issue in the inner city and it contributes to where you live and work, with whom and where you socialise. This manifested itself in subtle ways and in varying degrees with

P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, J. Delamont, J. Loftland and L. Loftland, (eds.) *Handbook of Ethnography*, London: Sage, p. 212.

¹⁴ See Maher, L. (1997) *Sexed Work: Gender, Race and Resistance in a Brooklyn Drug Market*, who as a white, middle class, non-drug using, non- working girl, writes her book about women who are a direct contrast to her in every one of these categories and the women then "emerge from their potential victimhood as creative resilient actors struggling to confront, challenge and continually re-make the structures which contain them", Oxford. Clarendon Press, p19.

¹⁵ Armstrong, G.(1998), *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score*, who mounts an ardent defence of Sheffield Football Hooligans, who he characterises as "disproportionately policed victims" of what "Sennett terms the purified community". The first quotation is from p136, the second from p. 312. Oxford: Berg.

¹⁶ Cohen, S. (1988) *Against Criminology*: New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction books. p5, quoted from B. Hudson, (1997), ' Social Control' in Maguire, M., Morgan, R., Reiner, R. *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 453.

all the main protagonists. Colour was always an issue. I was conscious of it not doing anything as dramatic as preventing or enabling friendships but instead it provided a parameter, within which any social interaction could take place. As Phil the head doorman said “*we can’t have an all white door team, here mate, no way, especially us lot, we look like the national front, what with everyone’s hair and that*”¹⁷. Race, nationality, class, ethnicity are variables which provided the basis for much of the banter and humour among a very mixed group of security. If I had been black, my experiences would have definitely been different but it would not have altered the breadth or scope of my ethnography.

However, I don’t think this would be true of all areas of the inner city. As Ken Pryce’s outstanding ethnography of West Indians in Bristol¹⁸ documents, attitudes towards “white people” are partly contingent on economic position and subsequent politics. In the desperate but bustling crack economy, which took place just outside the club, it was unsurprising that racial views were more extreme. Whether or not you ascribe to the belief that the sale at street level of this drug is dominated by, “Yardie gangsters who have learned to kill at the drop of an insult in crime-drenched Kingston... moving to London to sell crack”¹⁹. I think I would have found it hard to be wholly accepted, and I would, therefore also be uncomfortable, at presenting my account as authentic. Nevertheless Laurie Gunst has managed to successfully transcend the colour bar with precisely this group of people in “Born Fi’ Dead”²⁰ and Bourgois²¹ has done the same in his study of Puerto Rican drug dealers in New York. His foreign French identity making him sufficiently different not to attract the racist ire of his research group.

¹⁷ At that point all the white members of the team, except one, had shaved heads.

¹⁸ Pryce, K. (1979), *Endless Pressure: A Study of West Indian Lifestyles in Britain*, see the six ‘life-styles’ he identified (“hustlers, teenyboppers, proletarian respectables, saints, mainliners and in-betweeners”) and their diverse views on race and identity, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 271

¹⁹ Drake, N. (1997), *Dark Heart: The Shocking Truth about Hidden Britain*, London: Chatto & Windus.

²⁰ Gunst, L. (1995) *Born Fi’ Dead: A Journey Through The Jamaican Posse Underworld*. In this ethnography there are very few explicit references to the author’s ethnicity except, “You are white. It is difficult for a white person to simulate a black experience”. Edinburgh: Payback Press, p128.

²¹ Bourgois, P. (1995) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

As all my arguments in my thesis indicate, I am a great believer in the continued salience of class, gender and race. Yet it does seem a sad indictment of social science that most research begins with a list of the researchers' socio-economic profile to the detriment of a discussion of the human qualities required to make a study a success. An example of this kind of inaccurate reification is in Armstrong, "that said, all violent scenarios depended on context, because attributions of masculinity depend on who throws the punch, who receives it and who is watching. These males between twelve and their mid twenties grow up being checked out and sussed out by their peers, a system and style of activity whose procedural origins are difficult to explain and may well be incomprehensible to *the middle class reader*" (Armstrong, 1998, 159). Today more than ever before, we have opportunities to transcend our backgrounds through the process of education and experience. Thus a researcher should be able to undertake more than a single ethnography during their academic career. In my study, breadth of knowledge and experience were of much greater significance than my background. In particular my understanding of the nuances of violent interaction were based on direct experience. It was my encounters with violence rather than my physical size (or lack of it) which enabled me to both get the job with security and to relate to the team.

As someone who had been consistently in education, I could never claim that "I was very much part of the social world I was to study: an ex-member who returned in order to conduct an ethnographic inquiry"²² "but I had spent a number of years working in similar environments. The first of these was a provincial night-club where I worked for a year. During this time, I won a holiday in a time share apartment for the hardest worker"²³ and worked my way up the bar from the lows of a bar back to the highs of being offered the head-bar job. Regrettably I

²² Hobbs, D. (1988) *Doing the Business: Entrepreneurship, the Working class, and Detectives in the East End of London*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 2.

²³ The holiday turned out not to exist, a poignant, if not somewhat too personal example of what the club world is all about.

declined the position and went to university where I carried on working in a variety of pubs, clubs and restaurants to fund my education. Some of this work was done abroad and it included a couple of trips to the West Indies where I worked in a local bar. This kind of work continued throughout my thesis and I also did some occasional security work with some friends, at college parties. Previously I had also lived in the area and worked in it for a miserable six months, in a big chain of London bookies.

I mention all this because I found I had to use all my experience to hold my job and thus my place in the 'field'. Catering work is notoriously unreliable and the 'club' was the most fickle employer I have ever worked for. The turnover rate was rapid partly due to staff burn out, partly due to ruthless management. As a long serving member of staff put it: *"They would sack people all the time, every four months completely, except for a few people they knew and trust they would just sack the whole lot of them"*. Other people would just leave, exhausted by the hard work and their own self abuse, *"generally the staff who were working full time started to take more and more drugs. You would see people coming in, and after a few months they would have to leave or they wouldn't be able to perform, and they would be sacked"*²⁴. The security team did not do any better, as you had to suffer the scrutiny of both the owner's and the head doorman's surveillance. Indeed after six months I was the only original member of the team who had not been sacked or had not left.²⁵ The burden of holding down a job in this unpredictable, insalubrious environment was oppressive and this was compounded by my inability to be able to share with anybody my true vocation. If my longevity was exceptional, I can only explain it by my cultivation of a masochistic ability to endure insult, which I had learnt in previous catering establishments²⁶.

²⁴ Interview with staff.

²⁵ Even the head doorman and his cousin had been sacked but finally reinstated.

²⁶ In one top restaurant I worked in the West End it was a definite right of passage, the euphemistically named Italian or French staff (who were all in fact Albanian/ Kosovan) who ran the bar would challenge new staff to defy their authority over some trivial task. If you asserted your will, you walked, if you submitted, you stayed.

Occasionally my antipathy approached ignominy and it was then, I had to give serious moral thought to my position. I experienced berating from the management that normally, I would have found intolerable. And to rub salt into the wounds I was often forced to be complaisant²⁷ to the very same people. Unlike both Hobbs (1988, 12) and Bourgois (1995, Ch.5) who experienced moments of extreme aversion to aspects of their subjects characters, (the former to their racism and the latter to their bullying and rape) my vituperation was reserved for the institution as a whole and my active contribution to it. I witnessed several members of staff lose their livelihood due to iniquitous decisions by an incompetent management team. I also watched other security staff being pushed out, victims of the clubs internal political chicanery.

More immediately as part of the security team I was directly responsible for ruining several peoples' big nights out. Especially in the early days, when I had to establish myself as part of the team and we were still trying to be quite strict, I admit to initiating manifestly unfair, illegal and humiliating searches, which often put a premature end to punters' nights. I will leave it to a fellow bouncer who proved more insightful than me, to sum it up. He said after his second night: "*I feel like everyone in this room thinks I'm a fucking prick. I mean if me and you went out on a night out and we were treated like this, we would be fucking fighting*" before resigning in disgust.

The last mimetic dilemma is one of legality. A perennial problem of observing "deviants...*in their natural habitat* as they go about their ordinary activities²⁸". This was solved quickly for me, as to put it succinctly, the whole club was illegal. The license wasn't observed, the fire regulations were non-existent, and the

²⁷ Sometimes I felt like Chichikov in *Dead Souls*, "If they talked about stud farms, he talked about stud farms: if they were talking about pedigree dogs, he was able to make very sensible observations on that subject too: if they discussed some investigation conducted by the provincial treasury department he showed that he was not uninformed about legal jiggery-pokery either", and so on ... Gogol, N. (1961) *Dead Souls*. Penguin Books, p. 27.

²⁸ Becker, H. (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, These are Becker's italics not mine. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, p. 170

working conditions were in breach of health and safety. Stealing was endemic among the staff, as was drug use, soft and hard. When I graduated to security, this list grew to include as a matter of routine, carrying of weapons, illegal searches, assault, selling stolen goods, hard-core pornography and dealing hard drugs. Indeed illegality, much like race provided a parameter within which all social interaction took place. There are though, different degrees of both participation and illegality.

Ned Polsky is unambiguous in his assertion that the ethnographer “need not be a participant observer and commit the deviant acts under study” (Becker, 1963, 171). He argues that you “damned well better not pretend to be ‘one of them’ or one of two things will happen, either you will “get sucked into ‘participant’ observation that you would rather not undertake, or you will be exposed, with still greater consequences²⁹”. Equally forthright is Dick Hobbs who took the opposite view that the response to potentially criminal participation, “if richness and depth of data are at all important, can only be yes”. Consequentially, he “was willing to skirt the boundaries of criminality on several occasions”. He considered it “crucial to be willingly involved in ‘normal’ business transactions, legal or otherwise” (Hobbs, 1988, 7).

Personally, based though only on my experience, I would agree with Hobbs. When I worked on the door, sometimes you didn’t have the luxury of choice. If a situation arose then you had to defuse it any way the team thought appropriate³⁰. ‘Doing business’ generally meant, doing business in drugs and among the team, being an entrepreneur of the illicit was a sure way of keeping your status (and your job). Drugs were the strongest currency to possess³¹ and had the added

²⁹ Polsky, N. (1967), *Hustlers, Beats and Others*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

³⁰ Hobbs, D. (1995) *Bad Business: Professional Crime in Britain*. Dick Hobbs once again gets it right when he points out the singular difference between legitimate and illegitimate economies-“It is to the dark chamber of retribution, rather than legislative justice, that criminals turn to unleash forces of both a business and personal nature”, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.59.

³¹ Adler, P. (1985) *Wheeling and Dealing: An Ethnography of an Upper-level Drug Dealing and Smuggling Community*. They formed part of the “mutual exchange” which “research relationships involve”, New York: Columbia University Press, p.16.

advantage of making people garrulous³². The universal prevalence of drugs had the unforeseen effect of making it even more important to be involved in criminal activity. As they added to the amount of talk being talked. And as I quickly learned, lots of people 'say lots of things' but very few deliver. Subsequently the only certain way to verify something was to be there in person.

Though in taking 'risks' I felt sure I was partaking in sociology's new metaphysical construct³³ and thus was methodologically sound, I did often worry about the more mundane consequences. Thus I tried to take risks as sparingly as possible and tried so far as I could to be on the periphery of business, not at its core. This meant that my ethnography lacks insight into the higher echelons of the drug hierarchy, something that could be viewed as a serious omission³⁴. Yet, at the time, I took no joy in having to drive around " *fucking slowly because I've got ten years in my bag*³⁵" and can only endorse E. Bunker's³⁶ aphorism, "Don't do the crime if you can't do the time".

I will now return to the second aspect of my original question, 'To be or not to be'. Becker is correct in arguing that deviance ought not to be seen as "something special", but rather as "simply as a kind of behaviour some disprove of and others value" and that the "best surety against either extreme is close contact with the people we study"(Becker, 1963, 176). For the researcher this is straightforward; time is a palliative and the longer I worked in the club the more completely my anxiety was superseded by languor. Despite protestations from

³² Schrader, P. (1992) *Light Sleeper*, London: Faber & Faber, p 12. The drug dealer in his semi-autobiographical film "Light Sleeper" sums up the effects very well, of cocaine in particular, "Everybody wants to talk. It's like a compulsion. My philosophy is: you got nothing to say don't say it. They figure you tell a D.D (drug dealer) anything".

³³ Giddens, A. (1998) *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 64: "Risk isn't exactly the same as danger. Risk refers to dangers we seek actively to confront and assess".

³⁴ I feel this could be done but it would need to be an objective of a different study. As I was primarily interested in the club and I had made myself far too visible to be doing work on high-level drug dealers.

³⁵ One of the doorman's (Scott) favourite phrases.

³⁶ Bunker, E. This is taken from the infamous crime novelist (author of amongst others, *Animal Factory* and *No Beast so Fierce*, Herts No Exit Press, who as someone who has spent nearly thirty years of his adult and juvenile life in and out of prison should know.

the author³⁷ one cannot guarantee, the same reaction by the reader. Instead, as Ferrell and Hamm argue “skilled criminological researchers might in this sense be thought of as successful pimps, selling dramatic accounts of crime and criminals to those unwilling or unable to acquire it on their own³⁸”. In my view there is always a voyeuristic element in ethnography, but that is so in all accounts of deviant behaviour in any medium. What is of more consequence is the accusation that however unwittingly, the ethnographer is tightening not loosening the noose around his subject’s neck.

This was a significant issue for me in the construction of my work. I am aware in my attempt to be as comprehensive as possible that I am including information which adds support to all those who want to control and restrict club culture. Superficially what I saw confirmed the substance of the government and media’s shrill critiques. However, though I do not feel committed to defend club culture I would like to add that this piece of work must be placed firmly into context. Firstly, what I witnessed exists not in absence of legislation but in spite of it. Secondly, if one compares ‘club culture’ with ‘pub culture’ then in terms of damage inflicted on the self and to others there is no question that the latter is worse³⁹. My central argument is that the only way for those in control to better manage this culture is to forgo some of their means of control. Thus in pursuit of this end and not as evidence for further controls, I hope that my argument is both listened to and heeded.

³⁷ See for example Bourgois, P. who castigates “Anthropology’s obsession with the exotic other” and his defence of his work not being like that, *op.cit.* p. 17-18.

³⁸ Ferrell, J. and Hamm, M. (ed.) (1998) *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime, Deviance and Field Research*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, p. 4.

³⁹ Mott, J. (1990) *Young People, Alcohol and Crime*. Home Office Research Bulletin, Research and Statistics Department, 28: 24-8: “Evidence from a number of studies associates disorderly conduct offences with recent alcohol consumption, the location of violent and disorderly conduct offences to be in or near licensed premises in 20-30 per cent of cases, the timing of such offences to be likely to follow the end of licensing hours, and to occur on a Friday or Saturday night and to involve young men.”. Quoted South, N. (1997), ‘Drugs: Use, Crime and Control’, from Maguire, M., Morgan, M., Reiner, R., (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 950.

In conclusion, my primary ethnographic data from my work in the club consists of personal reminiscence dispersed with fragments of conversations, which I was active in or witnessed during this time. As a vocational ethnography I am conscious that the account is marked by my own personality. Nevertheless it is an authentic recollection based on actual not vicarious experience. My distinct perspective is augmented by my other primary research resource, interviews. These were conducted with a few members of staff and a larger number of people who used the club as consumers. This was instructive in providing both a mirror to my own behaviour and confirmation or refutation of general insights I had about the club or the behaviour of my colleges.

Finally, I found two secondary sources very useful in putting my experiences into broader perspective and in the comprehension of the details of small-scale confrontational interaction. Firstly, from the academy, ethnographies of police work. Though the police are an anathema to any self-respecting doorman, their often forlorn and prejudiced attempts to keep order, resonated with many of our attempts to preserve the peace. They contain descriptions of conflict resolution or stop and search located within ethnically mixed and suspicious populations, models that I will use as points of comparison. Clearly the Metropolitan Police are unique in having a sole claim to the legitimate exercise of force in common law (though having been a doorman you would never have thought it) and thus our interaction is distinct from theirs. However the macho working culture, the routine challenges of violence and the negotiation of legitimacy amongst ethnic minorities provides a comparison too strong to ignore.

Part of the reason for this is the non-existence of ethnographic accounts of doormen within the academy⁴⁰. This is only partly redeemed by biographical memoirs written by ex-doorman. Though these books capture the essence of the occupational culture and are an extremely valuable resource, they are by

⁴⁰ As of writing, this has been significantly rectified by Winlow, S. (2001) *Badfellas: Crime, Tradition and New Masculinities*, Oxford: Berg.

definition extraordinary accounts, otherwise they would not be in print. Thus the three I have read need to be approached with cynicism, though first hand material I have uncovered would suggest that they may be more accurate than many people would want them to be.

I have disguised the identities of all the participants in the ethnography and have also obscured the location of the club. During my time at the club, I admitted that I was studying at college and to some people I admitted my particular interest in the drug ecstasy but I was rarely pressed for much detail. Instead I just got on with the work at hand and tried to become another part of the colourful human tapestry that was and is the night-club's staff. In this respect, I think I had some success and I am still conversant with most levels of the club's personal hierarchy and I would still be welcome back to work.

As Ditton says "participant observation is inevitably unethical by virtue of being interactionally deceitful. It does not become ethical because this deceit is openly practised. It only becomes inefficient"⁴¹. I do not feel content in my duplicity but I do feel it was essential to get the study done. My only mitigation; among my colleagues on the door almost any self-serving or vicious action could be justified under the banner '*business*'. As was said, over and over, "*business is business and you got to do what you got to do*". So in this spirit I will write on; as Adler (1993, 11) proclaims, "investigative techniques are especially necessary for studying groups such as drug dealers and smugglers because the highly illegal nature of their occupation makes them secretive, deceitful, mistrustful and paranoid ". The only thing she has omitted is that to be successful, these same four characteristics must be shared by the ethnographer.

⁴¹ Ditton, J. (1977) *Part Time Crime*. London: Macmillan, p. 10.

Background

Night-clubbing. These two words do not just share a hyphen. Both are big business. Both are monopolised by the young. The night increasingly so: phone use is up, shopping is more common and more work is being done⁴². The 'night-club and discotheque industry' is worth over £2 billion per annum in the UK⁴³ and has become increasingly diverse⁴⁴. The night is being 'colonised'⁴⁵ by the young. Indeed as Ritzer argues the ultimate objective of a capitalist economy, at least as far as time is concerned, is to allow people to consume around the clock, every day of the year⁴⁶. Thirty percent of those aged between 18 and 24 who buy a main grocery shop, go in the evening (Kreitzman, 1999, 11) and three quarters of British 18-24 year olds feel that their lives would be a lot easier if everything was open all the time (Kreitzman, 1999, 17). Young people are the most consistent visitors to night clubs: 43 per cent of 15-24 year olds visit a club once a month or more often (Mintel, 1996, 5). In a survey of people at dance clubs in London and

⁴² Kreitzman, L. (1999) *The 24 Hour Society*, London: Profile Books, p. 10: "BT has noted an increase in telephone traffic at night. While total residential calls have increased by two-thirds since 1989, call volumes at midnight are up 150 per cent, rising to 250 per cent just after 2.a.m and to 400 per cent around 4.30 p.m. ... Shell's research found that 17 million people now shop at night: 1 million say that they can only shop after 10 pm. ... In Britain, at any given time of night, about 350,000 people are in paid work. A further 100,000 will be travelling, most of them to and from their workplaces". (p.10/11)

⁴³ Mintel, (1996) 'Nightclubs and Discotheques', Market Intelligence International Group: London. Though this includes 'discotheques' which are quite different establishments to 'dance clubs'. The former are based on the more traditional pub culture of drinking and meeting the opposite sex, and are likely to have more working class social base. However it does not include the revenue generated by dance clubs symbiosis with the radio and the record industry.

⁴⁴ See 'Time Out' which lists a myriad of nights with different categories of music.

⁴⁵ Melbin, M. (1987), *Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World after Dark*. In a prescient book on America's increasing use of the night, he likens the new users to the old pioneers and the new frontier of the night, to the old frontier of the wild west. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

⁴⁶ Ritzer, G. (1999), *Enchanting the Disenchanted World: Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption*. Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press. (p. 151).

the South East, "78 per cent started clubbing in their teenage years"⁴⁷," while a study in Sheffield found that "70% of people were aged between 19 and 24"⁴⁸.

As mentioned above, what runs in parallel with the young's increasing use of the night and their increasing attendance at clubs, is their increasing intake of illegal drugs. Evidence for a symbiotic relationship between the three and with ecstasy in particular, is compelling. In the Release survey (1997, Table 3.8) to quote directly: "as far as the sample was concerned, ecstasy had little competition, when it came to the best drug to take at dance events. 68% named it as their favourite drug to take at such events and this preference held across all groups and both sexes". In a study of drug use in Glasgow, the author concludes "a clear hierarchy of dance drug use in this Glasgow sample seems to be emerging. There are three levels to this hierarchy" and at the top are the "primary dance drugs, amphetamines, nitrates and Ecstasy"⁴⁹. The most recent study also comes to the same resolution, " Thus the drugs most associated with ecstasy use were stimulants and hallucinogens.....this fits in with the known pattern of ecstasy use, in clubs or dance contexts and suggests the users of ecstasy also tend to use other stimulants and or hallucinogens, probably to achieve similar effects of stimulation , involvement in dancing and rapport with other people"⁵⁰.

If academics are unequivocal about the relationship between ecstasy and dance events so are the journalistic accounts. In the following sections, I will refer to these accounts and to two of the culture's music magazines. The reason for this

⁴⁷ Release. (1997), *Release Drugs and Dance Survey: An Insight into the Culture*. Evidence from "520 respondents who were selected on an anonymous randomised basis with confidentiality guaranteed". London: Release,(p2).

⁴⁸ Christophorou, A., Scorthorne, J. and McGauley, A. (1996) *Results of a Major Survey in Safer Dancing*, Sheffield: SHED.

⁴⁹ Forsyth, A.(1996) 'Places and Patterns of Drug Use in the Scottish Dance Scene'. His other two levels are firstly, "tobacco, cannabis, opiates, benzodiazepines and solvents, which can be described as 'non-dance drugs'. Alcohol, cocaine, Ketamine and hallucinogens can be described as 'secondary dance drugs'". *Addiction*: 91(4), p.518

⁵⁰ Hammersley, R, Ditton, J., Smith, I., Short, E. (1999), 'Patterns of Ecstasy Use by Drug Users', *British Journal of Criminology*, 39(4), p.633.

is that their in depth knowledge of the evolution of clubbing is far superior to mine and the academy has not produced this sort of historical narrative.

At the beginning of the 'rave' explosion in 1987, according to Ian St Paul "obviously you had to have ecstasy for those clubs, without it, none of them would have worked"⁵¹. A year later in "Class of 88", W. Anthony eulogises about "Ecstasy uniting black and white, yellow and brown people as one". "The E generation became the We generation"⁵². And in 1989, S. Garret ⁵³ describing the big weekend events says " They wanted big name DJ's and exciting live acts performing their hits. Most of all they wanted MDMA, and lots of it: pleasure in a pill form, an instant escape". Ten years later, Reynolds concludes after his meticulously observed history of "Rave Music and Dance Culture " that despite the abiding myth that E isn't as good as it used to be, anecdotal evidence suggests that Ecstasy pills are stronger than ever, while the UK price of the drug has plummeted from twenty pounds in the late eighties to around ten pounds in 1997"⁵⁴.

There are two other simple points I want to make about the relationship between clubs and the ecstasy culture they contain. Firstly that clubs have become more important as venues for Ecstasy culture. Secondly that these clubs differ radically in atmosphere and construction to other kinds of clubs. In an early study (he was with his group in 1989) of Ecstasy users McDermott notes that "'raves' can take place in a night-club, a warehouse, a private house, a beach or almost anywhere" (McDermott, 1993, 213). As the histories of the culture listed above document, the location of ecstasy culture has been in flux. To put it succinctly, within England the kind of venues available to 'rave in' has been reduced. In what has often been a cat and mouse game between party organisers versus

⁵¹ Quoted from Collin, M. (1997). *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*. The title in fact says it all. London: Serpents Tail, p.64.

⁵² Anthony, W. (1998) *Class of 88: The True Acid House Experience*. London: Virgin, p.41/42.

⁵³ Garret, S. (1988) *Adventures in Wonderland: A Decade in Club Culture*. London: Headline Book Publishing, p.158.

⁵⁴ Reynolds, S. (1998), *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*. London: Picador, p.403

the police and politicians a battle has been fought, over the appropriate settings for these events.

The losers (as long as the analysis is confined to England⁵⁵) have not been the authorities. The reason, their ability to pass the requisite legislation. Initially, the police were ineffective. Forced to improvise they used an amalgam of health and safety legislation, for example the 1967 Private Places of Entertaining Act and the Local Authorities Act of 1988 to stop enterprising party organisers. Three years after the first summer of love, the pressure increased with the Entertainment (increased penalties) Act of 1990 first tabled by Graham Bright. Organisers of unlicensed parties could face fines up to £20,000 and six months in prison. This put a stop to the more unusual venues(runways, hangers, warehouses, farms) and encouraged promoters to apply for legitimate licenses for big one off parties⁵⁶. However the biggest and most controversial parties were still to come. In 1992 ravers and travellers joined together to create the conservative governments' ideological nemesis. The result, huge parties in the countryside with the biggest being the 40,000 who attended Castlemorton in May 1992⁵⁷.

This and other civil disturbances prompted more legislation in the form of the Criminal Justice Act 1994. This increased the powers of the police to prevent unlicensed parties, to include seizing of equipment and the power to redirect people. It also allows the police to be pre-emptory in their actions. They are allowed "to intervene and stop an event from happening, even if only three people have gathered, if the superintendent has reason to believe that eventually

⁵⁵ It can be argued and I will take the argument up elsewhere, that 'rave' can also be incorporated within globalisation and the consequence of such draconian legislation in the UK is not the ceasing of an activity but its export. Thus the island of Ibiza has gone from being an original but peripheral part of the English scene to an integral part of the English scene.

⁵⁶ Constantantinides, A. (1991) 'Rave On !', "The Graham Bright Bill did exactly what it was meant to do that is, drive out the cowboys. So says one of the four partners involved in Dy-Na-Mix (a promotion team) who wishes only to be known as Steve". The article ends with a very positive "big shout to the Legal 1991 Summer of Love." *DJ*, May, p.25.

⁵⁷ Reynolds, S (1998) writes about the coming together of ravers and travellers: " They discovered common ground in drugs, dance and the desire to have a wild time dirt- cheap". P.137.

more than 100 people will gather illegally⁵⁸". This did cause the diminution of the free rave scene but did not stop the parties. Instead they became more concentrated in existing legal venues and provided the inspiration for new venues which include the one I worked in.

Predictably with the parties came the drugs and then the legislation. The most recent piece of legislation, the Public Entertainment Licences (Drug Misuse) Act (often more popularly known as the Barry Legg Bill) specifically makes the connection between the venue and the drugs. The Act, which received two notable amendments in its bill stage⁵⁹, gives the council and police the following powers. It permits local authorities, on the advice of the local chief officer of police, to: immediately revoke the licence of a club; or to impose conditions and restrictions on a club; or refuse to renew or transfer a licence of a club, if it is suspected "that there is a serious problem relating to the supply or use of controlled drugs at the place or nearby which is controlled by the holder of the licence". Secondly, "the standard of proof which the local police have to present to demonstrate that the club has a serious problem is the balance of probabilities, rather than the beyond reasonable doubt used in criminal proceedings⁶⁰".

This concern over the distribution and use of drugs has also been directed at one group in particular, doormen. A doorman⁶¹ is defined by the Home office as "a person employed on premises which have a music and dancing license (Public Entertainment Licence) in operation with authority from the owner or the landlord, exclusively or mainly to decide upon the suitability of customers to be allowed on

⁵⁸ Shapiro, H. (1999), 'Dances With Drugs: Pop Music, Drugs and Youth Culture', a more detailed discussion of what Shapiro describes as a 'piecemeal' piece of legislation can be found on p30, in N. South (ed.) *Drugs, Cultures, Controls and Everyday Life*. London: Sage.

⁵⁹ Drugs Forum Focus (1997), 'Barry Legg Bill becomes Law'. *Drugs Forum Focus* (13). Initially the burden of proof the police had to present was the more difficult to prove "beyond reasonable doubt". Initially the club was to be considered liable if there was a serious problem "at or near the place" but that was later to be more restricted, "at the place or at any place nearby which is controlled by the holder of the licence." P.9.

⁶⁰ Drugs Forum Focus (1997). 'Barry Legg Bill becomes Law'. *Drugs Forum Focus*, (13), p.9.

⁶¹ Security will be used as a synonym for doormen. Effectively they do the same job though doormen implies the someone who stands at the opening of the club rather than inside it.

those premises: and/or to maintain order on those premises" (Morris,1998,3). The government is encouraging councils to employ a door registration scheme⁶², which prevents anybody who has not both been on a course and passed the arbitration of the council who act on the advice of the police, to engage in this profession. Indeed a specific recommendation by the Police Research Group pamphlet is for "all London local authorities to adopt registration schemes to ensure that door supervisors are appropriate for the job and well trained" (Morris, 1998, 27).

If, over the last twelve years, legislation in relation to licensing has been radically transformed, so have the clubs themselves. In the late eighties according to M. Collin "London club-land mirrored this monetarist climax.... Elitism was a virtue, acceptance had to be bought, and those who couldn't afford the price were turned away, their voices denied expression" (Collins, 55, 1998). The clearest if not the most comforting view of what night -life was like, in the mid-eighties can be seen in early editions of music magazines. In the original issues of *Jocks*, (now called *DJ Magazine*) one can see the state of the nations clubs just as 'Acid house' is beginning. In their 'Club News' section of Feb 1987, they ran an article on "Leeds' newest night-club Mr Craig's which brings the glamour of a West End night-club to Leeds". "The dance floor and table tops are in black marble, the metalwork and mirrors are gold, and the carpets are black. Unlike may clubs the sound level is low and there are areas, such as the restaurant and a lounge bar glassed off, so that customers can watch dance floor action while enjoying the comparative quiet⁶³".

In December 1986, the birth of 'The Point' merits news: a new entertainment complex in Milton Keynes. Where the DJ's "briefs have been to provide an interesting and appealing music show. The DJ's consul is not situated at a focal

⁶² "Registration schemes have largely been set up using powers conferred on the authorities responsible for the licensing of places used for public music and dancing which are found in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and the London Government Act of 1963" (Morris, 1998,4).

⁶³ *Jocks* (1987), 'Club news', *Jocks*, (4), p.9.

point within the club, but in a corner booth up some stairs behind one of the two bars⁶⁴". Finally in London, the new 'Limelight', where the "DJ is positioned in a hut-like room above the balcony bar, a DJ cannot see the dance floor and has difficulty mixing records due to the sound delay from the dance floor to the console up in the clouds⁶⁵".

The contrast is stark. The DJ's were peripheral, alcohol essential, the licence was minimal (2.a.m), chill out rooms were non existent but food was plentiful. Many clubs are still like this in the UK but the ones that hold 'rave music' are not. Instead, they are designed with large dance crowds in mind. As the pre publicity, several years later, for the Ministry of Sound in the same magazine notes. "There will be four main areas –a large mingling room with the juice bar...which will have a different decorative theme every month. The first is Blade Runner, a chill out room with comfortable seating and video screenings; a VIP lounge...for well VIPs; and, most importantly the 'worlds first and only sonic dance box'". Meanwhile the " DJ box will have a set-up similar to New York clubs-three decks, a top quality mixer, plus reel to reel DAT and cassette machines⁶⁶".

The club I worked was modelled on the example set by the seminal Ministry of Sound. The club had a late licence, it stayed open to 6.a.m and served alcohol to 3 a.m. It had two main rooms with a capacity of around 1000. In each room the DJ area was centre stage and each room had a small amount of seating for people to 'chill out on'. They had two large sound rigs and employed two people to keep them running and a further two to keep the lighting rigs and the stage arrangements functioning.

Unlike night clubs, the press doormen have received over the last twelve years has been consistent, consistently bad. In a recent *Mixmag* article called "Annoying-Clubber Warning Cards", security came in fourth out of twelve with an

⁶⁴ Tee, R. (1986) 'What's the Point', *Jocks*, (2), p.16.

⁶⁵ Tee, R. (1986) 'Songs of praise for the Limelight', *Jocks* (1), p.40..

⁶⁶ Stokes, H. (1991) 'Ministry of Sound', *DJ Magazine*, p.13.

annoyance factor of 89%⁶⁷. An article, six years earlier, on doormen in DJ magazine begins:

“Tales of maltreatment by bouncers in night-clubs, whether exaggerated or not, are rampant amongst today’s club goers⁶⁸”. The perception being, that the problem is especially acute in Manchester as Mixmag bluntly put it, in their expose “Gangchester⁶⁹”.

All the serious accounts of ‘rave’ are unanimous in their condemnation of doormen. “In those days (1989-90) you paid the security to keep the police out. It was mad, you didn’t even ask them to they just saw it as their duty. They don’t give a fuck those boys” (Collins, 1998, 107). Collins also goes on to write a brief resume of a similar if not worse scene in Manchester. “The Salford and Cheetham Hill gangs had first become involved in clubs through selling drugs, then they began to take over control over venues’ doors. By 1996, many of them had set themselves up as legitimate security firms and were getting paid to preserve a fragile peace”(Collins, 1998, 182). S.Garret (1998, 262) confirms the problem is ongoing; “.....privately many admit (promoters) that they are controlled by their security, rather than the other way round, “I have no choice, one club owner told me in 1997. I pay these people to stand on the door and keep trouble out, or I have them outside waving guns, threatening staff and being a big part of that trouble”.

An important part of any ethnography is its location. However, due to the conspicuous nature of study I feel that my description should not be more expansive than inner city London. I will though use some references to the South London Press to give some idea of how a local community responds to having these kinds of events in their midst. This isn’t a clue to the club’s location, only to

⁶⁷ Mixmag (1999), ‘Annoying-Clubber Warning Cards’, They were only beaten by projectile vomiters (100%), Speeding Gurners (92%),and Gropers (90%), *Mixmag*, May, p.44-45.

⁶⁸ Constantinides, A. (1993) ‘Not Tonight’, *DJ magazine*, April.p46.

⁶⁹ Swanton, O. (1998) ‘Gangchester’ is quite a thorough article on the way the gangs, club owners, security and the police are trying and failing to control/contain the drug trade and keep public order. *Mixmag*, Feb, p. 70-76.

mine. The area I worked in was predominately white with a large minority of black West Indians, black British and black Africans⁷⁰. There are other minorities in the area but the majority of the interaction I participated in was between these two groups. The area was also known where crack cocaine⁷¹ was easily available. More contentiously, it is alleged that this drug market is dominated by the so-called 'Yardies'. Certainly during my work in the area, a number of young black men were shot dead, due to their alleged involvement in the drug trade⁷² and the escalating violence caused a general unease for all groups in the area.

As part of the inner city it experienced the dual trends that much of London has witnessed. On the one hand in the short term, over the last three years, house prices have soared, making the established well off areas too expensive for young professionals. As a result, there has been an influx of them, into the old inner city areas sparking their partial gentrification. This means a more diverse population, increased house prices, new public spaces and the perception that the 'area isn't as bad as it used to be'. Conversely, it also means for the original residents, a residual resentment 'to those who aren't from around here', a loss of control over public spaces and problems associated with being at the bottom of a newly polarised ladder of affluence⁷³.

⁷⁰ Far higher than the national average of 1.6% of the population.

⁷¹ Schipiro, H. (1993), 'Where does all the snow go?: The Prevalence and Pattern of Cocaine and Crack Use in Britain' in P. Bean (ed.) *Cocaine and Crack Supply and Use*. New York: St Martin's Press, p.17-35. H. Schipiro observes that though seizures of crack cocaine in the UK grew massively between 1987(12) to 1990 (352) (a figure confirmed by NICS which also documents a further large increase to 1997 (1750) the total amount seized in that year was very low, only 1Kg. It is important to look at the astronomical rise of seizures not the amount seized, due to the nature of the drug. Crack is a street drug and an easy one to make. A large quantity of cocaine can be distributed as it is and will carry a lesser penalty, if caught. Thus the conversion process is often last minute and thus it is rare for the police to net it in large quantities.

⁷² An example of the way these sorts of events were reported in a local media at the time can be seen in the South London Press. For example on Friday October 9th 1998, "Man shot a second time is in fight for his life"- "Detectives believe the 28 year old was gunned down as part of a vicious on-going feud over drugs". Or a month later on Friday Nov 6th 1998, "cops hunt killer Gunmen trio". "Three masked gunmen assassinated a man in the street as he chatted with his pals".

⁷³ This is a vital point. If you look at who takes the most drugs according to classification of BCS data by housing areas "confirms that a higher proportion of affluent urbanites, prosperous professionals in metropolitan areas and better off executives in inner city areas will have taken drugs than anyone else. Moreover, the wealthy have the next highest usage among 16-29 year olds but crucially their use of drugs tails off with age. This is not the case with those in the poorest group, where relatively high levels of usage continue through into their thirties" (*Social Trends* (1999) 29, p.18). The interaction between relatively

Undoubtedly, there has been a general rise in the wealth of the nation. Unemployment has gone down from 3.2 million in 1984 to 1.8 million in 1998⁷⁴. Average earnings in 1997 have trebled since 1981, while retail prices have only doubled in the same time period (Government Statistical Service). If you look at the retail index of items owned there have been substantial increases in ownership of a number of items, between 1981 and 1997/8. This include telephone ownership going up from 75.8% to 94%, car ownership from 61.8% to 70% and central heating from 60.5% to 89%⁷⁵.

At the same time it can be argued that relative, and for a small amount of people absolute poverty, has grown. According to the latest figures published by The Joseph Rowntree foundation the "number of people on very low incomes (below 40% of average income) has risen to over 8 million(after housing costs) in the two years to 1997/8, representing an historic high. This includes over "2 million children who live in households where there is no adult in paid work⁷⁶". Indeed, Andrew Silnot of the Institute for Fiscal Studies "reckons that income inequality has increased since 1996, partly because of higher returns to skills in competitive markets, and partly because social benefits tied mostly to prices continue to lag behind private sector earnings". Thus, despite a change of government and its historical ideological commitment to redistribute , "New Labour may not be doing enough even to hold to the pattern of inequality it inherited from the Tories"⁷⁷. What exists now, is a two tier society and it exists in the inner city where both the extremes of consumption and the extremes of poverty are located side by side.

young wealthy student/professionals who take lots of drugs and the older unemployed or lowly employed who also take lots of drugs is a key to understanding the local drug market. I will elaborate this point later.

⁷⁴ The Government Statistical Service, The figure quoted by using the International Labour Office measure of Unemployment. "It refers to people without a job who were available to start work in the two weeks following their interview and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to the interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained".

⁷⁵ Government Statistical Service. Data taken from the Family Expenditure Survey, 1998

⁷⁶ Howarth, C., Kenway, P., Palmer, G. and Miorelli, R. (1999) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*, London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

⁷⁷ Prowse, M. (2000) "Prospect Magazine", January, p.33.

This is London in 2000, where the average income is £20,000 yet 2,400 people sleep rough every year⁷⁸.

Even though there is a great deal of cynicism over the veracity of crime statistics,⁷⁹ the fact that they have been rising since the 1950's is indisputable. Though in the 1990's "there have been years of relative decline, (1 per cent, 5 per cent, and 1 per cent in 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996)⁸⁰" this is from a historically high level. This includes a "doubling of figures within ten years (1955-1964), another doubling over the next ten years and yet another by 1990 (Maguire, 1997, 159)". As Maguire concludes (Maguire, 1997, 176) when you deconstruct these figures distinctions can be drawn. Lower class adults commit those types of crime, which are handled by the police at a higher rate, than middle class adults. Lower class juveniles also follow the same pattern. For my purposes all the reader needs to be aware of is that the area where I worked is an area of high police activity. Statistically, the young men are more likely to be perpetrators of crime and one is more likely to be a victim of crime, than in most other areas of London.

To sum up. My ethnography is in an inner city area, which like most parts of the inner city contained is very ethnically diverse. Some of its inhabitants are enjoying the extremes of wealth and its gentrification, while others are part of a poor minority who have recently become yet poorer. There are high levels of detected crime and even higher incidence of drug use. This includes the perceived, easy availability of crack and the adverse publicity and community relations that its existence often signifies. The club is the new kind, which caters for a dance culture that for the last twelve years has been entwined with endemic drug use, especially ecstasy. During this time there has been a plethora of legislation, trying to contain its expression and to regulate those who are partly

⁷⁸ These figures are from the Social Exclusion Unit.

⁷⁹ They are open to both political and statistical manipulation and are also notoriously unreliable, with big discrepancies between Home Office figures and self-report studies.

⁸⁰ Maguire, M. (1997) 'Crime Statistics, Patterns and Trends' in M. Maguire, R. Morgan and R. Reiner, (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.160.

responsible for its containment. Yet it is still policed by security, a profession accused by insiders and outsiders as being mixed up in the violent end of the drug trade. In the next chapter I will outline in detail the way the club I worked in was organised.

2. The Club

Opening time

In this chapter I will describe the club in detail. Everything that follows has been included as typical of what I experienced. Clearly as I have had to summarise nearly a year's worth of experience a lot has been left out. The club was a different place on a weekday or a Friday night than it was on a Saturday night. During the former two periods, the club was less busy which meant the same work had a different complexion. On the bar and on the door the main challenge was overcoming boredom. Gossip helped incubate the 'staff' as did their drug use. Violence was more likely to be prompted by spite rather than stress. The atmosphere of a half-empty club is peculiarly depressing. The loud music becomes deafening, the smoke suffocating and the rare dancer always looks desperate. Sometimes door staff would resign themselves to it and just fall asleep. Fewer incidents took place during this time but it is important to remember that for every intense night there was also an apathetic one.

I have a strong belief in the veracity of the characters and the institution I will describe. Though I was working with unreliable people prone to exaggeration and deception, I had the opportunity to observe them for long periods of time in a variety of locations. Not only did we work together, we also socialised together and the stressful situations we often found ourselves in soon revealed the genuine calibre of a person's character. Indeed, the people who have been quoted the most are often the people who had the least to say, but whose observed behaviour converged with their spoken accounts. Their veracity could also be confirmed by checking with multiple sources. Cab drivers were particularly useful for this. Even though your instincts told you not to, most of the doorman would unwind in the cabs home and often reveal an unembellished account of the nights' events to their drivers. These stories could be coaxed out

of the same bored cab drivers the next day. The characters presented below all existed and the dialogue is as it was said¹. I haven't used ideal types but on a couple of occasions, I have amalgamated two characters so my narrative does not get too diffuse to follow. Therefore some dialogue is attributed to a character when it was actually said by someone else, but all of it was actually said:

"The club, it's a great space and restored my faith in drum and bass clubs really, because you have got this huge space. The atmosphere is friendly but not excessively, you will not get complete strangers coming up to you and hugging you which I cannot be dealing with. If I take E now, I talk to people I know. Everyone is into the music, when someone plays a new dubplate, everybody think yeah wicked I haven't heard this tune before" (Punter).

The venue had been refurbished and given a new name. Its capacity was around a 1000 people and it was split into two rooms which each had their own sound systems. It had one cloakroom on the same floor and a room with a ladies toilet and a staff toilet. On the top floor there were the male toilets and the light and sound rooms. Behind both of the main areas were a VIP area, though it was not always used as such. The décor and the facilities were best described as basic. Its critics would describe it as a 'mess', its admirers as 'underground' or 'without pretension'. Certain promoters would make an effort to do the club up and depending on the anticipated crowd and the promoter's skill, this was accomplished with varying degrees of success². During my time there, the venue changed as the owner realised it was inadequately designed to accommodate the number of people he crammed in. The cloakroom was moved up a level and a new office was created for the owner. The men's toilets were enlarged and the old cloak-room was replaced by a chill-out room. Internally over the first six months it became more organised. First came new tills, then CCTV on the bars, then on the cloak room, the stock room and other areas in the club. Overall it

¹ The quotations that follow are from conversations had or observed during the ethnography. The details of which were then written down on returning home.

² For trance nights, one room would become "chilled out" with beanbags, and various psychedelic merchandise. On house nights some promoters would try to add a few luxury gimmicks, or laser lights, but most of the time it stayed minimal.

became a very different place to work in, I will attempt to describe the changes in the sections that follow.

The club was open two or three nights a week for the public from ten at night to six in the morning. The staff used to get there, from nine o'clock and one would expect to leave between six- thirty on a quiet night and eight on a busy night. The owner of the club also owned other establishments, which stayed open less late, and on other nights, many staff would be working there. Included in the 'staff' are junior management, bar staff, and back bar. This is a clear hierarchy and it was possible to work up from one of the levels to the next. On Friday nights there would be between six and eight bar staff and two bar-backs. On Saturday nights there would be eight bar staff and between two to four bar- backs. There would normally be two managers and between four to ten security on each night. They also employed a caretaker who worked nearly every night and was responsible for making sure the club was clean enough for use in the day for events. His modest appearance hid an unparalleled knowledge of the club game and I often used to seek his opinion on my more speculative queries.

The working environment at the club can be divided into two distinct periods. The first spanned the first three months when no precautions had been taken to protect the clubs money/stock. Though fully open for business, the club did not have the infrastructure to support it. Originally there were bottle openers attached to the bar but due to the volume of use they kept coming off. So the bar staff were forced to open bottles with normal bottle openers, hard to do on a high volume bar. There were never enough corkscrews, so wine would only be available at one bar. The black bags used were not of industrial strength and would split half way down fire exits. In the morning, the staff had to clear up but there wasn't more than one dustpan and brush. So the staff used to get old pieces of cardboard and sweep the rubbish into bags from the floor. Alternatively they would use their hands, but as there were no gloves, people would often get cuts. On the whole, cleaning up was an arduous and unhygienic process. The

rubbish left by a thousand people is considerable and at six -thirty or seven in the morning after a ten hour shift, tempers would get frayed. The music would not be on and it was at this time that the staff and the management had to be careful to hide their respective inebriation from each other. The body begins to relax after the hectic night and lets fatigue in, the extra push to do the cleaning would be too much for some. People would not be pulling their weight, disputes would start, resentment would be voiced until the job was done.

Then came the oasis. The staff would be rewarded with a free drink and sometimes the opportunity to purchase more at half price. The weed would come out, as would the war stories about the night. "How busy each bar was, any memorable customers, who was the best DJ". Complaints would be aired, "So and so didn't do any work", "They need to get some more staff" and then after about half an hour of gossip, the manager would usher the staff out. They would then sign out and reconvene to the next venue. Sometime this would be private party, but mostly they would go to another venue and keep drinking and taking more stimulants. As a member of staff described it:

"We would stay till nine in the morning, everyone would spliff up and drink. They always had this policy of you know half price drinks which would reinforce all the staff to become alcoholics and keep all the money within the business because at the end of the night you would be absolutely shattered".

The back bar

The back-bars are the engine of the club; without them the whole thing as an entertainment spectacle would come to a halt. They are first in at the club arriving at nine o'clock and setting the bar up. This means stocking it with soft drinks, spirits, champagne, wine, and beer. Then they have to get all the other paraphernalia, cups, bin bags, rubbish bins and ice. During the night the intensity of their work is dictated by the business of the bar. If the bar is busy then they need to be on hand to restock it and take the rubbish out, which is an arduous

task when the club is full. It means dragging big black bags full of bottles through five hundred people and down a fire exit and out into the often freezing cold night. This was their primary responsibility but they were also meant to keep the club clean during the night and had to pick up discarded bottles and plastic cups from the floor. Unfortunately, there would rarely be enough of them, so some areas of the club would clog with assorted rubbish. Then at the end of the night they would have to clean the club, along with the rest of the bar staff. This meant sweeping the floor with a dustpan and brush and then taking the rubbish back down to the rubbish dump. They were also expected to move back anything that had been moved in or out of the club. This could include the mundane, such as hundreds of chairs or the exotic, like torture equipment from the dungeon on fetish nights. These jobs would take a long time and on Saturday, no-one would finish before seven in the morning:

"The back bar were your European people with no money coming to London for the first time, so they would do all the shit and work their balls off " (Bar staff).

This would sum up the back-bar well as long as your definition of Europe is either broad or optimistic. The constitution of the back-bar was pretty fluid for a long time. They came from the East: Poles, Rumanians, Croatians; from the West: Spanish, French, and from the Americas, both North and the South. No formal qualifications were required, all you needed was basic English, stamina and fortitude. Sometimes their situation could be improved if friends were employed together as this would provide camaraderie and enable mischief. This was a job exclusively done by foreigners. Whether the job was too hard or whether it was too much of a threat to a domestic person's masculinity, I never saw an English person, black or white, working as a back bar:

"Yeah I like drugs, but the drug I like most is heroin, yeah it's good...

In my country, in Croatia, lots of cannabis, big bags of it and loads of E

But I can't get it into the country but my friend he is Russian Mafia, he has a Porche man he was trying to sell to me man, fuck.....

I hate Yugoslavs and Serbs, there are too many in London, it isn't good. I want to kill them. There are too many in my building, when I see one of them in my lift I shout fuck off, fuck off. He was scared, they are scared of us because we are good fighters" (Zito: back-bar from Croatia);

"This place is crazy. I kinda think its fun working with all these characters, I wouldn't want to work in a boring place" (Mike: back-bar from California).

Zito was a good hard worker and stayed for some time. He had a girlfriend back home but he liked London, *"I like black people man, they are so funny man, I like the way they dress. Black people are good people"*. He hated Serbs and he had lost a few friends in the war against them. In his words *"in the village in which I live, after the war, when the Serbs came back, we had burned their entire houses to the ground"*. Zito used to work six or seven nights a week but it was unclear how he had got the job as he had lost his passport. He was an industrious man and because he was capable he was exploited and over-worked. He would be left with only two other workers to keep the club going on Saturday night (there should have been five back-bar staff). As one of the other back bars used to do nothing, he had to do a disproportionate amount of work.

Zito always moved fast if the punters' left their drinks half-empty or their cigarettes burning he would finish them. Unfortunately his drug consumption did not fit into the club culture. Though I don't think too many people knew about his heroin use, his refusal to change his clothes meant he had a strong odour. This and his manic intensity used to unsettle the more sensitive female staff who used to complain to the management, *"he is fucking strange that Zito and he stinks"*. He lasted for a while but when he squared up to somebody on the dance floor at a magazine party he was sacked. He was genuinely aggrieved at this and told the manger to fuck off and was never seen again.

Mike was more mild mannered and also a good worker. His stint in London was part of an extended world tour, which included working in many different destinations. He thought the club was "so cool" and despite having to travel an hour to and from work where he stayed with some distant cousin, he found he was able to hold the job and build up money to travel. As a participant in the fledgling rave scene in California he fitted right in with the club's drug culture. He was frequently on ecstasy and would come in on his off nights, score E's from security and spend the night doing his American version of psychedelic dancing.

These kinds of guys were replaced a lot during the nine months but a nucleus of back bar staff was finally established around two Portuguese guys. These two had strong survival skills³ and were adept at both dimensions of occupational theft⁴. They realised early on, that alone they wouldn't survive at the club. Consequently they ingratiated themselves with security, went out with the bar staff and worked with the sound and lighting staff. Known as the 'Spanish waiters' for their convenient ability to lose their powers of comprehension as soon as they were told off, they both managed to get themselves promoted to the oasis of the bar. Their enterprise extended to outside the club where they had managed to find a safe squat, which the landlord didn't mind them living in. Sometimes they lived dangerously, and when all the DJ equipment disappeared after a Saturday night, the owner and the head of security went for an uninvited chat round their place. Despite a thorough search, nothing was found. Like the security they were often most awake, latest at night. Both the 'Spanish waiters' were big pill takers and would spend a good deal of time on the dance-floor. At the end of night at around seven they would frequently go off to squat parties or go and get drunk with the rest of the 'staff':

³ One of them had some 'form' already, as I heard from a reliable source that he used to be a drug dealer at home.

⁴ Ditton, J. (1975), 'Becoming a Fiddler, Some Steps in the Moral Career of the Naïve Bread Salesman'. *Working Papers in Sociology*, No6. Firstly "where employees adopt illicit means to rob the organisation which employs them" and secondly, "to utilise occasions of managerial laxity and tolerance to steal from customers", p.4.

Owner: Yes Tony was caught on camera, taking a bottle of Moet from the back bar

Staff: Yeah I heard that but I thought he was normally very straight

Owner: Yeah well, when we asked Manuel if it was a one off, he said oh no I do it all the time.

Despite being the guy giving the champagne out, Manuel managed to use his size to his advantage and plead intimidation, so it was the doorman who got sacked. Most people, both back-bar and bar staff, got away with this kind of thing before they installed the cameras. All the rubbish had to be deposited outside for pick up in the morning, and as stock was constantly being shifted out of the stock room onto the bars, it could also be shifted out into the rubbish. At the end of the night, staff could make a slight detour via the rubbish dump and then be happily off home. The back bar had their own special version of this, which was to stash stuff around the club for consumption on the night or the next night. They were masters of the club space, and at four in the morning you would frequently see them on the fire exits smoking a spliff and drinking a glass of champagne.

More straight-forward was simple theft from the customer. In our club any carelessness would be exploited. Cigarettes left behind, drinks half finished, purses dropped, coats left in the cloakroom, all would disappear. Mobile phones, pagers and more expensive items may re-appear the next weekend for re-sale but most stuff would be consumed on the night. Due to the state many punters would get themselves in, the amount of stuff that was 'found' was enough to make a difference. A couple of pills, a pack of cigarettes or a new sweater, make a difference when you are on £4.50 an hour. It was not that the bar-backs were any more dishonest than anyone else, it was just that they moved quicker than anyone else, so they would do the best.

Their more risky scam was to combine with security and mess around with the dealers. Most dealers who wanted to make money would keep an eye on

security but few would pay attention to the small guys, who looked like punters storming around the club. They were not the eyes and the ears of security team (though they could have been), as they, like everyone else in the club, looked after themselves. But after they had done their business with the dealers, or if they wanted pills and didn't have money, they would start a transaction. *"If you kick someone out can I have a couple of pills, I'm tired, I haven't got any money"*. Then when they identified the guy, we would kick him out, and if they were lucky they would get some of what was nabbed off him. A lot of the time this would not work as the dealers with large quantities of drugs would prefer to walk than be searched.

So soon they started to do their own business. Running around and looking out of it, they were the first people, punters asked, where they could get any pills from. So instead of sending them off to another dealer they might have spotted in the club, they started to deal them themselves⁵.

Predictably as doorman are big, back bar are small. At the bottom of the size and language pyramid they tended to have the toughest time. Unable to defend themselves physically or verbally, they are on the front line in a club. If a fight breaks out, or somebody is dealing they will spot it first. When things went missing or staff drug taking became untenable they were the easiest people to blame as they couldn't answer back. They were the scapegoats, sacrificed (fired) in atonement for the group's sins. When one night one of the bar staff was caught taking some acid in the cloakroom, under questioning she revealed that the entire bar staff had decided to take it as a dare. Unsurprisingly the tills' taking were particularly ramshackle that night, and the manageress unaware that admonishing people still on LSD might be futile, decided to assert her authority. Despite everyone's complicity, only the back-bar lost a team member. After being

⁵ They were good point men. They were inconspicuous and had an excuse to be almost anywhere in the club. Subsequently, once they proved their mettle there was stiff competition from the security over who would use them to supply drugs. The alternative would be to try and get a mate in as a back bar and then let him retail your business. Though if you tried this the other more established guys would probably find out where he got his drugs from and this would leave you open to exposure.

promised that in spite of his culpability he would not be sacked, he was spotted working by the owner the next Saturday. The owner immediately told the security "I want him out of the building". Straightaway, he was ushered out of the building and told that he was now barred from all the owners' premises. And that was that, off he went, jobless, into the night.

The bar staff

"I haven't met anyone there who has managed to survive intact really, it changes you in lots of ways. Most people end up taking loads of drugs and self-destruct and set back their lives by at least six months or you need to go away for six months, in order to get your sanity back. In a way you get caught up with a lot of bullshit, an incredible amount of politics and it does become, because you are spending so much time there, so important. There are so many ridiculous things that are going on that half the time you are gossiping. You just like can't get it out of your mind because it is so ludicrous that you have to tell people, so comical, just like the whole staff sacking things and the when they banned tips" (Dave, bar staff).

The bar staff were the most eclectic group by any yardstick. They were male and female, working class and middle class, educated and uneducated, black and white, English and from abroad. Some were honest, some were straight, some lazy, some industrious. Their age varied from nineteen to thirty, though they were more likely to be on the lower end of this scale. The only things that they shared were massive drug consumption and a short shelf life. People came and went , and then came back and then went again depending on their college terms or their travelling schedules. Both the men and the women, students or otherwise, tended to be on the esoteric side of youth culture. Dyed hair, piercings facial or otherwise, and tattoos were the norm not the exception. Gender was an issue, senior management were all male and the junior management who they promoted were almost exclusively female. They were then partly responsible for

recruiting further junior management and promoted women who they got in with and who fitted into the management culture. The women staff were more reliable than the male staff and managed not to let themselves get so involved in more confrontational aspects of the staff politics. I don't think this was because they took any less liberties or less drugs, but partly because of their gender they were often less conspicuous when things were going wrong. If you include the security, there were a lot of male egos who might take issue with any guy who threatened their territory and subsequently the male members of staff didn't last too long. To give an example of what was going on I will give a brief resume of two staff who worked at the club for a while.

David was a mixed race student, an earnest guy, he wasn't too involved in the drug culture and was more interested in getting money for college in a trendy environment in a job which was relaxed and not dull. As he explained in contrast to working as a professional, working on the bar was *"good because it gave you a sense of freedom and power, if people were rude to me I could be rude back"*. The perks of the job were meeting *"interesting people who were there and you know sometimes they did these parties there, and when you're on your break sometimes, you could dance with some beautiful ladies or whatever, it was fun"*.

Like many of the college students who worked there, the time available for work was controlled by the demands of their academic work. So during the summer, people would leave for exams and over Christmas students who lived outside London would go home for the holidays. They wouldn't want to work more than two nights a week but because of the disorganisation of the staffing people were frequently begged to come in at the last minute. People responded to this and when I was on the bar you would frequently hear the demented complaints that the job *"was screwing up college work"*. For Dave after over a year, it eventually all got too much for him:

"Well basically I was studying and I needed to pass my exams. I was working until three in the week days, and I needed to be in college at nine next morning,

so it was so hard to concentrate and stay awake". The effect of work, you know it's not just the nights you are working there, but you are completely wiped out the next day too. So even if you work there one night a week your whole weekend is destroyed recovering, even if you are working only a couple of nights it screws up your whole week".

When things started out, there was no control over stock and no cameras on the tills. When it was busy work was hard but the bar staff response was to try and turn their job into a participatory one. So on the busy nights, they would try to get as high, if not higher than the crowd around them. Two people worked on each bar and in the early days there were two questions every bar staff asked their partner, what are you on and do you mind if I steal? With the staff from the club and the staff from the owners' other establishments coming in for free and no cameras on the bars, drinks would disappear by the caseload. Tills would also be fleeced though the more unsubtle staff who took notes, tended to get caught. However because the volume of trade was so high when people gave you exact money, what many people did was put the money in the till so the transaction looked legitimate but kept a pound in their hand. After a delay, in which you went to serve another customer this pound could be placed in your pocket or if your pockets got too obviously full you could put it in your tip glass. Then at the end of the night this could be changed quite legitimately up into notes. On a busy bar, especially when you are serving more than one person at once, you have a legitimate reason to keep change in your hand. Thus though it may be possible to spot, because the scam normally involves small amounts of money, it is very difficult to prove the bar person is stealing. The arrival of cameras and new tills that recorded what kind of drink had been sold and showed on the camera the price of that drink, effectively ended this as a routine scam. However, it soon became common knowledge that the cameras had a blind spot at the end of the bar, so with your back to them, you could still do business. Though this seemed to be reduced to distributing drinks to friends.

The bar staff were generally too disorganised to get anything more profitable or efficient going than this. However on two occasions it was tried, both times, by boyfriend, girlfriend teams. The first tried handing over faked notes but they had only got started before they got sacked. She was much too obviously 'dodgy' and attracted attention straight away. The other involved another premises and the receipt of door money and was of the few scams that netted those involved, big money.

In retrospect, Dave concluded that:

"Generally, it was a bizarre place, so many things happen you lose the sense of what is normal and what isn't. You know, you see a lot of real harsh things, and it kind of blunts you a bit, you see a lot of the bad things that are going on in the world. It made me feel very separate from a lot of the environment that I was living in, which was mainly you know, middle class people. You realise that the world is a very different place and it's very shocking, but basically after a while you accept it as that's just how things are, but when you are trying to explain it to other people they find it quite shocking. But you get so used to people being on drugs like all the time and it seems like normality, yeah, I can't really tell whether that is normal or not anymore".

Dave was someone who stayed away from hard drugs but many people would say after they left, *"yeah, that place was a shit place to work and that drug is an evil drug man, an evil drug. But I don't do it anymore"*. From observing them you knew that three months earlier they had been working all the time and spending all their money on that very same "evil drug".

Leila was a case in point. She was much more committed to the scene than David. Her passion for drum and bass was matched by her hatred of all things techno, *"I want to kill those tie dye freaks, and house, you like house, what are you a pussy or something"*. She used to get on with security and understood the

nuances of serving on a bar⁶. A raconteur, she would entertain the staff with stories of her weekends at various jungle clubs; Leila:

"Do you remember Sarah from here? Well I was at M and she was like hello how are you ? And I was like not too good I've done three and a half pills, and then I was sick everywhere, on her and everything. I don't know how it happened I just, I don't know, it was really stupid really , I mean I feel so stupid now. I mean normally I do Mitsubishis but these were Mercedes, really, really speedy, but quite good".

As someone who was good at their job and a few years older than the rest of the staff she was promoted quickly which provoked resentment from the male staff who had started before her:

Dave: *"This place is run on oestrogen man".*

Ted: *"Yeah I think I am going to be gay it's the only way I'll get promoted in fact I'll be promoted by the end of the week, George will sort it out".*

Dave: *"Leila and Sophia coming on Saturday thinking 'they're all that', on half a pill and going to the VIP room and carrying on like they're rude girls and that."*

Ted: *"I mean she is twenty eight or something, but she's a fucking idiot ,I'm going to tell all management about all her fuck ups man".*

Leila was more than able to defend herself, *"I slapped a couple of guys tonight one for pinching my arse one for being an arse"*. However her drug taking irresistibly increased. On one of her last nights, she said: *"Yeah I've been up for four fucking days this is the first day I haven't done coke, for fourteen days, I can't believe it, and now I'm getting drunk"*. On a big night she would really go for it: *"Yeah you should have seen us on the bar on Saturday we were making a*

⁶ Spradley, J and Mann, B. (1975) *The Cocktail Waitress: Women's Work in a Man's World*. New York and London: Wiley. This book is a well-observed account of the minutiae of interaction on a bar. There are informal rules governing when to give a free drink, whom to serve first and other such interactions. A good bar person will know them and use them, to most importantly change an essentially impersonal position (you have no ownership of any of the stock) into a personal one (to give the illusion that you are in fact the proprietor of your bar). Chapter three of *The Cocktail Waitress* is interesting on the division of labour in a bar, and on how the barman enforces it by withholding or giving favours.

fucking porno film I mean Ted in his vest, and I was fucking him from behind with a plastic cup".

This kind of behaviour was tolerated in bar staff, but as management she was too wild. A few weeks later she was sacked. Apparently she had been involved in some credit card fraud on another premises though these kind of serious offences were often given out as public excuses for sacking people when the owners didn't want the real reason to emerge.

The owners

There were a few wild card people around, who didn't fit easily into the hierarchy. One of them was George, the older brother of the owner. In a family business he obviously felt he had a place but this feeling did not seem to be reciprocated by his siblings. Early on in the club's life, as Dave recounted:

"When I first started there was a big fight between George and his brother. George had been managing, but he had been giving out crates of beer to his friends and Quentin had enough. They both had a coke problem I think, but Quentin had stopped but George was just way out there, so they had this fist fight in the street and George came in and mashed all the toilets. It was like some kind of film thing, a Brooklyn kind of hoodlum film".

George was very friendly, always spoke really fast and always wore the same sweater. He loved clubbing and he loved drugs. He would either be saying " *this night is fucking brilliant man , its fucking brilliant*", or " *what I need now is nice big line and a fat spliff*". When he came to the bar he would order his long rounds of drinks in twos or he would come up to the bar and demand that all the fridge lights be turned off because they were providing too much illumination. He didn't seem to notice that the punters could no longer see what drinks they were ordering or the bar staff couldn't read the tills.

His generosity and inability to distinguish flattery from friendship made him an easy target in the club. The security and their dealers would hang round him selling him cocaine and he in return would liberally dispense them champagne. They were simply using him as cover for their activities. As a less predatory member of staff said about George *"like everybody is always asking drinks from him but I always say to him what do you want."* But even this sign of clemency actually signified the member of staff's quest for promotion and his willingness to use George to further this desire.

Soon there were wild rumours going around that he was being paid a grand a week to keep away from the club. When all of his clique were fired and barred he became an increasingly isolated figure. He used to go into deluded monologues about Ibiza:

"I mean I'm going there for the summer, I've got a friend out there who has a yacht and we are going to be doing a club there all night". I mean we are big time mate, their venues there have been calling us, so I mean what are you doing over the summer. We could use you, because Quentin he's too boring not ambitious enough, yeah, he's my younger brother but you would never think it, but what about Ibiza."

He started to get involved in the criminal activities of the security team and was reportedly selling stolen computers, possibly from his brothers other establishments⁷. What proved more ruinous, was his tendency to turn up outside the club and have his friends in the club, deliver crates of beer down to him. When his younger brother found out he put up a sign which reads:

"Do not let George in under any circumstances, if he refuses to comply please do not hesitate to call the police".

⁷ "As a very excitable member of staff put it *"I was with George who got me two apple Macs, he was in a safe house in Ship Lane man. He took me to college where there was this demonstration, he was like cool man, right on, I have to hear about this. Then when he got there he saw two cop cars and he went fuck got to go. He went of, he was driving all bug eyed and manic man"*.

Quentin was the owner and possessed the ruthless business acumen to issue this directive. He came from a very wealthy family that provided the capital for his initial investment, but subsequently he had proved his own credentials in the business. Very aloof, with a public school background he wasn't comfortable mixing with staff. When he came to the club he would spend most of his time in his purpose built 'office' with its beer fridge and his supply of cocaine. However, occasionally he would decide to wander around and would direct the security to kick people out, on his say so. This would create monumental problems as he was widely regarded as a racist and thus no-one could be sure of the victim's wrong doing. David from the bar, accurately summed up his character: *"Obviously he's got some severe personality disorders. I mean he's an intelligent man but he has no understanding of ethnicity at all. He is racist despite being mixed race himself. He has no idea about how to socialise and how to be with people, no common courtesy and he has no conception about where he is working, he takes large risks with his own safety through his behaviour".*

3. The Security Team.

Security

Phil: *"Everyone has got to wear black, Understand me. We all have to wear black trousers, black shoes and a black shirt. It's not too much to ask, to wash your trousers, get a T-shirt, if you haven't got the fucking money, I'll gladly give it to you".*

Tony: *"So can I wear these trousers?"*

Phil: *"Well they look black to me, so then you can fucking wear them then".*

Nigel: *"Well can I wear these shoes?"*

Phil: *"Well they're black aren't they, for fucks sake".*

Tony: *"Mum mum, can I?"*

Phil: *"Tony shut up, this is fucking serious".*

In this chapter I will recapture what it is like to do security in a big club and to provide some context, I will refer to three men who have spent a life time doing it themselves. In no particular order they are, Geoff Thompson¹, Dave Courtney² and Bernard O 'Mahoney. All these guys have very different pedigrees. Geoff Thompson is essentially a straight guy, a world class martial artist who worked for thirteen years on the door. He has written a series of books documenting his fighting exploits. Though he never worked in big 'rave' clubs they are worth reading for a fighter's analysis of the dangers you face on the door and what you can do to contain them. Dave Courtney is a traditional self-promoting 'English Villain,' but he started off on the door, and went on to run his own very large security company. His book contains insights into what goes on in the murky world behind the door. Finally, Bernard O'Mahoney's³ book is the most pertinent

¹ G. Thompson author of many books on martial arts and a number of nostalgic recollections of his time on the door, including, 'A Bouncer's Story', 'Watch My Back' and 'On The Door', all published by Summersdale.

² Courtney, D. (1999) *Stop the Ride I Want to Get Off*, London: Virgin Books.

³ O'Mahoney, B. (1997) *So this is Ecstasy*, Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing.

as he was in charge of the security firm at the where club Leah Betts died. He was also part of the 'firm' which in a highly publicised case were later assassinated in a Range Rover in Essex. His book is an excellent overview of what happens at the more extreme end of 'rave culture'. Co-incidentally I know the manager of his club, so I was able to verify some of the details of the book myself.

Obviously my ethnography is limited to the description of one venue, but I believe that the events described hereafter are representative of the whole spectrum of 'rave' clubs around the country. I say this not just because my experiences were similar to the ones described above but also because of the large number of doormen that passed through the club while I was working there. Even though few stayed for long, while we worked together, I got a chance to evaluate their behaviour and by listening to their conversation I could ascertain how our club compared to other venues they worked in.

In describing the activities of the security team I want to expand on their two paradoxical functions. Firstly our role fitted into the definition of policing as espoused by Robert Reiner who correctly differentiates policing as a specific aspect of social control, with the following features. "The concept of policing connotes efforts to provide security through surveillance and threat of sanctioning. Policing is the set of activities *directed* at preserving the security of a particular social order⁴. This is a comprehensive description of our *functional* activities on the door.

He also differentiates the 'concept of policing' from that of 'police practice' in a way that I found useful. Police practice refers to the actual, everyday mundane

⁴ Reiner, R. (1997) 'Policing and the Police'. In a lucid two paragraphs he argues that policing is not synonymous with social control as it excludes "activities intended to create the conditions of social order" and "excludes post hoc punishment", though he does acknowledge that the police may in fact "exercise forms of kerb side punishment". This informal use of violence again tallies with my experiences on the door. *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Reiner, R. Maguire M., Morgan, R. (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, (p.1005).

realisation of policing. From this generality, I want to highlight certain similarities that exist in both “occupational cultures,” “informal practices and codes⁵” and routine activity. To begin with, both are stressful jobs⁶ both develop an internal solidarity⁷, and both foster a divide between ‘them and us⁸’. Secondly, we had a great deal of licence over how we behaved, and that meant a license to behave badly. As Holdaway comments on the police, “the lower ranks of the police service control their own work situation and such control may well shield highly questionable practices” (taken from Reiner, 1997, 1002). Thirdly, there was no way we could enforce the law completely so we had to use our own discretion.

As Reiner again observes, there is a “recognition the police did not and could not enforce the law fully”. Discretion was inevitable because of the volume of incidents that could be regarded as breaches of the law would always outstrip police capacity to process them”(Reiner, 1997, 1008). And finally both jobs involve resolving potentially violent and highly charged situations. As Punch notes, “The policeman often becomes involved in emotionally charged encounters with citizens, which are perhaps uniquely stressful for the participants, but which he accepts as normal events and as everyday occurrences. And he must learn to protect himself by distancing himself from

⁵ Punch, M. (1979) *Policing the Inner City: a study of Amsterdam's Warmoesstratt*, London: Macmillan Press: “A central concern is to demystify police work by simply viewing it as work. As such, attention is drawn to occupational culture, to values and norms surrounding work, to organisational directives and pressures, to informal practices and codes”(p. 19). I am trying to do the same with door work and in doing so I have found many points of comparison.

⁶ Argyle, M. (1989) *The Social Psychology of Work*, 2nd edition, London: Penguin. In a survey of occupations rated on nine-point scale of stressfulness from Cooper, 1985. The Police come second after miners, p. 263.

⁷ Collison, M. (1995), *Police, Drugs and Community*, London: Free Association Press. This is a quotation from Collison’s ethnography with a police drug squad, “The team thus provides a strong collective image of how to do things. Long hours spent in the company of other members and the frequent disruption of family life builds strong comradeship so that the team takes on some of the features of surrogate family”, (p.103). As a direct point of comparison here is Thompson(1994, 10) on work on the door, “It sucks you in like a black hole and holds you like metal to magnet. Breaking away, even when you want to can be an arduous task. Also your work mates are no ordinary work mates, they are comrades, brothers in arms. The glue bonded affinity is something akin to love, it can get so close that you start wanting to be with them more than your actual spouse”.

⁸ Young, M. (1991) *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press. In his account the police, contrast themselves to the ‘dirty prigs’ who they police. (He writes a more complete analysis of the opposing attributes of the ‘Real Polises’ and the ‘Prigs’, p.113). Our security firm liked to highlight the differences between their debonair selves and the ‘fucking scroats’ they had to deal with.

unpleasant scenes or by developing a somewhat callous or cynical view point”(Punch, 1979, 89).

I want to dwell in particular on these “unpleasant scenes” and feel the police accounts of them are very useful⁹. The theorist who provides the analytic tools for most of the accounts quoted from above is Erving Goffman. I will be using his theoretical insights to hopefully broaden the relevance of the interaction I observed on the door. Thus, adding further material to Goffman's task of considering, “the way in which an individual in an ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them”¹⁰.

However, (hopefully unlike the police) the second role of the security team was criminal. As all the books written by doormen freely acknowledge the combined might of a security team can be awesome. Doormen are employed for their size, and their physical and verbal dexterity. They are often also chosen because they know the local area, which really means they know who the local criminals are and are sufficiently respected themselves to be able to keep them under control. In a big night club like the one I worked in, because of the lack of violence, you are more likely to get a broader variation of people. This may mean more ‘straight’¹¹ guys but it also might mean a broader variation of characters with a broader variation of contacts. Subsequently, within the group criminal enterprise is easily fostered. It is within the group that a wholesaler drug dealer might meet a retail dealer or a fence might find new buyers.

⁹ Kemp, C & Norris & Fielding, N. (1992) *Negotiating Nothing: Police Decision Making in Disputes*, Aldershot: Avebury. I found this an extremely interesting account of police interaction.

¹⁰ Goffman, E. (1969) *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life*, London: Penguin, (p. 1).

¹¹ On occasion, a doorman would be completely straight. They might be doing it for the women or they might just be serious body builders or ex-fighters who enjoyed the camaraderie.

This takes on a significance that belies the small number of doormen involved when placed into the relatively disorganised English crime scene¹². As Downes comments on the paucity of research “ into gang delinquency in this country is in my view a fair reflection of its absence¹³”. More recently both Hobbs¹⁴ and Dorn¹⁵ stress that English crime is opportunist and intimate often based on family ties. Placed into this context the role of security firms in the English crime scene is very significant. It is imperative to stress the fluid nature of much of this activity but even so, I would argue that they are big fish in lots of local ponds.

Despite the contradictory nature of these two roles, the policing and the criminal, I want to argue that they are united by a common theme, space. Indeed the very same spaces which are essential to the policing role of doormen, are the spaces which are utilised in their criminal activities. In the final part of the thesis, I want to combine my observations on the micro use of space within the club with the more general macro debate around the use of space in policing in general.

The Team

“The thought of being ordinary people frightened them, they liked being somebody, in their own environment they were stars”. (G. Thompson¹⁶)

Doing the door in a ‘rave’ club is a good job. It exempts you from the so called ‘crisis of masculinity’ which has beset poor areas in the ‘Post-Fordist’ economy¹⁷.

¹²Davis, M. (1992) *The City of Quartz: excavating the future in Los Angeles*, London: Vantage books. This is a stark contrast to America, where though as Davis points out “The gang role in drug distribution is too incoherent to qualify for the organised network,” “ 64% of 7,000 dealers” arrested were not identifiable as gang members, this still leaves 36%.,(p313).

¹³ Patrick, J. (1973) *A Glasgow Gang Observed*, Eyre: Methuen. The quotation is taken from Patrick, pg157 who goes on to comment “If Downes’ remarks are restricted to England “then on the whole they would appear to hold good”.

¹⁴ Hobbs, D. “My own research revealed that in the East End everyone was ‘at it’ and some were ‘at it’ more than most. They were the professional criminals”. (Hobbs,1988,8).

¹⁵ Dorn, N. Murji, K. and South, N. (1992) *Trafficker: Drug Markets and Law Enforcement*, London: Routledge. “It is worth observing that frequently in discussing diversifiers and their links to sideliners the importance of family ties was emphasised by many of our respondents”(p41).

¹⁶ Thompson, G. (1994) *Bouncer*. Chichester: Summersdale. (p126).

It is primarily, Fordist work, physical, masculine and in a sphere for “male bonded socialisation” (Taylor, 1999, 99) . You need no formal qualifications it is open to the angry young men who inhabit the estates of B. Campbell’s ‘Britain’s Dangerous Places’¹⁸. Indeed their experience on the ‘street’ and their anger might be positive attributes. Secondly, the job allows for the expression of what Willis calls “the products of this independent ability of the working class, profane testing of the formal, sharp unrefined language, oppositional solidarity and a humorous presence, style and value not based on job status”¹⁹. Thirdly and most importantly, it might provide ‘action’²⁰. Action, then offers as both Goffman²¹ and Katz argue, an opportunity to prove character or heart to your peers. Finally, alone or in a group it provides a chance to acquire “money, the entry-ticket to the consumer markets of the broader market society” (Taylor, 1999, 79).

The big obvious criminal opportunity for the doorman was dealing drugs. As I have mentioned earlier, it is widely acknowledged that drug markets exist inside these big clubs but I want to look at them in more detail. Research, in Glasgow has shown that “a clear hierarchy of dance drug use” exists and that at the top of this hierarchy are the “primary dance drugs, amphetamines, nitrates and ecstasy”²². It has been argued that though drugs are available at rave events, they are limited in type to the primary dance drugs and buying them at the venue is a last resort for most punters. A good example of this view is Forysth’s work,

¹⁷ Taylor, I. (1999) *Crime In Context: A Critical Criminology of Market Societies*, London: Blackwell Publishers. See p66 for Taylor’s detailed comparison of work in a Fordist and Post-Fordist society.

¹⁸ Campbell, B. (1993), *Goliath: Britain’s Dangerous Places*, London: Methuen.

¹⁹ Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour: How working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House, p132

²⁰ Katz, J. Action as Katz outlines in chapter six is characterised by risk taking, spontaneity, inhibition and danger.

²¹ Goffman, E. (1972), *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face to Face Behaviour*. Working on the door is an attractive alternative to the pathos of many people’s attempts to create action. An eloquent example is in his last sentence description of punters playing slot machines in Las Vegas. “Here a person currently without social connection can insert coins in slot machines to demonstrate to other machines that he has the socially approved qualities of character. The naked little spasms of self occur at the end of the world, but there at the end, is action and character”, London: Allen Lane.

²² Though where I was working neither nitrates, nor more surprisingly, amphetamines were sold by club dealers.

which includes the aptly titled article “Are Raves Drug Supermarkets²³”? In this article he concludes to the contrary, “the range of drugs are quite restricted, they are specialist shops rather than supermarkets”. I would broadly agree with this analysis, for the punter. However what Forsyth neglects, as do all other researchers who use surveys as their methodology, is the presence of an internal market.

The internal market is the market for drugs within the club. As some of the quotations from the staff have shown and my experience confirmed, a high proportion of the staff used a large quantity of drugs. The obvious dilemma is, is it the club environment which promotes drug taking? Or is it that drug takers are drawn to the club? The obvious answer, is there isn't one I could prove. Two main points can be made, firstly this market was far more diverse than the market available to normal punters. It included all drugs with the exception of heroin and crack. Secondly, it was quite large, as it included all employees of the company and often other staff who worked for the owner at other premises. Furthermore if you had control of the internal market it was much easier to expand into what I will call the ‘peripheral market²⁴’ and also to control the external market. Beyond this, all I can do is explore some of the drug cultures I witnessed and elaborate on the reasons for their existence.

Part of the explanation for the existence of a large internal market within the club's staff, was to do with their immediate environment²⁵. Most staff used drugs before they worked at the club and some staff dealt drugs previously as well. The combination clearly results in ready availability, and as most research shows, easy availability prompts increased use. This is especially the case when you are working in a place where most of the general public are on drugs, and the

²³ Forsyth, A. (1996), ‘Are Raves Drug Supermarkets’, *The International Journal of Drug Policy*, 7(2), p.109.

²⁴ This market includes street dealers who operate just outside the club and also includes cab-drivers who are a link between affluent punters coming in or out of the area and the local drug trade.

²⁵ Collison, M. (1996), ‘In search of the high life: drugs, crime masculinity's and consumption’. “As crime opportunities present themselves largely within the physical spaces bounding every day routines, so too do drug –consuming opportunities”, *British Journal Of Criminology*, 36 (3), p.433.

institution panders to certain types of drug taking. In many cases I witnessed the literal 'seduction of crime'. On big carnal nights the 'staff' would be seduced by the general mood of abandon and would get extraordinarily high. Everybody has a different capacity to handle intoxication, and many of the 'staff' would prefer to work an evening in the club on ecstasy, cocaine or amphetamines, as the general consensus was it transformed a routine job into an exciting one without detriment. Sometimes some of the security would take half an E, just to alleviate the boredom, but it was generally felt that the loved up mood it induced was not conducive to any more confrontational situations that might break out.

The majority of the security team spent most of their time operating in this world and to make matters worse, were competing with one another over punters and over drugs. Their own drug use made the atmosphere more ominous. Steroid use, heavy drinking and lots of cocaine have a detrimental effect on the mind's equilibrium. Combined with lack of sleep and already suspect temperaments it is easy to imagine how unstable the team became. Paranoia is defined as a 'mental disorder characterised by delusions, usually of persecution'²⁶, but when you work on the door and are involved in illegal enterprise it becomes very hard to differentiate the delusional feelings of persecution from the real threat of persecution. Consider the stresses of kicking out local drug dealers, of come back threats, "I'll be back to shoot you", routinely issued, and the hazard of being accosted by disgruntled punters when off duty. The duress of hiding your illegal activities from the owner, other doormen and the police all of whom may harbour petty jealousies about your firm or your own personal success. With the boundary between the real and the imaginary so blurred, it's very hard to know who is on your side. The lack of loyalty and cohesion meant that the club was a much harder place to work in that it needed to be. Ultimately this underlying instability accounted for the high turnover in staff. They either left, feeling

²⁶ Webster's Dictionary.

incapacitated in such a confused environment or were fired, victims of the paranoia of those in charge²⁷.

However despite these pressures, my job was still a coveted one. Its occupants were safe in their traditional masculinity and working class mores, yet had the opportunity to both gain in material and social kudos. More immediately it meant we were all, easily replaced which gave the head doorman some power but gave the owner more. Especially, as he was capable of sacking the entire team if he thought it was to his advantage. The high, subjective value of the job and the real possibility of losing it are two constants which underscored all our interaction. As the head doorman put it:

"Basically I'm fed up, I mean there is no team spirit , I mean it ain't a difficult job, but I don't know where some of you get off, I mean when I came in the club(on his night off) a lot of you are just wandering around like you are not working , its just taking the piss in front of my face. Quentin is not happy, we have a good relationship me and Quentin , and he will listen to my shit, but at the end of the day Quentin is a pure business man , and if he doesn't get what he wants then that's it we will all lose our jobs .Its got to look professional" (Phil).

There were two main factions on the door Phil and Grant were one and Nigel and Scott were the other. Phil was the head doorman in title, he did the negotiating, called the meetings, got rid of staff but without Grant to back him up he would have never survived. They were the nucleus of the security company, the only constant. Together they made a good team.

²⁷ Bernard O'Mahoney documents a parallel story of increasing "rumour, intrigue and accusations and counter accusations were resulting in a very unstable environment"(p120) as the door staffs success brings with it both increased attention from the authorities and increased drug use. "Tucker and Tate were becoming increasingly unpredictable – their consumption of drugs was spiralling out of control. Both of them used huge amounts of steroids and they both used cocaine, ecstasy and special K. Tucker once level headed was now often totally irrational. Tate was explosive. It was not the desire for drugs that affected him or Pat, it was the effects they had on their personality that was the problem". (p.106)

Grant

Grant is a powerful man; everything about him commands respect. His physique, his gait and his experience. A big man (eighteen stone), distant to most, best friend of a few, but the worst enemy to those who dare to cross him. It was his contacts from gyms, from doing the door and the underworld, which kept his younger cousin in staff. It didn't matter where they were from, everyone Grant brought in to work was solid. They might be unpredictable, but you knew they could do the job in a physical sense. This in itself made him respected and in the unlikely event that he couldn't do something or someone himself, you know he could get back up. He was and is a traditional English villain, secure in his manor and his reputation. He knew most of the 'characters' in the area and they knew him well enough "*not to take the piss, in his club*". In his mid-thirties, his wild days were in the past, he had graduated successfully from a life of petty crime. He had two families, a nice house and was earning good money. Not a big drinker and definitely not a drug taker, his behaviour was predictable²⁸. This means a lot, to anyone involved in unpredictable situations, as it meant you could count on him.

Phil

"Yeah well with Phil I know, he doesn't really know how to talk to people sometimes, he can be a bit of an idiot" (Grant).

His cousin, Phil, the head doorman was the exact opposite. He had a smaller stature, he looked good in a bomber jacket but when it was off he just looked fat. Same shaved head but not the same temperament. While Grant was a man of few words and fewer emotions, Phil was a man of many. Irascible, he was often

²⁸ Katz, J. in this he was a typical hard-man "The hard-man's toughness claims he never needs alter himself as moves about, rather scenes must alter to suit him"(p.253). What Katz neglects to add is how important this is, in a work environment, which is invariably violent and unpredictable. It doesn't matter who you have working with you, if you don't know what they are going to do next you can never be sure of your back up and conversely what kind of situation they might put you in.

shouting, starting fights but not finishing them, he drank heavily and took lots of drugs. Despite his querulous nature and tough image he lived with his mother. He was a fixer more than a fighter, he dealt in drugs and information, trying to maintain a monopoly over both. In this he was a success but there were casualties. He would bring people in to work who would be unreliable but loyal to him. However his friendship was a kiss of death. I realised this early on when he talked *"about loving Tony his right hand man to death"*, the next day Tony was fired. He owed his survival to three things: his dedication, his cousin and the fact that as long he was in charge, he paid the wages and controlled the supply of drugs.

To understand the club you have to understand these two as a team of contrasting personalities. They brought in all the staff and the break down of a doorman's relationship with Phil would be the reason for all of them to leave. In his mitigation, he was enforcing the wishes of the owner, and in the rise and fall of other characters, the club's internal politics are illuminated. Two of its brightest of lights were Isaac and Nigel. These two were the main black contingent and like Grant and Phil they were very different.

Isaac

"I'm a black cockney mate, I can get you anything mate, anything you want, on my estate they call me Arthur Daley" (Isaac).

Isaac was a young Ghanaian. Another big guy dedicated to his training, *"Shit nigger I would never let no white man lift more than me in the gym"* he had a strong aversion to hard drugs though he did smoke a lot of weed, *"I'm a black man"*. He was constantly ducking and diving, trading in all kinds of semi-legal commodities, especially porn which he liked to *"sell to the stupid Somalians who live near by"*. He was born on an infamous estate, outside the local area, but his family aspired to middle class respectability. He was often boasting about *how*

"his niggers run tings on the estate" but he was also quick to distance himself from the more vicious end of the criminal game, *"stupid mother-fucker shooting people and shit"*. Cynical in his outlook he wouldn't risk his personal safety for the job. When fights did break out, he subtly walked off (in as much as a sixteen stone man can do anything subtly). As he said to me after one such incident, *"you take the job too seriously, it was Phil's fault in the first place, drinking their champagne then not letting them in, he's a dumb fuck. I mean if it was personal, I would zip up my jacket and bust people up but it would have to be personal"*. He was sharp tongued and when he got on the walkie-talkie in his favourite lexicon, rap, verbally irrepressible. Many nights, he would perform an impromptu version of an entire rap tune often with their accompanying dance moves as well. Despite his image as an entrepreneur and his massive muscles, he also lived with his mother.

Nigel

"I've got some bad boy charlie man. You should try it, its wicked man, my girl you know the Italian one, the posh one, she coming to check me with some later man, boy she can grind good man. We going to get mash up, do our tings and get mash up, then go out later man. Do you want to come?" (Nigel).

Nigel was different, he was ten years older than Isaac. He was a local, from Jamaican heritage. To look at he was the embodiment of the dread-locked 'hustler' of Pryce's 'Endless Pressure'²⁹. Constantly buzzing he often played a parody of himself, constantly dancing and spinning out second generation patois to any *"young gal who listen"*. He was well liked and used his charisma to keep his hustling together. His mates and his women provided a good market for the small time deals he was perpetually involved in. He had a manual job and would often come to work after doing a full days work. He treated his time at the club

²⁹ p. 84. Like the hustlers in the book, he is always well dressed, always hustling and "hooked on white women",

more like clubbing than working and during my time there his cocaine use went from occasional to constant. Most of the time the combination of the coke, the music and the women would get him so excited that he was entirely incoherent. At the same time, he could fight and would back you up if any situation arose.

Tony

"I'm really pissed off I mean I pay the staff on time and give them all the shifts they want but they just take the piss. Look at Tony I mean he just hides behind Grant. He gets scared if something happens. I know he's got a bad back, but I mean he's no use to me. I mean he can hardly get up the stairs and by the time he gets up there he's no use to no-one. All he does is scoff food all day. I mean the last time I asked him to go up there, he and Isaac flipped a coin to decide who was to go up there and he lost . He went up there for five minutes and started moaning, I 'm paying him ten pounds an hour and he doesn't do nothing" (Phil).

Tony was a big fat Irish guy who had his own security company but joined forces to work with Phil. Initially good natured for a while he was Phil's right hand man. Well liked by the bar staff he understood the reciprocal exchanges of club culture. He would often give out a few pills, *"if you looked after any of his friends or family, if they came down the club"*. For a while, it looked like he would be big player within the club. He managed to get some of his extended family employed in many positions around it. Yet they also proved too conspicuous (too unreliable, too dishonest) and they never lasted long. Meanwhile he became more and more involved in all the schemes and the pressure seemed to get to him. After he was stabbed, he was a different guy. Prone to telling people what to do, he got into scrapes that the other doormen had to extricate him from. He started to take the disorganised state of the club personally. Having put his life on the line in the course of the job he was quickly frustrated by the less than professional attitudes

of those around him. He lost his sense of humour and in our club, if you lost your sense of humour, your job soon followed.

Mike

"I used to be 240 pounds man, I hit a bag ,and bang bang that bag used to fly , a 160 pound man holding it man . I used to hit it and bang he would fly off the ground. Now I am on the bag and it doesn't even move, man. When I used to go on it the guys used to tell me if I hit anyone on the jaw I would break it ,or in the chest I would crush it now, nothing, something has happened man.

He shakes his head, *" yeah you know what, I got old man I got old man".*

Mike was a body builder who took a lot of steroids and was there to intimidate punters and if necessary knock them out. He was mild mannered and well spoken when sober, extremely violent and aggressive when high, even the other doorman were wary of him. The problem was, the longer he worked in the club, the less time he spent sober and the more time he spent high. Sometimes, when drunk he would just reminisce about the times when he used to deal cocaine, *"man I used to get through an eight ball a day man, I lost a hundred pounds".* Or if he lost it altogether he would hit the dance floor, base ball bat on backwards, huge arms pumping up and down to the music. When he was in this state, there was not much you could do, so Phil and Grant tried to keep him as close as possible to them at all times. He was kicked out of Canada, *"yeah I spent eighteen months inside, I can't really remember what happened, I remember getting into an argument but when I sobered up they were trying to do me for attempted murder! They reckon I tried to kill the guy. Anyway I either had to stand trial or get the fuck out of their country so I walked."*

Leon

"This guy was irritating the punters so I grabbed him gave him a smack and threw him out. Then he started knocking on the window so I kicked it and he went off. Then about ten minutes later the head-doorman calls me over and tells me that he is still outside kicking in peoples motorbikes and stuff. So I go up to him get him in a lock. pull him down on the ground and just kick him around for a bit. Then the geezer was sick, so I dragged him through it a few times pulled him across the road put him in a phone box and called the police" (Leon).

Leon, when he worked, was the centre of attention. The best dressed, most tanned, most flamboyant doorman he was also the most violent. A family man with good intentions, every time I talked to him, he would tell me about some fight he had just had. He would always speak in a flat, matter of fact tone, only getting animated when demonstrating a lock he used. Sometimes, you got the impression that his capacity for violence actually frightened himself and after every story he would say but *"violence isn't right and I'm changing my ways and can't carry on like this."* But despite his repentance somehow or another trouble would always follow him around. An expert in martial arts, when it came to street fighting he didn't just hit people he hurt them, broken limbs rather than bruises were the habitual repercussions for the vanquished. From a mixed background he had contacts in both the black and white criminal scenes. He was used as an enforcer for another security team and sent to venues where trouble was expected. Due to his tendency toward excessive violence he didn't stay at our club for long but he did provide back up for Scott when things got difficult. Consequently his outrageous suits and gory exploits were a constant during my time there.

Scott

Scott: *I can't get my fucking jacket off mate*

Nigel: *Why not*

Scott: *Because of all the fucking knives sticking out my back.*

Scott was the wild card in all this. A highly educated, highly trained ex-special forces guy he started off doing security on occasional weekends off and ended up selling drugs full time. As part of the security team he created more problems than he solved. He would take umbrage at the slightest incident and once dragged someone out of the club for not apologising when they stepped on his shoe. Due to his cocaine use he was extremely paranoid and thought everyone was dealing which resulted in some humiliating episodes. Before we knew better, on his say so, innocent punters would be mistakenly dragged down fire exits threatened and searched. Though mentally gifted he was also very self-destructive. This combination got him into a lot of trouble but his access to drugs and a quick punch line got him out of it. He was constantly getting barred or being threatened but he always survived. He was older than most of the guys and his experience showed, though it never became clear exactly where it came from. He established himself as the main dealer inside the club and the staff would anxiously wait for his arrival every night. Financially he did very well, but his willingness to take risks made you wonder how long this would be so.

Occupational culture

“Look out for number one. If you don’t, no one else will. If a man is dumb, someone is going to get the best of him, so why not you? If you don’t, you’re as dumb as he is”. (Arnold Rothstein)³⁰

This was the maxim of most people in the club, but especially the criminal elements of the security team. This was something, which surprised me, as I had always wanted to believe in the adage ‘honour among thieves’. One could afford

³⁰ Cohen, R. (1999), *Tough Jews: Fathers, Sons and Gangster Dreams*. The quotation is from Rothstein described by Cohen as “Not only the future of Jewish crime in New York, he was the future of all crime everywhere”. London: Vintage., p.46.

to be affable with the punters, but any hint of weakness glimpsed by the security team would be punished:

Nigel: *Yeah you should have seen it at the millennium, I used to work there, but I had a dispute with someone. I always used to be tooled up there man, you have to be in the millennium. They keep all their pieces in the basement and at the end of the night you see every one carrying them out in big sports bags*

D.S: *Who did you work for?*

Nigel: *I used to work with G but they set him up, for real man. They asked him to turf out a man who they knew had a piece on him and they were just setting him up to get whacked, believe it man it happens, a man got stabbed to death there last week. They're trying to run it like some kind of Mafia down there man. You've got to be careful down there, if you go and check for the ladies and act all tough, they get somebody to sort you out, pick on you and watch to see if you get whacked up."*

This kind of predatory behaviour was endemic in the club and I would argue in any criminal enterprises³¹. In our place a good example was the way Phil and Grant got rid of Isaac. As one of the cab drivers said at the time, "*Isaac was just doing too much stuff, he was getting too many squeezes on the door and he wasn't cutting in the cousins enough*". On the other hand he had been a long standing member of the team and because he didn't take hard drugs, quite reliable.

Anyhow, one night he was told to go upstairs, he did and when he returned his radio was gone. He looked for it but it didn't turn up. Nothing much was said and he didn't pay it much attention. The next night, Phil approached him and said he has to pay for the radio, "*I recently bought them and there're worth four hundred quid*". Suspecting this is rubbish and knowing that they're not worth that much

³¹ See any Gangster rap songs and the expressions "getting played" or "playing your self". See (O'Mahoney, p73/74,1997). "We hardly ever did the work as agreed, but tended to have these people over. They weren't from our world and we considered them easy pickings". His comments on their enterprises, such as taking £3000 to go to Geneva to intimidate someone, but not going as far as "the end of Southend Pier" are typical of this attitude.

and that they don't own them, he kicks up a fuss but Phil, knowing Grant will back him up, kicks up a fuss too. An altercation follows and maybe a threat is made. Isaac storms off. Then Phil reports to the rest of the security team, that he has had to let him go: *"Not because he lost his radio, but because of his attitude he just didn't give a fuck"*. A month later the radio is mysteriously found. But by then Isaac had been replaced.

I would argue that the key to the success of this behaviour, and the way to avoid charges of treachery is an ability to control the boundaries of the group. Phil was successfully able to convince at least some members of the team that Isaac had changed, from being loyal to the team to being a threat to the team. In other cases, such as with Tony, despite most of the staff stealing, Quentin managed to portray Tony's thefts as so brazen, that they merited a different punishment. These boundaries were constantly in flux, but if you wanted to stay working you had to ascertain when taking drugs, became a 'bad habit' or being violent, became being a 'liability'.

For the rest of the team who didn't have the power to hire or fire, there was also a 'game' to be played. Many of the staff, Scott, Isaac and Nigel in particular, cultivated personas or fronts³² which were useful in times of persecution. They all joked around and thus if challenged about something, they would reply, we were only winding someone up³³. Alternatively people played dumb or honest³⁴. Grant was a master of this and few people sussed him out. He kept up the deception of not being involved, by playing up his family persona and playing down his 'street' persona. Meanwhile Scott had a straight persona, which he could slip into, so if accused of something he would retort, *"Its nothing to do with me, I've got work to go to in the morning, why would I want to get involved in that"*. Both Scott and Nigel were excellent minimising the import of their activities if they were being

³² "Front--that part of the individuals performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance " (Goffman, 1969, 32).

³³ "In telling an untruth the performer is enjoined to retain a shadow of jest in his voice so that should he be caught out he can disavow any claim to seriousness and say that he was only joking" (Goffman, 1969, 228)

³⁴ See (Goffman, 1969, 48) for his examples of these sorts of ruses.

questioned in public, so when I asked Scott about his business, he replied *"Me I don't deal, I've just got my personal, purely personal. It might be three grands worth, but its still personal"*. While Nigel would use his hustling persona as justification, *"I can't believe Quentin, thinks I'm dealing. Yeah I might sort a few tings out, but you know I'm just taking care of business, its not like I'm making any real money or nothing."*

There was always intense internal competition for both 'respect' and 'business'. 'Respect' broadly refers to one's masculinity. Every doorman has a finely attuned feeling for what constitutes 'respect' (as in, "I only listen to people who talk to me with respect" or "the way he is looking at me, I know he is trying to disrespect me") and what that respect is worth (as in, he knows me, so he should respect me). In a stable team with strong leadership, a clear hierarchy of respect can be sustained. As everyone knows where they stand, disputes can be resolved in a consensual manner.

"Phil has been pissing me off lately, I mean the way he talks to people, if he ever has a go at me I'll tell him, to start with you can say please mate, you don't talk to people like they're a pussy mate, I ain't nobody's pussy. I mean all we want to do is make some money, but nobody needs to be talked to like that, I mean if you want to be talked to like a pussy do a factory job mate, but nobody talks like that to me or I'll fist them up mate" (Nigel).

Within the club, there were physical and spatial resources that were allocated in ways in which conveyed 'respect'. Some areas were less pleasant to be stationed in; For example, some rooms when in repose you would be comfortable, in others you would be standing next to a speaker. Some nights, some rooms would be better places to work in than others, they might have a free bar or the chance of meeting some celebrities. Some guys would be at licence to do their own thing, to wander round the club or to instigate searches by themselves others were told deliberately not to do either. Everyone had walkie-

talkies but only some people had ear- pieces for them or magna light torches. Who got given what, indicated where you stood in the hierarchy and what was expected of you.

This kind of respect can be given on the basis of a reputation but it is also contingent on how you act at the time. As Goffman astutely writes “ One overall objective of any team is to sustain the definition of the situation that its performance fosters. This will involve the over-communication of some facts and the under –communication of others..... A basic problem for many performances then, is that of information control, the audience must not acquire destructive information about the situation that is being defined for them. In other words a team must be able to keep its secrets and have its secrets kept” (Goffman, 1969, 141).

Translated to the door this meant communicating any information which would make others think you are tough and keeping quiet about anything which could be interpreted as being weak. Consequently, I only found out about the other doorman's weaknesses in violent situations like the one below. Then suddenly it would become clear that their hands or knees were bust, so that they would have to stab or club their opponents. Or alternatively, in spite of what they might have said earlier, they didn't really fancy fighting or they were too out of it, and so on and so forth (when you are in a potentially violent confrontation it is a bad time to find out that actually your partners can't really handle it). As Goffman points out these pieces of information are secrets, which would disrupt the impression of physical power that their performances fostered:

“ We used to have knuckle dusters. The club was full of lads coked up, on the beer, thinking they're the bollocks. We used to get into it every week. Every week I had to take my jacket to the dry cleaner covered in claret. You must never show fear, look them straight in the eye and tell them to get the fuck out. If you back down they are going to treat you like an arsehole . I used to be nineteen stone, and I used to face up to guys bigger than me and my stomach would go all

flattery but at the end of the day, who gives a fuck I would just take them apart" (Grant).

Most of the guys would do anything to prevent these kinds of secrets coming out, "concealing or underplaying those activities facts and motives which are incompatible with an idealised version of himself" and only an experienced doorman like Grant was secure enough to admit to actually doing this. As this quotation from Grant illustrates, the first rule of being a doorman is "*never show fear*"³⁵. This attitude not only phases opponents but it also tends to impress other members of the team. The stoic man of silence gives the impression that even extreme situations don't bother him.

Aloofness does also have a pragmatic value as Scott said "*I hate people touching me, when I'm working, you know, grabbing my shoulder or holding my hand ,I fucking hate it . I always push them away*". I would concur with this observation as you do find that when people try to befriend you when you are working they have an ulterior motive³⁶. The other option is the "over-communication" of some facts and you could be sure that any fight or deal a doorman had been in you would eventually hear it. At work I was always being told stories of past fights or criminal escapades. And with this experience comes the ability to distinguish between the pedigree of Leon and the exaggeration of Nigel³⁷

³⁵ "The games all about front" (O'Mahoney, 1997)

³⁶ Sometimes it is merely to distract you from some other illicit interaction. Most commonly though it is the start of a softening up process. Lots of hustlers think (and they are right to do so) that by befriendng the doorman one can start to get preferential treatment. Once they buy you drinks they assume they can smoke spliffs in front of you ,once they know names they might cite them as reason why they shouldn't be searched or why they should be let in for free and so on and so on.

³⁷ With Leon you would always hear the same stories and the same views on him, from everyone who knew him. Nigel was very unreliable. I once asked him where he got his flick knife from, he replied "*that you better ask the man I took it off*". I found out later, that he had found it in a car he had just bought.

Leadership

"If you want loyalty buy a dog" (O'Mahoney, 1997, 151).

The major problem was with the leadership. Phil was what Goffman calls a "go between". "The go-between learns the secrets of each side and gives each side the true impression that he will keep its secrets. But he tends to give each side the false impression that he is more loyal to it than the other" (Goffman, 1969, 148). Phil tried to attain a monopoly on the secrets in the club³⁸, then when Quentin complained about things going wrong which they always did, Phil could do two things. He could either use his information as leverage to get people to do what he wanted or he could pass on some iniquitous information to Quentin and thus sacrifice a member of staff. This strategy worked well, and a succession of doorman got close to him. They couldn't resist the preferable treatment at work and the opportunity to do business with impunity, then they would be sacked:

"I want us to have an open discussion without shouting or having bad vibes with each other but more of a grown up sensible intelligent conversation on what we can do to improve things within the team" (Phil).

Phil would call regular meetings for the embittered staff where he would come up with this kind of spiel. The problem was only half the team would turn up but Phil used to turn this to his advantage by using their absence as another excuse to sack them. Consequently the group never really became a team and it was a widely held belief that if it wasn't for Grant, Phil would be dead. This may sound extreme but it was true.

³⁸ It was suspected but not proved, that at one point Phil was paying one of the security extra to spy on the other members of the team.

Instead of loyalty, what the security team had was factions. Each doorman had one or two other doormen who they could really trust if a situation broke out or if a big deal was going down. Consequently, when confrontational situations arose,³⁹ things didn't always work out as might be expected:

"Phil got punched in the face by a group of six guys. He called us down there to sort it out, but the problem was me and Tony were so pissed and stoned, we had been smoking all day long that we couldn't get down the damn stairs, we were falling all over the fucking place. Then when we got down there the guy didn't want to know and the one who had punched Phil had run off. Anyhow he had it coming man, he's got no fucking clue how to talk to people" (Mike).

Other times, things could go more seriously awry. When for example, a couple of crack heads decided to start trouble with one of the more unreliable doormen. Because he wasn't really trusted, even though we all came to sort it out, nobody knew what action to take. Though they weren't carrying guns at the time, the guys were notorious in the area for being gunmen and they had a lot of back up in the club. Out numbered, with concerted action we could still have taken them out. But as nobody really believed our guy's account, only a few people backed him up, the rest wandered off. Faced with a minor mutiny, Phil consulted with Quentin and they closed down the whole club. This may have been the most astute thing to do as it got everyone out without any violence but it was quite drastic and not something that Phil could afford to repeat. As Tony said, *"In an area like this the team can't be weak or we'll get a reputation then we'll have all the fucking scroats coming in"*.

Going out

When you are a doorman and go out to bars or clubs in the area that you work in people will recognise you and treat you accordingly. We were on friendly terms with many of the door teams in the areas and networks of reciprocal exchange

³⁹ Punch, p. 98/99, "willingness to fight when necessary and especially in mutual support situations was however a pivotal tenant of the patrolman's unwritten code".

were common. When they came to our club they wouldn't expect to pay and vice versa. You would always jump queues and if the bar staff knew you too, you might get free drinks. The downside was you couldn't completely relax as if any trouble broke out or anyone challenged you, you were expected to respond in a manner befitting your position. Consequently, nights out with the boys often included, interludes of violence or confrontation as we intervened in any trouble that developed on any premises we happened to be in. A big night out consisted of strip clubs, drugs, booze and possibly violence. When we went out in a group, it was to celebrate a birthday or some occasion, all the guys would come ready to party. This meant no matter how parlous their financial affairs they would have money. As a group we stuck to venues we were known at (other places Quentin owned) and we would be greeted by doorman handshakes, backslaps and drinks as soon as we arrived. We would dominate the venue and Phil as head doorman along with Scott, would make sure everyone had enough drugs and champagne. Consumption was deliberately conspicuous and as other staff hung around to indulge the celebration, these gatherings served to re-affirm our place at the top of the club hierarchy⁴⁰.

Inevitably as the night went on there would be casualties as the more temperamental doormen succumbed to the drink and the drugs. *"We were just mucking about and I said yeah I'll give him an arm wrestle just to see how strong he was, but I said Mike just do it slowly so I have a chance. Then whack just as I have my arm ready he just smashed it down. So bloody fast that I pulled a muscle in my shoulder, which fucked me up at work the next day. Then he said, I had to buy him a drink because I lost. And then when I told him that he must be joking, he wanted to knock me out. I think it was only because Phil stepped in that he didn't"* (Member of staff). Though intimidation and minor incidents were

⁴⁰ "These events where the firm got together were extraordinary. Nobody connected to us paid to get in anywhere. Nobody paid for drugs. Huge bags of cocaine, special K, ecstasy were made available for the firm and their associates. You look around the dark room you're surrounded by 40 or more friends all faces. Everyone else in the place knows it too. The music so loud it lifts you – you're all one, you have total control. On the surface everybody was friendly but there was this feeling of power and evil" (O'Mahoney, 1997, 62).

routine, the group would try to stop anything getting out of hand. If it looked like it was going to, some people would excuse themselves and then some of the more intoxicated would be escorted home⁴¹. It was a night to confirm their prowess not to demonstrate it. Some of the guys would only appear occasionally as commitments to their training regimes, would rule out regular excess. However for others, nights like this in our company or in the company of a smaller group were routine.

This rolling life of intoxication seems to be a feature of a certain type of criminal life style on both sides of the Atlantic. American research characterises “persistent property offenders” attitudes to their lives, as “life as a party⁴²” while the title of an article on British male young offenders is “In Search of the High Life” (Collison, 1996). For these guys such as Phil, Nigel, Mike and Scott getting high/drunk was always an option. This in itself is unremarkable but what separates their social lives from the average was the length of their binges, which often would include work. For example, all the security might go out on Thursday, stay up all night, roll into work on Friday, sleep Saturday day and then start again that night. They would work all night and then would meet up later on Sunday to reminisce about the weekend. This session would then stretch through the night and only by Tuesday would anyone be ready to go back to work,⁴³ illicit or otherwise.

⁴¹ “I’ve got to be up to help my misses in the morning” (Grant) or “I’ve been telling everyone that I am the dogs bollocks but no one seems to agree, so it looks like its going to be the rocks and the whores again, oh well never mind.” (Mike) are two typical parting exclamations.

⁴² Shover, N and Honaker, D., (1992), ‘The Socially Bounded Decision Making of Persistent Property Offenders’, *The Howard Journal*, 31(4) Their work is based on interviews with sixty offenders. “Life as a party is enjoyed in the company of others. Typically it includes shared consumption of alcohol or other drugs in bars and lounges on street corners while cruising in automobiles. In these venues party pursuers celebrate and affirm values of spontaneity autonomy independence and resourcefulness. Spontaneity means that rationality and long term planning are eschewed in favour of enjoying the moment and permitting the day’s activities and pleasures to develop in an unconstrained fashion”. P. 283. Sometimes as Katz (1988, Ch.6) comments this can lead to ‘action’ .” When people party all night for days on end they don’t have fun, as they might at a children’s party, they are into action”.

⁴³ As Collison argues “A street powerful and predatory masculinity could take time out from anxiety by stepping outside daily life and it’s routines with the help of drugs (Giddens 1991, 37). Sometimes this could be a big step, with the weekend beginning on Thursday to only finish in the early hours of Monday”. (1996, 445).

The other significant feature was its provincial nature. The team stuck to their own area and it was in the bars and clubs of that area that a front had to be maintained. The image was less about having lots of money, though that helped, than to do with being seen to be above the mundane or the constraints of normal life. Thus they relied on projecting themselves as being tougher than others, having more drugs than others and having more freedom to indulge in either.

The Criminal Side

Dealing Drugs

Grant: *"I'm still doing it of course I am, I made about a grand tonight you know when we are standing around doing nothing down here we might as well make some money, I've got some new shit that's even stronger than the old stuff. Yeah, I mean I've got 200 pills in my pocket".*

DS: *"Why don't the guys(Scott and Nigel) buy it, I mean do they know?"*

Grant: *"Yeah they know because they can see what we are doing down here but I haven't sold them any pills. I mean we know what they're doing and they know what we're doing, but the way he sold me that ounce for £1200 I mean that was steep I mean, I get it for £950 these days and its pure mate fucking pure so that I don't even cut it. I mean I can do .8 of pure rock and I can guarantee that they will come back., They're all buying off us, I mean I gave them a half gram sweet like, like here's half a gram go out and enjoy yourself and then they come straight back. I mean they can't sell their shit, it ain't worth shit, I mean you just don't do that It's not right selling it for that price".*

Drugs were the main source of illegal income for security. This scenario is reflected in both the other books written by ex-doormen involved in this kind of club. As D. Courtney puts it "and the worst thing anyone can do is that first deal, because it makes it easier to do the next. I've seen it happen time and time again to people. Once they've done the first one their minds won't let them work eight hours a day five days a week for few hundred pounds when with one phone call

they can make them a grand. And they can make ten phone calls a day. Please believe me, its true that selling drugs is more addictive than taking them”(1999, 238). Or on the specific money to made in the club, “Mark would farm out the work of selling the goods to his dealers and profits were divided accordingly. For every pill sold they would get a pound. Which does not seem like a lot of money. They would usually sell roughly 100 pills each. In four hours they would earn more than they could working forty hours in a straight job. It’s easy to see why people turn to crime. The hours are good and the pays substantial (Mahoney, 1997, 9). Even if the kind of money quoted above is exaggerated (which I think it is) it is still provides staggeringly high returns for something that is not hard to do.

The security team would also trade in knocked off goods and some local thieves would occasionally bring their goods down to us to buy, but all of this was small time. Sometimes something valuable would appear but no-one ever made any substantial money. Other alternatives, which might have generated similar money to drug dealing, such as armed robbery ⁴⁴ involve dramatically more organisation and danger than dealing drugs. These sorts of gambles are one-offs, while the drug trade was seen as a “steady earner, which could be calmed down” if pressure was exerted “by the old bill” and then re-continued when their interest died down.

Between the external and the internal market, the internal market was the most prized and thus also the most openly contested drug market, in the club. Though it did not offer the high volume profits of dealing to the impersonal external market, it was more consistent and entailed less risk. It was a personal market and the dealer had the advantage of knowing his clients. This means he not only has the opportunity to judge the trustworthiness of his client but he can also use the intimacy of a shared location to further minimise any risk. All security staff will know the places where dealing drugs will not be detected and can use personal

⁴⁴ Morrison, S. & O'Donnell, I. (1994) *Armed Robbery: A study in London*, Oxford: University of Oxford, (Centre for Criminal Research). According to their research the median amount of money generated by all kinds of armed robbery is £2200..

nature of the interaction to intimidate the client as well. Controlling the internal market, especially the higher echelons, also brought fringe benefits, as the owners and managers socialise with people similar to themselves, further increasing the client base. It also meant that they were privy to the owner's patronage, which meant two things. The passing on of crucial information about the activities of the police and a better chance of keeping your job, if any untoward incidents came to light.

The drug which was monopolised by security, was steroids. Many of the security were body builders and with this pastime comes the endless debate over the use of the drug. As with most of the drug cultures, the drugs used, varied with who was working. Steroid use tends to provoke a partisan reaction between those who believe in natural muscle gain and those who don't. At the beginning of my tenure, they were not part of the market but by the end they were available and like marijuana were more or less openly talked about and dealt.

More ubiquitous was the use of marijuana. On slow nights, staff on their breaks would seek out safe spaces within the club, fire exits, sound rooms or a packed dance floor, to smoke and this was tolerated by most of the management who would do the same. After work finished, though not during the tedious cleaning up, marijuana was also half tolerated. This depended on the management but most nights would end with a staff drink and a spliff being passed around. There were long established local spots to buy weed in the area which some staff used. They were controlled by the locals and the local cab drivers who would take punters to them, if asked. Staff also sold weed and the market was very disorganised, reflecting the ease with which large quantities of marijuana can be bought in the capital.

The Coke Game

"Millennium is the kind of club that pretends it's not mentioned in listing magazines but is. It imagines itself as entirely VIP chiefly because it's heavily into cocaine⁴⁵". Sitting in our VIP room is Quentin, the senior mangers and their mates, snorting cocaine and desperately trying to justify this kind of statement:

Quentin: *"I don't know about coke".*

Manager: *"Yeah but you've been doing it for years".*

Quentin: *"Yeah I know, but its because I ' m bored, I just get bored. But you know it can get boring or out of hand, when you know, when you start to do it in the week. And I hear central London vice squad are really getting strict, they had a drugs raid on that club in town".*

Friend: *"Oh that's the club owned by George Michael's cousin isn't it, I don't know why they bother, when there are lots of young people dying from ecstasy, why do they go down there, it's all middle aged men taking cocaine with a few under-age girls".*

Quentin: *"Well its not just any girls, its that' it' girl, Tara Tomkinson doing all that cocaine".*

For others cocaine use can be less than boring: *"I was bang on it mate, I wanted to kill everyone, I lost it mate. People would say these little things to me, but my mind would pick up on them and then dwell on them. I thought everyone was against me, I went to see Scott and I was planning how to kill all the doormen and Scott had to get me a few beers because I was so charged I was scaring Nigel"* (Leon).

⁴⁵ Thornton, S. (1995) *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p.89.

Cocaine was the most highly prized illegal drug. I do not want to present a simplistic view of cocaine use, as this is precisely what I am trying not to do with the drug ecstasy. However I do want to extrapolate on some of its uses, as in harmony with the general perception that cocaine use is increasingly popular⁴⁶ during my time at the club price came down and availability went up. Comparative purity is hard to judge but it was certainly the case that price came down from £60 a gram to between £40-50 a gram and as competition became more intense, quality had to be increased to keep buyers loyal.

From the users point of view, cocaine has a highly pragmatic appeal. It is a drug which keeps you awake, provides a high and boosts confidence, all of which make it easier to do the type of work demanded in the club. Its effects are far less dramatic than amphetamines or ecstasy, both on the immediate demeanour of a person and on their behaviour the following days. In an environment where even though most people are on drugs, no-one is supposed to show it, cocaine, with the exception of frequent or overlong visits to the toilet can be taken without arising much suspicion. This desire for secrecy explains the hysteria generated over the staff toilet⁴⁷ during my time at the club.

The mythical image of cocaine is also important in explaining its use. Cocaine use has long been associated with conspicuous consumption. And like most of the other extravagant trappings of the legitimately wealthy lifestyle, fast cars, big jewellery and designer clothes, it is also integral to the criminal lifestyle⁴⁸. In the

⁴⁶ All indicators of cocaine use(See ISDD survey, Customs and Excise figures and National Poisons Unit) show a big increase over the last few years, especially in the South East. See articles such as "White Fright" in *Time Out*, March 1st p. 14/15, Kerr, J as a response to this.

⁴⁷ The over-use of it cost people their jobs and caused so much aggravation that eventually everyone was barred from using it.

⁴⁸ For mainstream use of cocaine, see the countless references to its use by the successful Yuppie or the stressed out Wall street trader. A constant presence in the construction of the criminal mystique the drug was immortalised in "Scarface" the Brian de Palma movie. More recently it has been presented as an essential accessory to the rock and to Roll lifestyle(see Oasis, Rolling Stones, Studio 54) but it has a long lineage. The infamous autobiographic African American writer, and ex-pimp, 'Iceberg Slim' takes his moniker from his actions on the drug." After " shooting stuff for several hours in his pad. I was so frosted with cocaine I felt embalmed". He then nonchalantly dealt with a stray bullet, which went through his hat,

club both groups, the criminal and the legitimate, used cocaine to signify their status. It is often used socially, and those who have it, will offer to share it with those around. This confers a degree of power to them, and various people used the drug to keep people close to them and in their immediate friendship group. Due to its addictive properties and its illegality, this was a powerful double-edged sword. On the one hand sharing the drug, meant people were nicer, which could be developed into a dependence over time, further increasing your power. On the other hand if they reneged on your friendship, you could use their drug use as a tool to discredit their standing in the club. The owners and the managers who all had large amounts of disposable income used the drug in large quantities and security did the same but also vied with each other to distribute the drug to the fore-mentioned group. The rest of the staff provided the market, eager for cocaine's actual or imaginary increased prowess:

"Coke mate you can double your money on an ounce, you have your different cuts mate, your club cuts that you can just bosh out, your regular cuts for regular customers at home and then your top cuts for people who you are trying to get off other customers. So they go, fuck me! It's good and come running back" (Grant).

The two drugs mainly traded, ecstasy and cocaine, are easy to make money out of without much investment. The bigger dealer can make two hundred on each ounce and only needs five six-ounce dealers to buy each week to be making a high return. An ounce of cocaine was retailing for around one thousand pounds for twenty-eight grams. After this had been cut it would be between thirty-five and forty grams which sold at fifty pounds a gram would bring in roughly twice the initial investment. However it is unlikely that an ounce supplier would bother with so many little transactions as each one is a risk which only nets him a few pounds. Instead he might sell five quarters at three hundred each which nets him five hundred pounds in only five transactions. The quarter ounce dealer will cut

thus earning for the first time the name, "Iceberg Slim". Slim, I. (1996) *Pimp: The Story of my Life*. New York: Payback Press, (p. 188/9).

his seven grams into ten making him two hundred pounds on a three hundred-pound investment. Or he can sell a few grams at a cheaper price to small dealers who would then, make ten pounds on each gram they sell. Why this kind of drug dealing is so endemic in areas where people lack capital is that so much of it is done on 'tick'. Thus the dealer acknowledging that those below him may not have the capital on hand, can credit the smaller dealer on anticipation of a return on his outlay. Pills can also be laid onto street dealers by bigger dealers who will wait for their return⁴⁹.

The money made in combination with credit provided, makes drug dealing an easily accessible and profitable enterprise right the way up the ladder. I think 'the ladder' is a correct metaphor for drug dealing, even if in practice, people rarely stay on the same step (see also Dorn's⁵⁰ typology). The profits to be made on each step mean that targeting a 'Mr Big' may be futile because certainly at an intermediary level he is very replaceable. It only takes some self-discipline and a few good deals for someone to move up. For example, Scott started off as a half ounce dealer buying from a local dealer, Ricky, who was dealing four and five ounces a week but retired later on because he was having a child. At this point Scott moved up to being an ounce dealer, buying from another big dealer in another part of the city but dealing locally. As he became more trusted by the

⁴⁹ The profits made from ecstasy follow a similar pattern. A thousand pills can be bought for about £2 a pill. They can then be sold in hundreds at £4 a pill. Hundred pill dealers can sell them on in batches for ten for between £7 and £8, doubling their money on each pill. Ten pills can be purchased by a small time dealer, who can sell them as for ten pounds each. When a hundred pill dealer wants to sell, he can either sell in ten's or alternatively he can give ten pills to someone to sell at ten pound a pill and allow them to take £2 pounds for each pill sold. Thus he is making around £4 per pill or £40 per ten and thus £400 on each batch of hundred. I will explore ecstasy dealing in more detail in another part of the thesis. The main money to be made dealing ecstasy in the club was to get people to deal it for you in the club and split the profit.

⁵⁰ Their typology is seven- fold. It consists of "Trading Charities, Mutual Societies, Sideliners, Criminal Diversifiers, Opportunistic Irregulars, Retail Specialists, State Sponsored Traders". By using the metaphor of a ladder, I am arguing that there are different scales of involvement in the drug business in terms of money and time invested but I am not arguing that they exist in a series of stable hierarchies. I agree with Dorn that a stable "triangular market model of the market topped by a few groups (cartels) or even one group(monopoly)" doesn't exist. Instead, I fully endorse their conclusion that "What is important, is the social background, opportunities, resources, cultures and ways of working of individuals and small groups, who weave in and out of the trade, going up market sometimes, changing how they operate another time, and going back up market or ceasing to trade as circumstances change". (p.59)

dealer ahead of him, this dealer farmed some of his clients out to him so Scott began to work all round London and his dealer concentrated on buying “big bits”(KG's). At first this was a sideline to legal work but as his business proved more lucrative he left his job and dealt full time. Once he had access to larger quantities, other small time local dealers such as Nigel started to buy bigger quantities and concentrate solely on this kind of ‘hustle’.

However, it is very important not to present an idealised view of the profits to be made from drug dealing. Often these sorts of profits and the larger estimates for the combined worth of the drug trade make it seem like ridiculously easy money. This isn't the case, nor is the other, alternative myth of a deadly business, which guarantees a premature violent death. The higher level dealer is in the more enviable position of having to make a few sales for a quick return. However, the sentences are much higher and if someone immediately below you is caught, the police will put a lot of pressure on them to give up your name:

Scott "I got rid of seven grams, but I was so fucked I can't remember everyone I gave them to".

More unfortunate and far more numerous are those who are at the lower end of the ladder. Though they can make a high return on their investment, they will experience routine problems in the market. Many dealers who I watched operate were at this level and though they often made money their advance up the drug hierarchy was hindered by their parochial contacts. It is one thing being able to dominate a local clubs internal or external market, but it takes very different skills to do this, in another very different part of the city. The idea is to diversify, but many of the dealers lacked the social skills to mix with people of different class backgrounds from themselves and that cuts them off from potentially lucrative business⁵¹. At this level and below, the problem of actually getting paid is a big

⁵¹ I find Bourdieu's ‘distinction’ between ‘economic’ and ‘cultural capital’ useful. Most of the drug dealers lacked the cultural capital to move easily in the world where their easiest pickings would be, among the

one. At a street level, petty drug dealers and hustlers tend not to be the most reliable of people, especially to credit money or drugs to. More often than not they tend to be users of the drugs themselves. With the ecstasy users I interviewed, most had a clear idea of how large their habit was, so despite being in possession of a large quantity of ecstasy they could be sure that they would not inadvertently consume pills that they had budgeted to sell. However with cocaine, due to the social and addictive nature of the drug and its powdery constitution things can easily go wrong. Anyone who has spent time around heavy cocaine users will not be surprised by the amount of times grams are lost, left in toilets, get wet, and are snorted on a whim. If the margin of profit is only a couple of hundred pounds and three grams go missing, the profit becomes a mere fifty pounds. Faced with this situation the small time dealer may rip off his customers or fall into debt.

The bigger dealers should have a busy social life. Preferably mixing among the kinds of people who take the drug and thus having the opportunity to introduce their drugs to a new clientele. This may be a fun way of spending time but it is, unless this occurs in your profession anyway,⁵² a chaotic way of living life. The chaos is exacerbated when it comes to picking up small debts owed to you by the people below. At this point, violence or the fear of violence is omnipresent. Then the tension of drug dealing can become acute. Many dealers deal to people they know (out of expediency or to minimise risk). For example, Scott used to deal to Nigel and Nigel to Phil. Then when money goes missing, it is hard to act on the implied threat. If the operation is run more as an impersonal business and it is implicit that violence will be used if money is not repaid, it is easier to act. However, with customers lacking any personal loyalty and the risk of alienating others with acts of violence, the possibility of being shopped to the police

wealthy. Their speech, manners, and frames of reference made them stand out. They might be viewed as an attractive novelty by the young rich but it seemed that the older rich preferred to deal with dealers who shared their cultural capital. Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁵² Good professions to be in to be able to easily deal coke inside clubs are DJ's, promoters, sound engineers. They are jobs that ensure you are out anyway at night, mixing among hedonistic people, who are likely to take drugs.

increases. Though in the circles I was mixing in, deals that went wrong did not provoke real violence, they were characterised by high levels of tension and constant threats of retribution⁵³.

The Crack Game

Isaac: *"Yeah selling crack, my cousin sells crack cocaine, gets you high man, you make five hundred a night".*

DS: *"Yeah but the old bill don't like it".*

Isaac: *"Yeah well fuck the police, I mean do it as a business not like my fucking cousin who smokes it you know, I mean he sells it out his flat, he's up all night when I go home he's still up"..*

DS: *"What about the other people on the estate".*

Isaac laughs: *"Man we run the estate, there is nothing on the estate we don't fucking know. When the police raided my cousin's flat he just swallowed it and shat it out and then sold it to the guy he was sharing a cell with. But the thing is, you got to do it properly, change your phone every month and things, I mean all my friends sell crack. You can make big money you know, but the thing is they smoke it too".*

This is a typically upbeat assessment of crack dealing by Isaac. Yet it also hints at its more detrimental aspect, *"but the thing is they smoke too"*. Smoking crack or 'stones' is an expensive habit and at between ten and twenty pounds a blast, as any crack smoker will admit, it is easy to burn thousands. Consequently a more typical attitude expressed by security was Grant's. *"You don't want to do the crack game mate everything about it is scummy. People coming to your house begging you for just one more rock and that, I mean I had mates who did it but they made their money and got out "*. Even Scott wouldn't cook his coke into

⁵³ See D. Courtney for his take on drug dealing (1999, 263) "A lot of romance had gone out of crime cos the crime of the moment was drugs. And there is not a lot of romance around drugs-a lot of wealth, not much romance. Less morals less standards, less loyalty and less honour among the drugs culture that there was among the traditional forms of crime. Drugs change everything. If someone can break into their mum's house and nick things to get their next fix".

crack, as *"I couldn't do that to people, I wouldn't want that sitting on my conscience, its just wrong"*.

My regular taxi driver Clive was a local and had been a smoker for about ten years. As he himself said *"yeah with the stones I try to keep it to the weekends. I mean before I properly lost it, spent thousands on it man"*. In his time in the game he had served two stretches and been stabbed (*"yeah I got stabbed right in the chest, I thought I had been punched, but when I looked at my shirt there was blood everywhere"*). He knew most of the local smokers, dealers and hookers who made up the local crack community. This group was clearly a lot less affluent than the drug takers in the club and was mainly black, though many white customers would come in from other areas to score.

Judging by his account, and the accounts of doormen who had been involved or had family involved, I want to make a number of points. Firstly, there did not seem to be a particularly organised dealing network. The bigger dealers were on the look out for ounces of base and made entreaties to Scott and others to do business. They would also be willing to sell at this level to club dealers but were widely regarded as unreliable. Nigel had connections through his extended family but he wouldn't use them because he thought they would rip him off⁵⁴. If there were organised gangs operating in the area, I think they must have been powerful only within their community as there was never any mention of a gang or a 'Mr Big' that the team need watch out for or alternatively do business with⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Nigel: *"My cousin gave me some good charlie, but you know when he comes to sell more, he often switches it"*.

⁵⁵ A more specific example of the kind of operation that existed would be in the *South London Press* on Thursday 1st of April, 1999. They ran the headline "Drug Smuggling Mum and Daughter Jailed for 19 Years". The next paragraph read "Customs officials snared a mum and daughter who headed a massive drug smuggling ring by bugging their bags". They were caught bringing five kilos of cocaine in from Jamaica. Here is a typical example of hyperbole mixed with truth. What needs attention is the "mum and daughter" by line and what needs to be ignored is "the head of a massive drug smuggling operation". There is no evidence presented for the latter accusation. Employing your own daughter to accompany the courier hardly implies a "massive operation" and hiding the drugs also suggests an amateur one. Despite the press' desire to make out otherwise I would argue that what seemed to be much more common in my area was this kind of family operation (also see Dorn, quoted earlier on the importance of family). Alternatively a small number of friends would be dealing together. This does not mean these groups of people should be

The combination of the disorganised nature of the dealers, the desperation crack's use sparks in its users⁵⁶, the fact that at least some of it was done out on the street, and the involvement of people prone to extreme violence, made the crack game the most dangerous to be in. After some high profile killings in London, Nigel and Isaac were discussing the killers:

Isaac: *"Yeah man, we used to run with them you know, smash down doors and things but it is getting much worse now".*

Nigel: *"What, you were involved with Red and that?"*

Isaac: *"Yeah but now he's in trouble, he always wears a bullet proof vest, he never travels anywhere by train and he never stays in one address. I mean they used to go down the front line and rob everyone man".*

Nigel: *"Yeah well that's the rock business".*

Isaac: *"Yeah, true I mean they were responsible for putting that area of London on the map but its becoming a dangerous place to rave now".*

Nigel: *"I know that".*

Isaac: *"What I do now is I rave outside London, because everyone has a glock now, but worse they don't know how to use them. I mean they've got their big fancy guns and that but I've got my 9mm and by the time they pull it out I would have shot them".*

This sort of dialogue was typical and reflected the doorman's acknowledgement of an unpredictably violent, Jamaican influenced, criminal subculture(sometimes embroiled in the crack trade, sometimes not) that was active in our area.

Journalists or academics might want to call them 'yardies' but I hesitate to use the term because it is so confusing. Firstly, as the term is so closely associated to simplistic exaggerated comments such as the one that follows, "In effect the

dismissed as if one of these groups is successful in smuggling this amount of cocaine, they would be able to have a serious impact on the local drug market and make a lot of money.

⁵⁶ See Davis (1990, 314) "Whether or not it is actually the most addictive substance known to science, as originally claimed, it remains an absolute commodity enslaving its consumers."

Yardie Rude Boys have almost single handedly fuelled a major crime and drug crisis within the black communities, the like of which has never been known in Britain⁵⁷.” Secondly because it has no single meaning, among the doorman, yardie was often used as a synonym for ‘rude boy’. It meant that the referent was probably West Indian and probably a bit of a gangster. As such, the nearest equivalent for a white guy was, he’s a ‘geezer’. However, because of its now inflated associations with gangsters and violence, it was self-appropriated by people who were neither West Indian, nor gangsters, but wanted to be seen as both. When used by Clive (someone who other people might call a yardie, but in his own terms wasn’t): *“The English black guys might try to rip you off but the Yardies, they won’t man, they want your custom, you know they’re alright”*. *“When I buy serious gear I get it from a proper yardie, he gives it to me on the weight, he doesn’t drink or smoke, he calls me up when he gets the proper stuff in. I just do a quick blast to see how much its been washed”* it meant something different. According to his terminology a yardie is a “living Jamaican”, someone who is either a Jamaican and over here illegally or someone who has recently arrived. A yardie doesn’t have to be criminal (they could just be from ‘back a yard’ and be contrasted to ‘smallies⁵⁸’) but in this context it is assumed they are. I will go on later, in my section on race, to briefly examine why ‘yardie’ is such a popular term yet one so divorced from the reality.

Returning to the everyday internal market, most ‘staff’ mirrored the opinions of ecstasy users that I have interviewed, and expressed a strong hostility towards heroin and to a lesser extent crack-cocaine. While I was there none of the staff openly used heroin and many expressed dislike towards, the drug and towards the junkies who would occasionally shoot up near by the club. Injecting drugs was frowned upon (except by the steroid users) and heroin which could be smoked or snorted did not seem to be around. Crack, though not sold by any

⁵⁷ Small, G. (1995), *Ruthless: The Global Rise of the Yardies*. If the rhetoric is hysterical, the following paragraph makes a better point. He continues, “The inherent racism and racialism of British society aside, no one group has done more damage to the reputation and well being of the nation’s black communities in recent times than the Rude Boys”, p. 370. London: Warner.

⁵⁸ Smallie: A west Indian term used to describe West Indians from the smaller islands

staff, was used by some of the staff some of the time but was not a drug people readily admitted to trying. (see quotation from Grant) However it was available outside and some of the cab drivers who used it had contacts with the dealing networks which were situated nearby. On Garage⁵⁹ nights in particular, cocaine or crack were smoked⁶⁰. As one of the punters who regularly attended these events put it “ *When I started raving, I just thought that somebody didn’t wash their clothes and they had dogs in the house”. I smelt this awful smell*”. The problem is that is impossible to distinguish between the two of them, but what was certain was on occasion the whole club would stink of it.

Guns

“I mean I can get you them, I don’t have one at home I don’t like to but for a 9mm I can get it for £400 with two clips but you need three or four if you go a bit wild and that” (Grant).

Guns were talked about with typical male bravado, the less likely you are to see it the bigger it gets. Lots of the guys talked about guns and propositions like this, “*I can get a fucking Uzi mate, for two and a half or a Colt or a Berreta and a couple of clips for a grand*” from Tony were never going to happen. However it was clear that guns were available for a price and especially in the crack trade they were used. But the more honest doormen would admit that they would rather not have one at home, due to its potential threat to both health and liberty. As Leon said “*I can get a gun but I don’t want to be an arsehole and tell you yeah I can get this and that, when it doesn’t happen but I’ve asked around and when it comes up it will be sorted. I used to belong to a firm and I had a sawn off shotgun but to be honest guns frighten me I mean you shoot someone and that’s it*”.

⁵⁹ These nights were where you would have the biggest number of people who aspired to the gangster kudos. Thus precisely because it is more inefficient and more conspicuous, cocaine was smoked rather than snorted.

⁶⁰ This is easy to do, as both cocaine and crack can be put into a spliff and cocaine can be wrapped around a wet cigarette.

There was also a feeling that the influx of firearms into the area had changed the hierarchy of danger in the area. Thus though it was important to be big and physically able, the doorman understood that this quickly became irrelevant faced with someone armed with a gun. It was thus important to at least know how to get one thus if necessary a threat could be returned. When Nigel got into a big argument with another some time doorman over a women he was vexed that he wouldn't fight him then and there but instead made threats to get him shot:

"But times are changing now; the kids can't fight they have to get their tings, knife or gun or thing. They can't fight when I was younger I used to fight all the time. Its like Lance and that, when we had that row I wanted to do it then and there but he went on and on about getting his cousin and his ting. I said if you're going to do it just do it, do it man! But I told my brother anyhow, that If I get taken out, put him in the ground mate, put him in the ground. And he knew that he saw him in the street and he looked him up and own and told him about himself so that's it. Then he comes up and says its' done! done".

This interaction was fairly typical, threats would be issued, which is not the same as threats being carried out. On the other hand people were shot regularly in the area and as the dialogue above illustrates each participant had possessed enough credence in the other to take steps to protect themselves.

On being in control: Stopping drug dealing/ taking

Phil: *"Look mate you've got three choices. No in fact you've got two choices either you give me the gear now and you get on and enjoy the club or you can be a cunt and not give it me and I can take you down stairs and call the cops. The police station is just round the corner and they'll be here in five minutes".*

Punter : *"I wasn't doing nothing".*

Phil: *"Look mate this is my fucking club and if you give attitude you get attitude back".*

Punter: *Handing over the drugs: "Alright man I can see you're clued up".*

Phil: *"That's right now, off you go, enjoy your night".*

Our policing function meant a set of activities *directed* at preserving the security of a particular social order. In general, these activities consisted of preventing blatant consumption of drugs, stopping drug dealing and keeping the peace. In theory the informal rules were as follows: If you were caught dealing, you would have to leave. If you were caught with class A drugs, if you handed them over you could stay in the club, though on other occasions you would be kicked out as well. Smoking dope was more or less tolerated but if you were caught skinning up, then you might have your gear confiscated but you would be allowed to stay in the club. The actual enforcement of these informal rules (the rules were not consistently stated, different people did very different things, and after a while they were abandoned completely, with the exception of restrictions on dealers) was very haphazard for a number of reasons.

Firstly, enforcement was contingent on how many doormen were working compared to the size of the crowd. If the ratio was very low, then we wouldn't do much. The amount and type of drugs being consumed was contingent on the music being played in the club and thus the crowd that followed the music. The biggest takers of class A drugs were the trance/ techno/ hard-house crowds. Very fast, very repetitive electronic music with few vocals attracts a crowd who take large amounts of ecstasy and amphetamines. They also smoked so much dope that you had to encourage them to smoke discreetly, otherwise the chill out room soon resembled an Amsterdam café. On the other hand they are the least aggressive most compliant and best-behaved crowd. Sometimes street dealers would come down knowing they could get rid of their drugs, but their 'street attitude' and street clothes are easy to spot amongst the tie-dye. Probably second, were the huge Jungle/Drum & bass nights, which would attract much more varied crowd with more diverse drug habits. Ecstasy, cocaine and dope would be in abundance, the crowd would be more hostile than the one above but also they were more energetic, jumping up and down and dancing wildly to the

music. This makes stopping drug consumption very wearisome and when the club got really packed, the security wouldn't bother. Third are the house and garage nights, with ecstasy (House) and cocaine (Garage) the most common drugs. Finally, Hip Hop nights and electronic/ eclectic nights would see little drug use, except some dope smoking. In the next section I will look at the structure of this potentially confrontational interaction.

All of our encounters involved interaction with the public and followed a general pattern that I think is very similar to the one outlined by Kemp et al. (1992), in their analysis of police disputes. "Where interactants embrace recognisable roles, their actions are more predictable and the interaction may proceed smoothly, even in conflictual situations. Thus it is even possible to speak of the achievement of social cohesion in cases where an arrest is being made". This is what you want in any interaction. For example you come over and tell somebody to put a spliff out and they acknowledge you and do as you ask. They have seen your uniform or your badge and recognise that your request is reasonable so they comply. The slight rush of adrenaline that any sanctioning interaction generates subsides and then you feel calm, confident in your authority.

However interaction is rarely that simple, but with experience you learn how to keep it as simple and as quick as possible. As Kemp observes "as parties seek to establish those *minima* while assessing the consequences of sustained challenge or retreat and while maintaining an orientation to any complicating features of the situation (such as presence of an audience assessing their loss or maintenance of face), the interaction is characterised by messiness and unpredictability. Once embarked on this path, the dynamic of the situation may be resisted but the tendency is towards the escalation of the stakes and proliferation of the conflict". The best way to avoid this uncertain period, is to follow a policeman's advice (quoted from Punch's study), which is "to let someone start talking and then listen to his voice and answer back just like he does" (Punch, 1979, 132). Except that it is best to talk first and try not to let it

develop into a conversation. For this to be a success, one has to have a good idea of what the appropriate diction is. In every interaction you have to be authoritative but you must never over extend yourself. I found for people who I thought might regard it as their right to smoke weed wherever they so choose, I opted for being polite, telling them, "to put it out mate, or can you put it out", "if you want to smoke you an go elsewhere in the club". For people I thought would want to talk about the validity of my instruction I used to be very abrupt, "just fucking put it out" or even give them a warning, "If I see you doing that again you're be out". Clearly, getting people to obey you without aggravation is not just about the words used but also to do with how you talk to them, how close you stand to someone, where you look, but the principle is the same.

Sometimes your request can be simply refused and then you are in a potentially dangerous situation. "But the challenge to the legitimacy of the role played by interactants also challenges the generic norms which bind the conduct of actors in all social situations. In such circumstances interactants have to establish to what *minima* the situation can be reduced before it breaks down entirely. Where some interactants are authoritative , such as a police officers, that minimum is the threshold at which they invoke their ability to claim the legitimate exercise of force" (Fielding et al., 1992, 16). Occasionally I asked individuals, if that was a spliff could they put it out, only to be told, "of course it's a spliff", and have no action taken. At this point, violence was an option and some of my colleagues, such as Phil or Tony might grab the offender. Personally, I would try to stay articulate, and would probably move onto "*well if you want to be like that, we could always throw you out,*" which would normally get a response and eventually the situation would be resolved.

Essentially what I am trying to articulate is that interaction in a night club is fraught with uncertainties. The way you assess whether a person is amenable to your control or not, is imprecise and in the dark you can frequently get it wrong. The alternative is to do nothing, and that is what many of the security did. If you

wait for incidents to come to you in a 'rave' club you will have a quiet night⁶¹. The problem that will eventually confront you will be drugs not violence.

Catching drug dealers is actually quite easy even if, as they mostly do, they operate in groups. The key is to keep an eye on who is in the club when it is not too busy. During this time, before around twelve thirty, you form a good idea of who is with who. Then you start to look for people who are moving around a lot and are not part of any of the groups you have registered. Once you have got an idea of who you are looking for, you monitor them. Most people, when they are doing something illegal will try to be furtive about it but their very furtiveness will give them away. Dealers used to congregate in the blind spots of the club, behind speakers, or by doorways so that every time people walked past they could offer their pills. To compound their visibility they are often over cautious and will continually look around or try to move off anytime security get near. When it came to catching them, if you watched people's hands, it was relatively easy to catch both the buyer and the seller, though as our club was so disorganised one of them would get away.

However, the club never carried out a consistent policy on searches and they ultimately tended to be implemented on a whim. Some like Tony felt they had to do it:

"The problem about this place is the fucking DJ's and the fucking promoters and the people with them who do all the dealing. They say I'm with the promoter, I'm with the fucking DJ. I don't care who the fuck you're with. When I used to do security I used to nick people all the time. I mean one time I hear this girlfriend of this guy saying be careful of the security. And he goes, in here, the security ain't nothing ... So I waited for him and I rushed him from behind, and he goes I'm

⁶¹ "D.Courtney on his acid club, The Arches: "Anyway after hours and hours of this I started to realise they were all harmless. Much more so than normal clubbers. they were too much into having a good time even to think about anything else (1999, 120). See almost identical comment in B. O'Mahoney on 'house and garage nights': "There was no trouble among the customers and the atmosphere in there was fantastic. Its hard to describe. You could feel the music, it was so loud, you could see little because of the darkness and the smoke , but there was a feeling of unity among the revellers". (1997, 79).

with the promoter and I go I hear you don't think the security is nothing. Grabbed his stash, 25 pills thanks very much."

Others like Isaac, if he needed a smoke, would just pull someone he knew had weed on them. Others such as Mike, voiced distaste at doing it, *"I feel like a fucking nazi doing these searches, just let the guy go and enjoy his night"*. The punters on the whole seemed more content. I'll quote a regular visitor:, *"There is no search at the door at all. At first it was like, this new club has opened and you expect to get searched. So we were stashing our drugs, but now recently we haven't been bothering really .On the way up to the club, literally five and six people try to sell you pills. The area has had this kind of renaissance kind of thing, lots of trendy people, its night time central"*.

When drugs were found they were meant to be given to Phil, who in turn was meant to put them in the drugs box. This was a locked box and only Quentin had the key. Unfortunately during my entire time working I never once saw it and most of the door team doubted it actually existed. What I did witness was Phil ending the night with his jacket stuffed with multiple bags of pills. However most nights he wouldn't be so lucky as the drugs pulled from people would be distributed to all the guys doing the search and any of the other doormen who might want them⁶². Only the dregs of any bust would find their way to Phil, lumps of hash or pills that didn't look real.

When this job wasn't done efficiently, which is what happened when Quentin briefly employed another security firm, the club changed completely. The few nights they were in charge, drugs were openly being sold all round the club. As you walked across the dance floor you would be asked five or six times, if you wanted anything. Though our team were unscrupulous and disorganised, we did at least prevent this from happening. And compared to some clubs we were quite

⁶² For drug users like most of the security, finding drugs is the equivalent to equivalent to finding money and not parted with easily.

lax on the personal consumption of drugs especially on busy nights. Once a big night had got going we rarely had the staff to prevent people from doing their own drugs. The VIP areas would be policed even less; though on some nights, the promoters were told to calm it down when the thick cloud of smoked cocaine started to drift out into other areas of the club⁶³. On the other hand, I think we were stricter than other clubs.

Again, even though the searches were meant to follow a strict format, they rarely did. We were meant to give people the option of leaving the club or being searched and after about six months we actually did start to do this. However if you were caught with drugs in hand, you would be searched and once in a private space anything could happen. Often people were made to take down their trousers and occasionally they were forced to take off their underwear. We did get complaints especially on nights when the security were particularly eager to work because they knew there would be a lot of people taking drugs. We lost these nights to other venues where drug taking is even more endemic⁶⁴.

Meanwhile, outside the club similar sorts of informal negotiations were going on with the local drug dealers. I'll quote a typical scene, which I witnessed. In the rain Isaac is trying to placate a local dealer, who has just been kicked out.

Isaac: *"I let you in".*

DD: *"Yeah but its been a bad night, a bad night all round. I mean that geezer the Australian was after me".*

Isaac: *"No not the Australian the American".*

⁶³ "Notably, there's 'Pure MDMA' for the VIPs and 'double burgers' for the punters. The distinctions of Ecstasy use are not unlike the class connotations of McDonalds and 'no additives' health food" (Thornton, 1995, 89). This is crucial to understanding the club as a space for drug consumption. The VIP areas have long been the places where the purer drugs are consumed more openly.

⁶⁴ This is the kind of discussions you would get at the end of nights when we had been particularly out of order. Promoter: *"Yeah got a few complaints tonight about the security being heavy handed"*. Phil: *"Well on a night like this you are always going to get a few complaints but you have to see it from our side, I mean we had a girl working with us tonight who must have confiscated over forty spliffs"*. Promoter: *"The thing is our crowd is used to raves where everything is tolerated but I can see it from your point of view, there were quite a few street dealers in who don't have anything to do with our crowd"*. Phil: *"Yeah well, I don't know why you don't point them out because we ain't have'n it. Quentin says....."*.

DD: *"Yeah well whatever he should sort it out, have a word with Phil mate".*

Isaac: *"But he won't be interested in it unless there is some money in it, all he is interested in is the money, fucking prick".*

DD: *"Yeah well I can do that".*

Isaac: *"Yeah but what kind of money".*

DD: *"Well there would be around £200 in it for you if you do a couple of hundred pills, I mean I've got pills coming out of my ear oles mate , I mean here's a score see what you can do".*

Isaac: *"Yeah I'll try and talk to him".*

We were quite strict on this external market on Quentin's instructions. But what is important to recognise is that in an area such as ours, there were a number of groups, including members of our own team, who felt it was their territory.

"This is our manor mate, I 'mean we know what they're up to with all their fucking little tricks and that, but this is our manor". I mean they can just get up and go somewhere else, but we can't mate, we've got kids here" (Grant).

Consequently Phil and Grant were in constant negotiation with the local dealers, (*"the riffraff"*) who felt the same way, and who generally dealt outside the club. The local dealers were quite astute and would come down in force, on a busy night to target the queue. This was hard to control as they were out of our jurisdiction. As this happened repeatedly, the police began to come down more regularly to patrol this area around the club, as it had become notorious as a place to buy drugs⁶⁵.

Violence

Violence for a member of the public is normally shocking and unexpected. Even to witness it was enough for one member of staff to leave their job:

⁶⁵ People asked me for drugs and tried to sell me stuff on the way to work.

"Basically there was a scuffle at the door because a guy went out with a bottle. They were already a bit hyper because some mixed race guy had already come in, who was new to the country, and didn't really speak the language and they told him to go away. But his friends had already gone in before him and they told him to pay the money and he said his friends had already paid it, and they just pushed him through the door and he just flew and landed on the street. He spat into the doorway and the doormen chased him and then they cooled down a bit, mind you Leon might have been running after him to get the big up from the boys. Later on another guy went out with a bottle and they started pushing him, and he took a swing at them, I don't know who he took a swing at but they just mashed him, and he was just dazed, walking into the middle of the road bleeding everywhere. The police came but they wiped the video tapes and they said no senior manager was there. George had to lie that he wasn't working".

Doormen will tend to have a different perspective on violence based on deeper experience and understanding as Isaac put it:

"You must have bottle if you don't have bottle then it is nothing, In Ghana when they fight you must kill them and in Jamaica, they will kill you, I swear they will kill you. At the millennium club everybody works in pairs but I work alone, we had this guy a skinhead called the 'rock' and the other doormen could not do nothing so they call me, and I come up to him and he goes who the fuck are you! and I tell him to go, and he goes come on then make me. So I take off my jacket but I slip on it and he knees me in the face but I block it and hit him and let me tell you after that he was crying like a boy like a little boy".

Compared to other venues and other times the club was seen to be a safe place to work. Nigel and Grant reminisce on more dangerous times:.

Nigel: *"Yeah man I remember the time when Coventry was rough man all you had to hear was nah man, me from Coventry, you understand and that was it, you let them in".*

Grant: *"Yeah when I was working in the sheeban's it was bad man, I used to work for my mate and then one day we got rushed at the door, all the Coventry boys, not going to pay or nothing".*

Nigel: *"So I went home, got my chopper and acid man and just set to them. Mashed them up boy."*

Grant: *"Nah Irish pubs are the worst mate, I used to work them all the time They would take a look at you and then it would be I'll fucking have you fucking English cunt. Loud as well so the whole pub could hear, if you didn't do anything you were finished so I used to go O.K outside mate!"*

Nigel: *"That way you would get them outside and secondly, it would test their bottle They couldn't back down in front of the pub and but because you challenged them it would fuck them up right up psychologically".*

The reality in our club was much more mundane. Serious violence was a rarity and the security handled it with their normal incompetence. The only doorman who was seriously hurt while I worked was Tony. According to him:

Tony: *"This guy was having a dispute with Chuck inside the club and then when he went to leave he went out he took a bottle with him and we told him to leave it and he was saying no. I'm going to take it out side you bomba-claart white guy and this, no white man is going to tell me what to do stuff. So we let him out and he goes away. But then he comes back and Chuck goes out and carries on the dispute and I just tell him to calm down and then he gets out this kitchen knife and thrust it straight into my stomach, and if Nigel hadn't been there, well. I mean he grabbed me so the whole thing didn't go in, I got sixteen stitches outside and the same amount internal".*

Phil: *"Yeah there was blood all over him, but Chuck the pussy didn't do nothing."*

Tony: *Yeah it was like I had been stabbed and Chuck just stood there and didn't do anything, pretended he didn't see it, so I went inside and I saw Phil and Mike and they got someone to call the police they rushed after him".*

Phil: *"Yeah we rushed after him, but the cunt got away, I had my screw driver out and Mike had his knife and he tried to slash the car up".*

Tony: *"Yeah I mean the old bill got him".*

Phil: *"I would have slashed him up mate, stuck it right in his stomach, fucking cunt".*

Tony: *"Well he got nicked they found the knife and everything".*

After this he wasn't the same and although the physical scars healed mental ones remained⁶⁶. Initially easy going, he became *"pre-occupied with the fucking scroats"* and after one incident for which he was reprimanded for putting a guy in a headlock and dragging him down some stairs he reasoned *"He deserved it he was threatening me. I mean we are not going to get on the radio every time something happens, we're too soft in here, I mean we let all the fucking scroates take the fucking piss, I mean we are just too soft If something goes off we can't just get on the radio we got to do something"*.

Phil didn't see it that way, he didn't like *"it getting out of hand in public because it gets back to people and I have to explain it to Quentin , I mean we have to be professional like"*. On the whole the attitude to violence was similar to that which emerges from ethnographies of the police. So that "Generally excessive violence was not condoned and unnecessarily aggressive policeman were not respected. At the same time normal but illegal violence, was accepted in certain cases" (Punch, 1979, 81)⁶⁷. As Phil also said about the same incident, *"I mean out of sight I don't give a fuck, I mean he deserved it"*.

⁶⁶ At least, according to psychoanalysis this is a text book reaction to someone who has suffered a trauma. As C. Garland argues, the result of trauma is that the "ego, once traumatised, can no longer afford to believe in signal anxiety in any situation resembling the life-threatening trauma: it behaves as if it was flooded with automatic anxiety". In other words, Tony was unable to easily deflect the anxiety generated by minor confrontation and instead, from quite minor situations he was mentally transported straight back into his traumatic anxiety experienced in his stabbing." Garland, C. (1998), 'Thinking about Trauma'. In Garland, C, (ed.), *Understanding Trauma*, London: Duckworth , p.16/17.

⁶⁷ See also, a description of the resolution of a violent dispute recorded in Kemp et al, (1992, 74) "then goes on to say as far as he (the police) are concerned, they have no objection to the two of them finding a quiet spot and settling whatever it is among themselves, but it isn't on to have this sort of fight involving a sledgehammer on the street particularly in front of children".

It was generally felt that due to on the one hand, the placid nature of our punters and on the other, the risk of extreme violence that being physical with people was unnecessary. Thus another security team who worked nearby, who held someone down while others kicked him, were widely condemned as being 'well out of order'. Eventually Tony was also challenged by Grant,

Grant: *"I mean Tony you've got to calm down mate, I mean I used to be like that, but I been doing the job since I was seventeen , I was like a bull in a china shop , you know what you looking at kind of thing, but things have changed now. In this place we don't need to be like that, yeah if a guy is totally out of order , but you got to be careful or people will come back for you. What I can't understand about you is why you carry on even after what happened to you? or is it because of what happened to you?"*

Tony: *"Yeah, its what happened to me".*

Grant: *"But you got to not take it personal mate,, I mean with those guys who wanted to shoot me, I was going to rip them up but I just had to leave it, it was totally unnecessary, I mean Scott created the whole problem".*

Revenge

"Yeah I mean imagine the cheek, Quentin asked my girlfriend at the end of the night what you doing here, and she said she was waiting for me

And he said I don't know why you bother he isn't worth it. I mean I was going to wait for him with a hammer and break both his legs, I mean I don't how he gets away with it. I mean he walks up and down between the clubs like there is no problem. I'm surprised, I really am that no-ones cut him up or shot him or something, I mean it was really good when Gee threw a bottle at him, I mean he deserved it, the fucking cunt" (Leon).

This is the kind of thing you would hear as a matter of routine. Ninety-nine per cent of the time nothing would happen but occasionally as the end of the quotation indicates something would. These threats issued by security at other

staff, unless they were aimed at you, would warrant nothing more than some sympathy and a wry smile. Potentially more sinister would be the intermittent threats issued by punters⁶⁸. A wired, would be gangster/ rude boy would deliver their "I know so and so and I/we will be back with a little present for you," speech. Most of the doormen would dismiss these kinds of people as 'scum'. Though it was acknowledged, that their lack of status, was also the reason, that they were potentially more dangerous, as they had less to lose Again, whilst this kind of threat is unlikely to be realised, it can still achieve its intended menacing effect. You just don't know who that person is with, and when the club is very busy and you are walking through the crowd, you can all of a sudden, feel very visible/ vulnerable⁶⁹.

The ability to deliver physically was something that was respected but the aversion to using weapons wasn't widely held. The more typical (see police accounts which hark back to the old days where weapons weren't used) attitude of a hierarchy of violence with unarmed combat at the top barely existed. Nigel used to complain about the fact that the *"young guys can't fight anymore. All they want to do is get their knife or gun. I say if you've got a problem with me lets get it on here and now, you and me"*. But most of the guys had no qualms about using anything to hand, which would do the appropriate amount of damage. What was widely voiced was that if someone pulled a knife or a gun they had upped the stakes. As Leon said (and had said to a number of people in his time): *"If you pull that shit on me, you better kill me, because if you don't I'm going to kill you with it"*.

While I worked there, somebody did try it with Leon and they ended up in hospital, with their knife stuck in their back.

⁶⁸ As Grant said: *"You would be amazed about the number of people who come in here and within minutes they would be back with guns and shoot up the whole place"*.

⁶⁹ This was especially the case if you enter into an encounter alone. Situations develop very quickly. Sometimes, for example, I would have a word with a dealer who I thought was alone then be confronted with all their mates. It is amazing how quickly you go from feeling confident to vulnerable but it is imperative that you hold your nerve.

Race

Grant: *"Yeah Mike, don't bother with all those gold chains and that..."*

Isaac: *"Yeah man normally its the other way round".*

Grant, laughing: *"Yeah why don't you get a nice watch or something, leave the chains to the brothers".*

Nigel: *"Bomba claat man, nice tings and all that, cha, I don't wear gold, I 'm a dread man a true dready".*

Isaac: *"Nigger please! We're trying to talk man".*

Nigel: *"Cha".*

Race/ethnicity was an unavoidable part of a great deal of social interaction on the door. As I mentioned earlier we were working in an area with a large Caribbean population, at the time of the anti-minority bombings and in the wake of the Macpherson report. We were an ethnically and racially mixed team working in a club with an extraordinarily diverse ethnical mix of staff. The crowds that attended the club were mostly white but some on nights they were largely black. I want to deal with the issue of race among the team and then as a factor in our policing role within the club.

The first point and it is the most important one, is that people got on. In the team and in the area, there is a fantastic amount of mixing among the races. Most of the guys had been brought up the inner city, lived in ethnically mixed areas, and had been to ethnically mixed schools. Most members of the team had strong friendships/ relationships/children, with people outside of their race. Though exclusive ideologies exist (normally claiming respective superiority, though sometimes just incompatibility) on both sides of the black/white divide, blacks

and whites intermix in England far more than any other minorities in most other countries⁷⁰.

If co-existence is cemented by the physical it is also reflected in shared language and shared leisure interests. Most of the guys were capable of conversing/ understanding each other's accents or slang. The black guys (African/West Indian) could talk cockney, the white guys (English/Irish) could speak patois. Both groups shared musical tastes, most of the team, be they black or white had a preference for black music⁷¹ (Hip-Hop, Soul) and both groups shared many leisure spaces, be they pubs or clubs.

A common misconception is that mixing, connotes assimilation. In fact most of the team combined a heterogeneous life with a strong sense of ethnic identity. Everyone was proud of his or her cultural differences and most had family backgrounds, which were rich with ethnic significance. For most of them being African, Irish, Jamaican or English, meant something⁷². Their respective identities were brought up a lot in conversation and were often used to justify behaviour.

⁷⁰ The number of black men living with non-black women is over 40% and the number of black women cohabiting with white men is around 20%. 7% of Asian men are with non-Asian women. Coleman, D. and Salt, J. (eds.) (1996) *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census, Demographic Characteristics of the Ethnic Minority Populations*, London: HMSO, p199. This is not to idealise the British situation as Ben Bowling makes clear there are differences in the experience of racial harassment and violence. Ethnic minorities will experience them as more traumatic as they lack political representation, economic clout and often effective policing in relation to the white majority. However it is also to acknowledge as he does in a different context that in comparison to the United States. "Here many more people are conscious of the fact of their mixed parentage, with an increasing proportion of the Afro-Caribbean, and to a lesser extent Asian population marrying white people and having children who are not clearly either black or white" (p.317). Bowling, B. (1999) *Violent Racism: Victimization, Policing and Social Context*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

⁷¹ As S. Jones (1988) observes in his ethnographic study of reggae in England, *Black Culture, White Youth*, despite the existence of a fundamental tension existing between "white youths struggles for more responsive and articulate modes of cultural expression and black musicians struggle against white cultural and economic power to redefine their music, white youth have time and time again found in black music a more realistic and resonant account of their experience that he established idioms of could offer". London: Macmillan, p.xxi.

⁷² Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness*, London; Verso. In this book he uses the idea of 'diaspora', to help link the varied black cultures in Africa, America, the Caribbean, and Europe. He uses it to try to unravel the paradox for black people of a shared culture and history combined with a sense of the deep divergences and differences, encompassed by the term 'black' The result is often a mixture of hybrid identities. This seems to be quite an accurate way of describing the personalities on the door if it is extended to all the guys who worked in the clubs, as they also had hybrid and paradoxical relationships to their ethnic/racial identity.

Unsurprisingly, while working with a team that possessed strong ethnic identities and the ability to have relationships with others, who also strongly valued their own identity, there were some heated exchanges⁷³. Indeed, I would argue that these expressions of perceived differences and confirmations of shared humanity are essential in situations where different groups are committed (due to desire or necessity) to living and working together. Hopefully, in other work environments correspondence doesn't have to be as full of prejudice⁷⁴ as ours was. But this is partly a reflection of the relative ignorance of the doormen and partly due to the ribald environment of the club⁷⁵. Sometimes these frank exchanges would be serious reflections on one's culture or on the difficulty of dating people beyond it⁷⁶. At other times the conversations would just be humorous or deliberately offensive.

⁷³ For other evidence from a smaller town, which broadly supports my point, see a recent study called: Watt. P. and Stenson. K. (1998), 'The Street: It's a bit dodgy around there: Safety, danger ethnicity and young peoples use of public space'. In Skelton, R and Valentine, G. (eds.) *Cool Places, Geographies of Youth Culture*, London: Routledge. The paradox of the town is "whilst we uncovered evidence for inter-ethnic friendships amongst some of our respondents living in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, this must nevertheless be set against views which indicated that those same places could also be sites of racial harassment against other black and Asian young people if they didn't live there or didn't personally know anyone there." (p. 256) "However, interethnic friendships, were more frequent amongst youths who came from ethnically mixed council estates and other predominately working class areas around the town where young people often shared the same schools and leisure facilities. More than half of the white working class young people said they had black and Asian friends but there were far fewer non-white friendships amongst the grammar school respondents living in the affluent suburbs" (p. 256).

⁷⁴ On the whole I would characterise the doorman as full of "Prejudice- literally means 'pre-judging' someone -knowing next to nothing about them but jumping to conclusions because of some characteristic like their appearance(see above). Yet no-one I witnessed behaved in a directly 'racially discriminatory' way to other members of the team. Direct racial discrimination defined as something that "occurs when someone is treated less favourably on racial grounds than other people are, or would be, treated in similar circumstances". (Commission for Racial Equality, 2000)

⁷⁵ When prejudiced views become racist abuse is very much up to the recipient. See the 1986 Public Order Act, Article 4 a which classifies racist abuse as abuse that has the intention to cause harassment, alarm or distress, in the eyes of the victim. Thus at the club I didn't object to being, called 'Jew boy' now and then. However, I didn't appreciate being pointed out by Isaac as a "*Jewish cunt looking for money*", when at the end of the night the whole team would spend five minutes searching the floor for lost money. When I did object I had the support of the rest of the doorman and interestingly there was no way a white doorman would address a black doorman in correspondingly abusive terms.

⁷⁶ The black doormen mixed with whatever race women they chose without censure from any groups although, Nigel for one acknowledged that twenty years ago the reaction from white men would have been different. White doormen could also see whoever they want without comment from the door team. However in the area as Leon for one had experienced, if you went out with a black women, you could expect a fair amount of abuse from black men. Strategies about overcoming either sides ignorance or prejudice, was common conversation among doormen.

As a general rule, each individual was at licence to expound on the positive or negative stereotypes of their ethnic/racial group. This might provoke lively disagreement but rarely offence. Everyone understood each group's stereotypes, which would most commonly be broken down into ethnicity for the sake of humour. Most nights there would be feuding over the radio between the Jamaicans versus the Africans or the Irish versus the English, though sometimes it would be a white/black thing, but with not everybody siding with their colour. Indeed the idea of 'white might' versus the 'black brothers' was never referred to without a sense of irony or the absurd.

Race and Control

Phil: *"No disrespect to you, Nigel but you know some black men don't like to be told what to do by some white guys, and J is a big man you know he doesn't like to be spoken to in a certain way, anyhow it isn't a big deal".*

This was Phil's comment, which provoked no disagreement, after Tony had told J to do something about a queue. I witnessed the scene and I wasn't sure what J objected to, being told what to do or the way Tony told him what to do. Whatever the answer, his response, that *"he would shoot him in the face"* didn't seem to be warranted. The next conversation was about a black doorman who had been shot dead by another black guy at a nearby club:

Isaac: *"You see the way some black men are, its like stupidity, so if a security talk to him like this or that, then they feel they have to do something , you know to represent their area of London, Cause it was Jamaican thing you know, they feel they got to keep a reputation up".*

D.S: *"Yeah but the doorman was black".*

Isaac: *"Of course, I mean a black man doesn't like to get told what to do by a white man you know, so they have to have black security".*

As I have written earlier, kicking people out or searching people for drugs was a discretionary activity that was often wrongly applied and wrongly executed. Reaction to it was at best uncertain, so the easiest response was to do nothing. In these circumstances I would add that the feeling of racist hostility is often hard to differentiate from a more general hostility⁷⁷. However, the feeling voiced by the black doormen⁷⁸ was that the black crowds our club catered for could be more problematic than the white crowds⁷⁹, which the club catered for. Also, a feeling expressed by both groups of doorman, was that certain black men would not listen to the instructions of a white doorman. Consequently, firstly Phil (or Quentin) would have more black doormen on blacker nights. Secondly, Phil would encourage the black doormen to deal with black punters and he himself seemed to shy away from any confrontations them.

In my experience, the situation was far less clear cut. Certainly on the few 'black' nights we had, the 'staff' complained about the treatment they got working at the bar⁸⁰. However from a security point of view, they were not characterised by any more violence than any other night and the amount of drugs consumed were much less than most of the white nights. The big difference is in attitude. When you compare a jungle or garage night to a techno or a trance night it, people at the former will seem far more aggressive⁸¹. However once you get accustomed to it, I don't think these nights were significantly more problematic.

⁷⁷ Foster, J. (1989), 'Two Stations : An ethnographic study of policing in the City' Foster notes in her excellent article on the police that "It is vital not to dismiss the fears that officers had about the challenge West Indians posed to their authority. People not getting out of the way, people kissing their teeth, swearing in patois". This may be seen as a racial challenge by an all white police force but the same actions might be seen as an anti-authority by a racially mixed police force. Article in D.Downes, (ed.), *Crime in the City: Essays in Memory of John Barron Mays*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press. p144.

⁷⁸ As Isaac, put it in his typically forthright way. :

Isaac: "*Oh shit, lots of niggers in the club tonight, fucking niggers always giving attitude*".

Promoter: "*Yeah you see us black people are proud, sometimes we walk with this high attitude*".

Isaac: "*Shit, you mean the wrong attitude*".

⁷⁹ This is an important proviso. Our club did not put on nights which attract the kinds of white crowds which do cause substantial control problems(such as football crowds or heavy drinking crowds) and may also contain individuals who have the equivalent feelings at being controlled by black doorman.

⁸⁰ The back bar, had problems because people wouldn't get out of the way, the bar staff would get people walking off with drinks and would not get any tips.

⁸¹ This is far from universal, nor is it exclusively black. In fact, the kind of street swagger and defiant attitude personified in rap videos, is drawn upon by all groups in British youth culture. See, for example,

When kicking out or searching black punters, it would be dishonest not to admit the existence of a racial dynamic. I was aware of their potentially hostile views of white people and I was aware that they could mistakenly accuse me of racism. However the reality was this rarely happened. I would always adjust my way of talking to who was in front of me and with black men I was no different. And ninety per cent of these encounters went without incident. In fact I got the impression that despite Phil's preference, most of the black doorman had more respect for the white doorman who weren't afraid to initiate and deal with these encounters. On most nights most of the punters who were thrown out for possession of drugs were white, however a very high proportion of the dealers we would throw out were black:

Isaac: *"Nah man, I ain't throwing him out, Quentin is fucking racist man, he has got a fucking problem with black people man".*

Punter: *"Yeah, what have I done, being black in Coventry that's what it is".*

Very occasionally this was to do with the racism of Quentin. It was rare but it is worth mentioning as it puts other peoples' behaviour into perspective. Quentin would wander around in a cocaine stupor and tell us to kick black guys out because they were dealing. However, we would either ignore him or explain the situation to the punter, get him out of sight, then let them back in. Other times it was to do with the way the local drug market was structured, as the kind of dealers who might chance it and try to sell a few pills at the club were in our area, as likely to be black as white. The other reason why black dealers' attrition rate was so high was to do with their style. Unlike some of the white dealers, they rarely made any concessions to the night and would deal, in full street regalia and attitude. Consequently on white nights, out of ten black men in the club, often five would be pulled for dealing.

Gillespie, M. (1996), *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change* for an interesting discussion on how young Punjabis in Southall, selectively incorporate black youth styles. London: Routledge, p.181-182.

I mention this, only because of the troubling effect it had on my attitudes to black people on the whole⁸². Again I can only endorse the ethnographic research done on the police that notes that police prejudice is often a product of the way their powers are employed rather than its cause (Reiner,1997,1024) . While I was at the club my negative encounters with black punters, were mitigated by my positive friendships with black doormen. However, these guys were criminals as well and when I went away from the club altogether, I noticed that I harboured irrationally hostile and negative views towards black people as a whole. Luckily due my interaction with close black friends away from this scene, my opinions were challenged and my views became more objective. Yet I would argue that these sorts of controlling jobs evoke prejudice very quickly in the controllers, if they only have contact with that minority in the course of that job. Obviously, if this is not dealt with, in a role such as ours, prejudice can soon become discrimination⁸³.

The Police

Son: You know dad, I think I will be able to fight you in a couple of years.

Father: You think so boy? listen when we fight, it ain't going to be any of that stuff they teach you in the boy scouts. We fight cops rules.

Son: Hey that ain't fair

Father: Why not?

Son: Because policemen fight dirty you told me that.

⁸² I would argue that the process described below is a universal one. If you have a negative experience with another person who is identifiably different from you it helps if this is offset by other neutral or positive experiences with the same group of people. The alternative is to educate people so they don't universalise their particular experience with someone into racial/ethnic stereotypes. It might also provide an explanation for the difference that you might find difficult. However from my experience I believe education alone cannot deflect the visceral power of personal interaction.

⁸³ As I have noted earlier there are legitimate distinctions between prejudice and discrimination in law (see footnote 149) and Robert Reiner in his astute discussion of police attitudes adds a further two categories, bias and differentiation which are particularly germane to issues of enforcement or control. What I am trying to give an account of is how the mind moves from one position into the other. In my case how easily bias can become prejudice which could become discrimination, when in a control situation , faced by differentiation. Reiner, R. (1992) *The Politics of the Police*. 2nd Ed, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p.157.

Father: That's right boy and don't you forget it, just remember cops always win⁸⁴

The police were at most a peripheral irritant during my time at the club. All the guys who embarked on criminal enterprise did so without police interference. Nobody I knew who worked at the club was ever arrested for any offence. Occasionally the police were called to the club when someone had been badly beaten up or mugged but they never seemed to question our version of events: *"Someone got mugged outside and the coppers got called and me and Tony had to come downstairs to talk to them except there had been a free bar so we were so pissed we couldn't stand up straight. Then, Tony says, 'I've seen you've sent your top boys', because they looked about twelve, which weren't too clever see, as I've got a warrant out for my arrest"* (Mike).

The Police seemed incapable of taking the initiative and the one time they raided a 'staff' party, where there were the usual amounts of illegal substances, their actions were staggeringly inefficient. Not only did they fail to find anything, but they also failed to remain calm and responded to the goading that was aimed at them⁸⁵.

More worrying were the frequent allegations of corruption, which ranged from the oblique, *"I think they have meetings with them once a month"* to the conclusive, *"Quentin's got the police in his pocket, mate"*. These allegations of corruption also applied to the relevant representatives of the local council. Due to the sensitive nature of this subject and also because the police only liased with Quentin or one of the owners directly it was hard to establish exactly what was happening. Consequently my argument is based on omission as much as action.

⁸⁴ Rubenstein, J. (1974) *City Police*, Chapter 7, 'Cops' rules', New York: Ballantine Books., p.267.

⁸⁵ Despite the fact that they turned up in large numbers they looked scared and were easily rattled. The Sergeant lost his temper and searched somebody basically because he was being cheeky. They antagonised everyone and arrested no-one despite the fact that nearly everyone had class A drugs on them.

As I mentioned above, what didn't happen was, everything. We were never raided, the council never appeared and our various licenses were never checked. Here is an account by a member of staff about his time there:

Dave: *"Then I would get my own bar upstairs, but it was never licensed and the police would ring up and say we are going to do a raid on it. So the police would turn up and you would be standing there by a completely stocked bar and the police would walk up there, it was full of punters and we would be like, no we are only serving non alcoholic drinks".*

D.S: *"Did this happen more than once?"*

Dave: *"Yeah the police came about four or five times, yeah somehow they always knew that the police would be coming; they would tell you before hand that they were coming".*

There seemed to be a pattern of mutual support. When Quentin decided that some of his security employees' activities were getting out of hand, he would wait for a specific incident⁸⁶, and sack them. If they kicked up a fuss it would be made implicit that if they didn't disappear for at least a while, then the police might become involved. This could also happen in reverse. One of the team might attract attention in another area of the city and the police might trace him back to the club.

As Phil said: *"The old bill came down here, they were looking for a big guy with tatoos (Leon), and a smaller well dressed guy in a suit(Scott). Apparently they've been fucking about in the West End. Its very different down there, you got to be careful. They've got CID all over the place".*

D.S: *"And did they see them down here?"*

Phil: *"Well we didn't say nothing but I hear they're watching them now, they've got to be careful, I mean last week Scott offered some shit to a CID guy in the club, I mean ... That's fucking stupid".*

⁸⁶ In Orwellian fashion, he would be buy drugs off one of them and then sack them for selling him drugs. Scott on being sacked- *"The last time I did a line was on Sunday round my house with Phil and Quentin. I mean I got the coke for Quentin and we were sitting around doing lines together".*

Of course when I spoke to Scott, he said:

"It was nothing, me and Leon was just joking around with a couple of CID guys in the club". Phil and Grant had told them we were in but then when CID came round, they realised that they had been sold a patsy and really it was them two, up to no good. So now they're watching them two instead".

Whatever the truth of the accusations, Phil and Grant calmed it down for a while, and Scott was barred. However within a month everything was back to normal.

The more perplexing question, is what was Quentin doing, to have such preferential treatment and to able to liken all law to *"being a bit like the speed limit"*. The same member of staff quoted above, also recalled packing crates of JD for Christmas at the local police station. And a local business man, complained that though he played golf with the local licensing officer whatever he was paying him, he could not "match what Quentin was giving him". Judging by other accounts of police work, information was obviously constantly changed hands. CID did come onto the premises and I'm sure in their meetings with Quentin information about who was dealing locally was swapped over. If anything more overt was exchanged, (which I suspect there was) unfortunately I never witnessed it.

4. Interview Methodology

In this chapter I outline the varied approaches that have been utilised to explain the growth of ecstasy use and I outline some of the advantages and disadvantages of my own study. In a recent book called "Dance in the City" Andrew Ward acknowledged that "rave is a highly significant phenomenon; Indeed it is perhaps the most extraordinary of all contemporary movements¹". However, he then went on, "Yet the response to rave by serious commentators has been at best muted but generally non-existent...; whilst those who have a sense of its importance, adopt a strange semi-myopic approach to the topic". The reason for this dismissal of his contemporaries, was that they were "characterised by a curious failure to discuss what is the defining feature of their subject matter –namely dance"(1997, 5). Yet he does admit that to "capture the meaning of dance when this is the only available through dancing and cannot apparently be presented in a verbal or written form without distortion or loss²" is extremely difficult; A point also forcefully made from outside the academy by S. Reynolds (1998, 19), who before trying to answer his rhetorical question, asks "How do you write a history of a culture that is fundamentally amnesiac and non-verbal".

My own straightforward, though perhaps partial answer, is by asking those involved. Unfortunately as B.Malbon (1999, 16) in the most recent book on clubbing, correctly states, (actually quoting Gibson and Zargora), "as with many other youth musical subcultures, the voice and concerns of ravers are rarely

¹ Ward, A. (1997), 'Dancing Around Meaning (and the Meaning Around Dance)' in H. Thomas, (ed.), *Dance in the City*, London: Macmillan, p.4

² I am not convinced by his argument that dance is regulated to the periphery of the academy due to in his opinion an unjust association with the irrational. I would argue that it is more to do with the difficulties in writing insightfully about this non-verbal activity. Though he does successfully show that dance should be considered from a variety of standpoints. These are, that the meaning of dance can be seen to reside in the dancer, the spectator, culture and the analyst.

heard in academic texts". Instead the academy's voice of rave is the voice of cultural studies.

The problem with cultural studies is that in the absence of a traditional empirical base³ their speculative insights are often as wrong as they are right. Sometimes these commentaries can be perceptive "Rave dance legitimates pure physical abandon in the company of others without requiring the narrative of sex or romance. The culture is one of childhood, of a pre-sexual, or-oedipal stage⁴". Sometimes they can be guilty of giving passing fads more significance than they warrant, "This idea of insulating the body from 'invasion' is even more apparent in the heavy duty industrial protective clothing worn by both by male and female fans of German Techno music, a European variant of 'Rave'. In both cases the body signifies sociability and self-sufficiency. The communality of the massive rave crowd is balanced by the singularity of the person. Subcultural style is in this instance a metaphor for sexual protection" (McRobbie,1997, 169). Theory can be more obscuring than enlightening, "to understand the different pleasures of the dance floor one needs to move to a different logic of tourism where one comes to hide from the spectre of a former self, to disaccumulate culture and disappear⁵". And when evidence is collated it is flimsy: "In this environment, dancing becomes an exciting new form of work, the sweating body on the dance floor, symbolically replacing the exertion of the factory floor. For example, 'work your body' is often used as a vocal sample in the house tunes⁶".

There have been other approaches at subsuming dance culture into broader categories such as the carnival, play and imaginary hedonism and I will now look

³ None of the commentators I have quoted below have used or even make reference to the sociological methodologies of surveys, questionnaires or interviews.

⁴ McRobbie, A. (1994) *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, London: Routledge, p.168.

⁵ Melechi, A. (1993) 'The ecstasy of Disappearance' in S. Redhead, (ed.) *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth culture*, Aldershot: Avebury, p.32.

⁶ Richard,B. and Kruger,H. (1998) , 'Ravers' Paradise ? German Youth Cultures in the 1990's', p161. Another example in the same article is on p168 when they state "For example, young men are placing more emphasis on the sensual, rather than the physical aspects of their bodies". The evidence: "Plate 10.4" which is a picture of a man dancing in costume on a float. In T. Skelton and G. Valentine (eds.), *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, London: Routledge.

at them in more detail in this order. These approaches, while ultimately too general to be used as sufficient explanations contain insights that must be heeded. Firstly, the argument stemming from the concept of carnival is that ecstatic celebrations are common in western culture. The theoretical idea of carnival originally developed from Bakhtin's literary analysis of Rabelais⁷, has been applied to both metaphysical theory and physical events. It can now be used to refer to both the 'popular physical celebrations characteristic of European folk culture which often degenerated into violence⁸ or it can be a reference to acts of transgression or reversal, common at carnivals and in popular culture as a whole⁹.

In modernity, it is argued that the latter facet has triumphed over the former. The 'iron cage' of bureaucratic rational society has reduced real carnival to an anachronism. Instead it only lives on as a mode of expression still apparent in art and psychoanalysis. Where metaphors of inversion or representations of those on the margins, still hold great power. However it could be argued that it is plausible to see the growth of ecstasy use and the culture surrounding it, as an actual physical manifestation of the old carnival. An example of a fully-fledged carnival with all its' intricacies of transgression.

Carnivals celebrated an inversion of all things normal and were positioned on traditional agricultural or religious holidays. They were marked by a transgressive act of entry, laughter, physicality, and what Nietzsche called the glowing life of dionysian revelry. There are indeed some striking similarities. Big rave events still

⁷ Bakhtin, M. (1984) *Rabelais and His World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. A study that places the inspiration for much of Rabelais work in the carnivalesque low folk-culture and humour of the French Renaissance.

⁸ Many English Social historians stress the importance of carnival in the social and political life of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Events such as May Day, Plough Monday, Twelfth Night and Shrove Tuesday.

⁹ Stallybrass, P. and White, A. (1986) 'From Carnival to Transgression', in K. Gelder and S. Thornton (eds.), *The Subcultures Reader*, London: Routledge, based on what B. Badock calls a symbolic inversion "an act of expressive behaviour which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and political", p.298.

fall on traditional holidays (New Years Eve, Bank Holidays) which mark breaks in the productive year. Drug taking can be seen as the new transgressive act, which guarantees right of entry. This enables a symbolic reversal to occur. Working class people assume the position of being equal to the bourgeoisie, while it allows the middle classes to squander their symbolic capital, to get in touch with their desires something normally denied, the price they pay for material and political power. Clubs are also spaces where this mixture of people is augmented by the glorification of the physical, much gaiety and an obsession, even if it is rarely realised with transgressive acts.

It could also be argued that the history of the rave scene also mirrors the politically ambiguous position of the traditional carnival. Initially Bakhtin argued that carnivals were subversive and often associated with disturbance and rebellion. However as Eagleton has pointed out, far from being seditious they were in fact “a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony”¹⁰ which had the opposite effect. They sustained the political order by allowing a letting off of steam in an acceptable non-threatening arena. More recently carnival has been thought to possess a complex political dimension contingent on attempts by the higher powers to control them. It was this “dialectic of antagonism which turned rituals into resistance” (Stallybrass and White, 1997, 297). The same pattern of debate has been engendered by the use of ecstasy. The major confrontations over its social use have not come with the discovery of novel places to take it, but when the state or the council has decided to prevent an event. This occurred primarily during the passing of the criminal justice bill, and the huge free raves and rioting in London which accompanied it.

The other significant parallel is in relation to carnival’s “uncritical populism”(Stallybrass and White, 299, 1997). They argue that though the carnival is a place of inversion, there is still room to abuse or demonise weaker groups. As Thornton (1995,104,) observes there is the same elitism present in the

¹⁰ Eagleton, T. (1981), *Walter Benjamin: Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, London: Verso, p.148.

supposedly anti-elitist rave celebrations. Although, these days it is not the denouncement of weaker groups, but those who are less cool. However this disparagement is structured along gender lines, with imitative and passive cultures seen to be feminine and girls cultures. Thus even in rebellion an authentic culture is reaffirmed in masculine terms and remains the prerogative of men.

Thus it seems that there are strong similarities between the carnival and rave and I will return to the connections in my last section on ecstasy and mass culture. However though the 'carnival' is a useful heuristic device, its general nature prevents it from being able to cope with the real differences between how various sub-cultural groups behave in clubs and use drugs. Nor does it offer any kind of explanation for Ecstasy's sudden popularity.

The second broad concept often linked to ecstasy and clubbing is play. 'Play' is a multi-faceted theoretical concept, and has been written about as something endemic to the human character¹¹ to civilisation¹² and more recently been enlisted to help explain night clubbing¹³ and gambling¹⁴. In relation to the use of

¹¹ Taylor, D. (ed) (1999) *Talking Cure: Mind and Method of the Tavistock Clinic*. Psychotherapy sees play as an essential part of our development. At an early stage this play takes place in the transitional space. "This notion of a bounded world, a kind of make-believe world, in which all sorts of activities can take place, a world which is spared the usual demands of reality, is one of the absolute fundamentals of human play". London: Duckworth, (p.16).

¹² Huizinga, J. (1949) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, London: Routledge. "Civilisation does not come from play like a baby detaching itself from the womb, it arises in and as play and never leaves it", (p.12).

¹³ The most sustained engagement with the pleasures of ecstasy and clubbing has again been by Malbon, using two concepts both with long intellectual genealogies, the 'oceanic' and 'play'. He argues that these "two notions of 'altered states' characterise, and for some clubbers provide the *raison d'être* of, the clubbing experience" (p.105). The first is explored in the chapter "Moments of Ecstasy-Oceanic and Ecstatic Experiences in Clubbing" and the second, in a chapter titled "Clubbing and Playful Vitality".

In the first chapter he describes the Oceanic experience as "sensations of extraordinary and transitory euphoria, joy and empathy that can be experienced as a result of the intensive sensory stimulation of the dance floor. Notions of freedom and of in-betweenness appear to be vital, yet these are melded with the strong sensations of belonging and identification that I introduced earlier", (p.105).

He correctly argues that these feelings can be felt in other arenas other than a club or without drugs so properly distinguishes between the 'oceanic' and the 'ecstatic'. The ecstatic experience is reserved as a label only to apply to "to those oceanic experiences in which drugs, and particularly in the clubbing

experience the drug ecstasy (MDMA), are used in an attempt to trigger, prolong or intensify the experience" (p.109).

In the second chapter he makes a number of important points about play. Firstly that play is in itself important, "play as potentially refreshing and revitalising, and as performing an important role in (to give but two examples) social and sexual intercourse (p.137). Secondly, he characterises the pleasures to be gained by play in the dance context as the experience of 'flow'. A matching of challenges with skills and techniques which if successful can create a 'flow' experience and if frustrated (too few or too many opportunities for action) can result in the 'experience of boredom and anxiety (p.140). Play experienced clubbing can also have more rewarding consequences if experienced as 'playful vitality'. It is difficult to exactly summarise what he means by 'playful vitality', it is "one conception of the sense of inner resolve, pleasure and resilience and bodily control that can be experienced" (p.161) and the "vitality that is experienced can through dancing takes the form of a sense of individual and communal euphoria, induced through the playful practices that constitute dancing as well as the specific contextual details that make clubbing out as different from say , line dancing..." . He wants to explain the sense of paradoxically individual and communal relief and release articulated by clubbers, which he couldn't do without this lexicography.

I found his analysis both helpful and frustrating in equal measure. The first difference between our approaches is scope. Malbon takes clubbing as his subject while I am looking at only a subset of this, 'clubbing on ecstasy'. I have already argued that I think his approach is too indistinct but it does have some advantages at this juncture. Clearly, people go clubbing without ecstasy even if many of them go and take other drugs. His broader theory of the attractions of clubbing per se, means he can account for their involvement, as well as drug users. I can't as comprehensively as I have only interviewed ecstasy users. I have however spent nine months in a club as part of my ethnography and all of my interviews were with people who had been clubbing before without ecstasy and six were with people who no longer took the drug. Thus I do think that I have collated some information on why people do or do not club without the drugs.

He is correctly stressing the importance of the crowd and the music in the construction of the high or the oceanic experience. He also makes an attempt to explain why these feelings are not always experienced and when they are experienced, why they are seen to be so meaningful. However, I think his labels obscure as much as they reveal.

Firstly my respondents made big distinctions between clubbing before they took ecstasy, clubbing on ecstasy and clubbing after ecstasy. The types of experiences he documents, were only referred to in conjunction with taking ecstasy. Therefore I am arguing that the drug may be the crucial variable for those who have ever taken it as to whether they achieve any kind of "oceanic" experience. I don't doubt that this is partly to do with my methodology (if I had interviewed clubbers who had never taken ecstasy I would have got responses which mirror Malbon's) but I still think ecstasy is of critical importance.

Two further reasons for my argument that the drug ecstasy dominates the kinds of experiences likely to be had at a night-club and produces experiences which are qualitatively different are as follows. Firstly, out of the people who stopped taking ecstasy but carried on clubbing they felt that having had the experience of listening to the music on the drug was important. Secondly, from working in the club and observing the nights with smaller numbers of ecstasy takers, there seemed to be many differences which might change peoples expectations and realisations of the fun to be had. Some of these nights people seemed more concerned about being cool or macho and used the night club as an extension(rather than escape from) their normal world. They were thus preoccupied with status and the opposite sex. On other nights the club resembled a bar and the night was more likely to see good dancing rather than wild dancing and conventional socialising rather than collective.

My other main criticism is, though, he does contrast a good night with the possibility of a bad night he doesn't attach his labels onto any agents of change. Thus it is impossible to ascertain answers with his terms, to these kinds of questions. For example, how long will the oceanic experience be a possibility in

ecstasy, it can be seen as example of certain kind of play as proposed by Caillois¹⁵. Drugs can be seen as a certain form of play, *ilynx*. They involve, “The Pursuit of Vertigo, which consists of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind”(Caillois, 1962, Ch2). However, far more illuminating is the comparison between clubbing on ecstasy and Huizinga’s definition of play¹⁶ or the therapeutic account of play. As the Tavistock’s account makes clear, the best kind of play hovers on the edge between play and delusion. “In this way it can resonate with real life dramas and anxieties, like the best trapeze acts where we truly fear the acrobat will fall”. Yet “play cannot take place unless we are in an environment which is protective and felt to be reasonable safe. However, when these conditions are present, it provides a means of exploring different scenes

clubbing? If playful vitality is important then why do people stop clubbing? This inability to incorporate time is a big problem in relation to an activity which is indulged in by many for only a short part of their life. Without wanting to go into the broader argument about clubbing, I feel my interviews gave me a clear indication to why most people give up taking ecstasy after a short period of time (relative to other drugs, such as marijuana, heroin). Clearly some of these reasons will not be specific to the ecstasy experience, like the interruption of drug markets or a drug related death of a friend but many will. In order to explain this further I feel that I have to set up a typology, which includes all the aspects of the ecstasy experience. Some aspects will include terminology used by Malbon but many will just relate to the drug experience.

¹⁴ Downs, D. et al. (1976), *Gambling, Work and Leisure: A study Across Three Areas*, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul. In this study of numerous variables compared to predilection for gambling, little emerges, except that any child of a parent who gambles is more likely to gamble than someone who is not.

¹⁵ Caillois, R. (1962) *Man, Play, Games*, New York: Free Press of Glencoe. Caillois’ splits play up into four categories, ‘Agon, Alea, Mimicry and *Ilynx*.’ These variations of play are repeated and perverted in every kind of society.

¹⁶ Huizinga characterises play as having the following characteristics;

- a. it is a voluntary activity – it is free
- b. it is not ordinary life/real life. It has its own special sphere of activity
- c. disinterestedness of play, it is external to the immediate immaterial interests or the satisfaction of biological needs. It is an interlude
- d. it contains the faculty of repetition
- e. it is performed within a playground marked off beforehand, either materially or ideally
- f. it creates order, it is order. i.e. it is beautiful, it creates rhythm and harmony
- g. it contains tension, uncertainty, chanciness
- h. All play has rules, the spoilsport is more feared than the cheat
- i. loves to surround itself with an air of secrecy.

Huizinga’s definition of play can be applied as follows. Again like the club itself, clubbing though at first sight a chaotic activity is full of rules, repetition and order. My respondents, often went to the same club night, week in week out, for months on end. More interestingly they also observed routines in the club. They would often sit in a similar place and each person had a role in the group, as for example as a dancer or someone who sat and talked. There was also protocol to observe, if one of them was ill, they were all expected to help or if they had drugs to smoke later, they were meant to be shared. And if the rules were broken a member of the group could be ostracised. They were also deliberately clandestine about their activities, though and this can be seen as a criticism of Huizinga as this could be said of any people whose activities break the law.

and events springing from the imagination within an external life from without". This may included an element of danger especially in young men. As the same author argues quoting the study, "Growing up on two wheels", play involved "being close to the edge, and "where it managed to remain just the right side of the edge, it probably did help them resolve some of their rivalrous and dangerous conflicts with authority."(Taylor, 1999, 26)

As this chapter documents, my main group of respondents eulogised about club culture as providing exactly this kind of environment. On the one hand, going out in groups, the club provided the kind of safe space that really allowed them to experiment and express themselves. On the other hand their drug taking and in particular their mixing of drugs injected an element of danger and risk which made each experience exciting and different. As they progressed with their drug taking the tension between delusion and play continued for all of them but continued with very different consequences. For those who stop, one of the reasons articulated is a recognition that their experiences are no longer playful but deluded and thus become harder to enjoy. However, the heavier drug takers err on the side of delusion and clubbing ceases to be play and instead becomes a genuinely risky life style.

Finally, there is an argument based in consumer theory that sees modern consumption producing new places for consumption¹⁷ (in Ritzer's terms, cathedrals of consumption) rooted in the pleasures of self imaginary hedonism. These new spaces¹⁸ provide a different role for their audiences. "People as spectators are not part of these contemporary spectacles; indeed they are

¹⁷ Which is in itself rare, as S. Miles, points out. "The sociology of consumption has become preoccupied with what amounts to unbalanced, over-generalised uncontextualised discussions of consumption questions and more recently the culture of consumption".p33.

¹⁸ His thesis is very similar to Hannigan, J. (1998) *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Post Modern Metropolis*. London: Routledge. He turns his attention to "fantasy cities" (rather than "cathedrals of consumption") and argues that these leisure complexes are the end product of a long standing cultural contradiction in American society between the middle class desire for experience and their parallel reluctance to take risks, especially those which involve contact with the lower orders in cities. I am not arguing against these hypothesis per se but I am arguing that there are other important trends such as the popularity of clubbing, dancing, drug taking which involve very different narratives.

alienated from them. People watch them because they are alluring, but the spectacles are put on for them, people are not an integral part of them" (Ritzer, 1999, 106). He concludes, "in the main, new means of consumption offer highly sanitised environments in which to purchase goods and services" (Ritzer, 1999, 185).

The dominant explanation for why we consume these disparate leisure pursuits, is at different times called fantasy, day dreaming or self-illusionary hedonism. This idea originates from Colin Campbell¹⁹ who states that "The central insight required is the realisation that individuals do not so much seek satisfaction from products as pleasures from the self illusionary experiences which they construct from their associated meanings. The essential activity of consumption is thus not the actual selection purchase or use of products but the imaginative pleasure seeking to which the product image lends itself" (Campbell, 1987, 88). "Their basic motivation is the desire to experience in reality the pleasurable drama which they have already enjoyed in imagination and each new product is seen as offering a possibility to realise this ambition." (Campbell, 1987, 90). He also provides a genealogy for this concept, in Romanticism, and its popularity at the end of eighteenth century and the beginning of 19th century England²⁰. "The

¹⁹ Campbell, C. (1987) *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Consumerism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

²⁰ This question can be looked at historically by subdividing it to consider whether England was the first country to industrialise and was also the first to produce a consumer ethic. The whole idea of a consumer ethic is inspired by the recognition of the paradox, that it was Protestant asceticism, which may have inspired English capitalism. Weber, M. (1992) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge, is being uncontroversial in saying "The Spirit of modern capitalism is to describe the attitude which seeks profit rationally and systematically", p.64

More contentious, is the idea that some of the success of the elect's capitalist enterprise was due to their devotion to labour, "as every hour lost is to lost labour for the glory of god" (p157) and their "strict avoidance of all things spontaneous, enjoyment in life is above all, completely devoid of any eudamonic, not to say hedonistic admixture" (p.53) This may have provided an inspiration for capitalism (combined with the structural changes of the time, condensed to six causes in Giddens' excellent introduction) but the laws of economics would eventually demand a change for success to continue, in the form of increased demand. Campbell's response is to posit 'The Other Protestant Ethic' as a 'Romantic Ethic'. The historical problem I can identify with Campbell's proposition is that Romanticism was always stronger on the continent and secondly, it contained very strong anti-consumer elements. For example, the love of the simple, the reveries for the countryside and its dramatic landscapes (for example, the work of the key Romantics: Rousseau, Goethe, Blake).

Daniel Bell's response is to take Weber at face value and be alarmed at rising demand and hedonism and to see it as a contradiction, foretelling collapse. This polemic, within which, one can include much

romantic ideal of character, together with its associated theory of renewal through art, functioned to stimulate and legitimate that autonomous self-illusionary hedonism, which underlies modern consumer behaviour. At the same time romantic ideas concerning the role of the function of the artist served to ensure that a continuous supply of novel and stimulating cultural products would be forthcoming via Bohemia, the limits of taste would be repeatedly tested and overthrown. The romantic world view provided the highest possible motive which to justify day-dreaming, longing and the rejection of reality together with the pursuit of originality in life and art; and by so doing, enabled pleasure to be ranked above comfort counteracting both traditionalistic and utilitarian restraints on desire" (Campbell, 1987, 200/1).

This emphasis on the imaginary has had several deleterious consequences. Firstly, it has been incorporated into the post-modern canon and used in the argument that we no longer distinguish between the real and the fake. To take one example from John Urry²¹ on our relationship to holidays. "What people gaze upon are ideal representations of the view in question that they internalise from postcards and guidebooks and increasingly from television even when they can not see the natural wonder, they can still sense it and even when it fails to live up to expectation it is the representation which stays with them". Secondly, with the stress on what people imagine rather than articulate or do, it discourages empirical work. This helps to explain why none of the authors I have taken quotations from did any empirical work in support of their hypotheses. Thirdly,

written on the "decline of western civilisation" has a crucial flaw as it sees hedonism as contrary to productivity. In fact as my interviewees amply demonstrate most people are able to combine the two; either because their personality is sophisticated enough to contain very different roles (perhaps in Jameson's words the schizophrenia of the consumer) or because their hedonism is release, as the Frankfurt school proposed, of sublimated aggression built up at work.

Finally, and most recently there is the twofold defence of the Protestant ethic by Landes, D. (1999) *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some are so Rich and Some are so Poor*, London: Abacus, p.177. He defends it empirically, "where records show that Protestant merchants and manufacturers played a leading role in trade, banking and industry" and theoretically, "the heart of the matter lay indeed in the making of a new kind of man-rational, ordered diligent, productive". His argument is that the drive to produce cannot be separated from the desire to consume as he observes of the English revolution and later on the great growth of the American economy between 1870 and 1913, "it was the synergy that made America so productive. Mass consumption made mass production feasible and profitable; and vice versa".

²¹ Urry, J. (1990) *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London: Sage, p.86.

the most spectacular but also often the most untypical modern events are used for analysis²². And fourthly, more surprisingly considering the post-modern controversy over the 'subject'²³, the subjective view of the academic is assumed to be a shared norm. Thus Ritzer can blithely assert that "furthermore so much around is unreal that we have grown far more uncomfortable with the unreal than the real". A tropical island owned by a cruise line and staffed by its employees seems more attractive than a real tropical island and its native inhabitants and their indigenous foods and products." (Ritzer, 1999, 180).

Clearly the popularity of ecstasy use does not fit into any of these new leisure venue trends. A 'night-club' is neither a "highly sanitised environment" nor one where people are anything other than "an integral" part of the event. Indeed, most of my respondents were both very attracted to the pleasures of being in a friendly crowd and enjoyed the risks of being somewhere less salubrious than normal. They and the door staff were not under any illusion that what they were partaking in was a fantasy nor did they want it to be. As I will describe later most went to great pains to make that particular night special and hopefully full of unreconstructed authentic experience.

However, to just take this one unorthodox example²⁴ and argue from it, that all their theorising is misguided, is equally fallacious. Instead, I am making two broad points, firstly that there seem to be contradictory developments in the evolution of modern leisure and their examples only present one aspect. And secondly, and this can also be directed at the theory presented in the following

²² The most often quoted example are the killings that have occurred after confessional talk shows in America. Instead of being seen as horrific but rare anomalies, that are very extreme versions of a broader, more mundane process that the media influences our behaviour, they are seen as something far more significant. They are seen as another example of the process of implosion (Baudrillard), for example "contemporary television talk shows are dissolving into life and life is dissolving into talk shows" (Ritzer, 1999, 133).

²³ As I argue at greater length in my ethnography I do not agree with Said et El that only an insider can talk authoritatively about their culture. However the assumption that class, ethnicity, education or gender can be ignored is equally absurd.

²⁴ Though I do think there are a number of obvious examples which run contrary to the idea that the "new means of consumption offer highly sanitised environments". See in this country the recent explosion of lap dancing clubs, licensed premises and the possible expansion of casinos. .

paragraph, that by not asking people about their own experiences, they are neglecting a central insight gleaned from the more perspicacious media studies academics that “the speed of technological change or commodity change is not the same as the speed of social or cultural change²⁵”.

My criticisms of “self-illusionary hedonism” are less pronounced, as my interview chapter will show, an element of fantasy and imagination is an integral part of the ecstasy experience. Yet this is offset by, the equally important but more mundane desire to get a decent physical high from the drug. The search for ‘good ‘ drugs, safe clubs, and close friends to go out with are of paramount importance for my respondents. These pragmatic concerns are the “essential drive for consumption” and failure to establish them can stop them clubbing or taking drugs.

The most recent book on ‘clubbing’ (Malban,1999) is a worthy attempt at restoring the balance as he places the voices of his eighteen respondents at its centre²⁶. Theoretically very strong, I feel that he has already covered much of the

²⁵ Silverstone, R. (1999) *Why Study the Media ?* London: Routledge, p.5.

²⁶ In writing my conclusion, Measham, F. Aldridge, J. and Parker, H. (2001) *Dancing on Drugs: Risk, Health and Hedonism in the British Club Scene*. London: Free Association came out based on a mixed methodology incorporating both questionnaires and interviews. This is a very thorough and interesting study and their observations and mine concerning the way ecstasy is used are very similar. My evidence concurs with theirs on a number of points. For example, on the importance of a friendly warm environment to go out in. “A new ambience in the generated social space of club-land, with a lack of obligation and expectation on both sides of the gender divide” (p.40)

The point is that different drug use is contingent on which club they attended. “Customers attending techno clubs reported more widespread use of a wider range of illicit drugs than at the garage clubs, with higher rates of self-reported consumption/planned consumption, of cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamine, LSD and ketamine on the fieldwork night”. (p.43) . They also observed the advantages of mutual societies for the purchasing of drugs:

1: The obvious financial advantages of buying in bulk.

2: The greater security, fewer contacts, less chance of getting bad drugs.

3 : The shared wisdom on drugs.

4: Saving time searching for dealers.

5: The sociability and camaraderie of group purchases and consumption (p.153).

Also the relative safety they felt in the club environment: “People felt far more safe in clubs as there was less alcohol and alcohol related violence, (p.160).

However methodologically I think there are concerns with their technique of actually doing their questionnaires in the club, as people are already committed to their leisure activity. They are more likely to be positive about their drug taking and the club environment if asked about either when they have just paid to enter a club and are just about to or have just taken a drug. I would be especially cautious about

ground I was hoping to be first to. However I feel that the book has a major weakness which is a failure to ground his respondents in anything more specific than mainstream London “dance clubs”²⁷. This has a number of negative consequences. Firstly, this nebulous context obscures the fundamental distinction between clubbing on ecstasy and clubbing without it. All of my respondents stressed this distinction and many went further, saying that they wouldn’t or couldn’t go clubbing without the drug. Taking ecstasy not only shaped their perception of what they wanted from the club in terms of music, atmosphere and people but it also structured all their activity through the night. It determined where they would physically be before, after and in the club.

Secondly, despite the diversity of his sample, it is not clear ‘where they are’, when they are quoted²⁸. Thus my other methodological criticism is aimed at how reliable the comments attributed to them actually are, as they come from people who volunteered through dance magazines to be interviewed. Most of my respondents went clubbing most of the time within a group and I would argue that some parts of the clubbing experience can only be understood with reference to this group. In fact, I doubt Malbon would disagree with this and he has written a good chapter called “Getting into it, feeling part of it” about ‘belongings and distinctions’. However only two of his interviewees, Valerie and Kim, actually went out together. The problem with only having one voice speaking on behalf of others is that an erroneous impression of the group’s behaviour may be formed for number of reasons. The individual may be untypical in terms of class; they may be keen to glorify their role, they may be the least reflective or articulate.

someone’s testimony when they had actually taken ecstasy and I am far from confident that those who are on drugs can be weaned out from the interview processes in the club as they purported to do.

²⁷ This problem of suspect methodologies and vague classifications is also present in the other theoretically strong book about clubbing (Thornton, 1995). Her “ethnographic research” meant she effectively ‘went clubbing’ as a ‘participant observer’. This lasted four years (a long time in youth culture) and was not specific to one city, sexuality, or one musical style. (p.106-108)

²⁸ What I mean by ‘where they are’ is, ‘what kind of club are they in?’, What music are they listening to?, Are they on drugs or not? and in which case which drugs and how much? Indeed how long have they been doing this for? One of the central reasons for different views of the ecstasy clubbing experience is the length of time someone has been doing it for. Hopefully my ethnography also illustrated these types of questions as vital in understanding the ecstasy experience.

These sorts of risks are exacerbated by the fact that all his subjects put themselves forward to be interviewed and as I learnt in my ethnography, a desire to talk means the veracity of a conversation should immediately be viewed sceptically²⁹.

My own new material consists of an analysis of twenty two ecstasy users³⁰ with whom I conducted interviews using the same semi-structured interview questionnaire. Despite the smallness of my sample, given its relative uniformity and its unusual disposition I hope that it will prove useful. If the voices of ecstasy users have been neglected generally, I would also argue that “another area which research on youth has neglected is that of privileged youth cultures. While working class youth sub-cultures have been extensively documented, privileged youth from elite social classes have not been the focus of academic research³¹”. The twenty interviews I will discuss in this section are uniformly from a middle class sample. With the exception of those based abroad³² I interviewed them in London³³. Out of the twenty, sixteen were men and eighteen were white³⁴. The

²⁹ He also includes a chapter on Ecstasy called “Moments of Ecstasy” which is theoretically very interesting. However there are what I consider to be some empirical inaccuracies, which I will refer directly to, in the relevant sections of my interview data.

³⁰ I will mainly refer to the twenty who were part of my four groups, the other two interviews were examples of the problem I had, as described below. Though I feel the sample could have been bigger, I found that it was very easy to get an interview with an individual who was currently using ecstasy but much harder to guarantee that I could also get interviews with the rest of the people they were using ecstasy with.

³¹ Valentine, G, Skelton, T and Chambers, D. (1998) ‘Cool Places: an Introduction to Youth and Youth Cultures’, in Skelton, T and Valentine, V. (eds.) *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, London: Routledge, p24.

³² I have included a group of four who were currently living abroad for a number of reasons. Firstly, ecstasy is increasingly a global phenomena and is now popular in Europe, America, Thailand, Goa, Eastern Europe, Russia and Ibiza. Secondly I wanted to see if a very different local drug market and scene influenced my subject’s attitudes and behaviour.

³³ *ISDD UK Trends and Updates 2000* “Highest prevalence rates for this group (under 30’s) are found in the South East and in London. Although waning, London still has the highest rates for drug use in England and Wales”, p5.

³⁴ McDonald, Z. (1999), ‘ Illicit Drug Use in the UK: Evidence from the British Crime Survey’, p592. “If anything our results suggest that being black or Asian origin has a significant negative association with past drug use, as does age and religious practice. This is despite the fact that ethnic minorities are over represented in areas of high social deprivation”. *British Journal of Criminology* 39 (4), pp585-608. Also according to *Social Trends 29*: “In the general population approximately three men to two women have ever used drugs.” (p. 18). In the context of American research, studies of white synthetic drug users are rare. As Jenkins, P. (1999) *Synthetic Panics: The Symbolic Politics of Designer Drugs*, New York and London: New York University Press, argues, I think correctly, “the fact that synthetics tend to be consumed by whites has always shaped public perceptions of these substances. For one thing, we know a

ages of those based in this country were between eighteen and twenty three³⁵. Thus statistically this sample was drawn from groups of people who are the most likely to try illegal drugs, especially dance drugs.

My other considerations in choosing this sample were both pragmatic and theoretical. As the quotation above illustrates there is a dearth of empirical research into privileged youth cultures³⁶ an omission that is exacerbated by the fact that the British Crime survey consistently shows that the middle classes use more illegal drugs than any other group except the very poorest³⁷. I also feel they provide an important contrast to the working class basis of my ethnographic work. This is not to say that there always is a clear division of labour between middle class ecstasy consumers and clubs staffed by working class dealers and labourers (though this is often the case). Instead, in relation to my thesis, it provides a dramatic contrast which hopefully demonstrates the broader point, that ecstasy culture encapsulates a huge range of people.

lot less about the usage patterns for synthetics than we do about "minority" drugs such as heroin and cocaine, because most of the existing official measures are heavily weighted towards detecting problems in metropolitan areas rather than in suburban or rural areas or even in middling cities." (p15).

³⁵ ISDD UK Trends and Updates 2000, p 2, "The BCS prevalence figures for the general population disguise the more marked rates of use among the under 30s, whose drug use prevalence tends to outstrip the older generation by at least 2:1 (49 per cent of 16 to 29 year olds for example have ever tried a drug compared to 25 per cent of 30 to 59 year olds). Out of my sample only three of the group interviewed out of the country were older, between thirty and thirty three.

³⁶ Though it has to be said there is very little research done on working class ecstasy users either, with Gilman. M, (1994), 'Football and Drugs: Two Cultures Clash'. being the one exception known to me. In this article he presents an ethnographic snapshot of football fans recently converted to the ecstasy experience and documents the pacifying effect the drug had on these normally aggressive individuals. *The International Journal of Drug Policy* 5 (1), pp40-48. This lack of work may account for the recent, alarmingly misinformed comment. "In working class areas, in particular we suspect there would be a tendency for all drug use to be apprehended as being on a par with that of heroin or cocaine." in the otherwise excellent Taylor, I., Evana, K and Fraser, P. (1996) *A Tale of Two Cities: Global Change, Local Feeling and Everyday Life in the North Of England: A Study of Manchester and Sheffield*, London: Routledge, (p.351).

³⁷ "Classification of BCS data by housing areas confirms that a higher proportion of 'affluent urbanites, prosperous professionals in metropolitan areas and better off executives in inner city areas have taken drugs than anyone else. Moreover, the wealthy have the next highest usage among 16 to 29 year olds, but crucially their drug use tails off with age". Though there are two provisos. Firstly, that the poorest group who have relatively high levels of usage continues through to their thirties and that household or school based population surveys miss out "completely the levels of drug use among marginalised groups such as those excluded from school, the homeless and those living in care of some sort." Quoted from *Social Trends* 29, p. 18.

From a more pragmatic point of view, as I started my interviews I quickly realised that my earlier project was over ambitious. Initially, I had wanted to interview different groups from a variety of ethnic and class backgrounds. As I worked in the club, I soon realised that the music followed was also a determinate factor. Thus people from the same background would use different drugs differently contingent on whether they liked 'garage' or 'house' music. Even more importantly when I had recorded a few interviews I realised that it was crucial to consider, how long the individual has been using the drug and what quantity they had been using it. Clearly a young group of recent users will have a different view to an older heavier user. I was also interested in those users who had given up the drug and their reasons for doing so.

To get some sense of all these influences and yet maintain a sense of cohesion so that some legitimate conclusions can be drawn, I felt it was essential to reduce the diversity of my sample. Placing a restriction on class was the quickest way to do this. The middle class groups I had approached were the most accessible and the most understanding about the nature of research of this kind. Some of the members of all the groups I interviewed had 'raved' at the club I worked at, so were in some respects typical of our punters. As well as sharing a class background, most shared their musical tastes for house, trance and techno³⁸. Where they differed substantially was in their use of ecstasy.

The first group, were a group of light users (they had taken between five and one hundred pills) and had just started taking the drug when I interviewed them and in the subsequent year continued to use the drug at least once a month. A year later, by the time of the second interview, three members of the group had stopped using ecstasy, two were using it more infrequently and one had maintained his use. I have placed the young group of six at the core of the chapter as I had the most access to them. They came to the club most often and

³⁸ Though two in the university group now favoured drum and bass.

I felt I managed to interview all the key members of the group³⁹. I was also able to do a longitudinal interview with five out of the six.⁴⁰

This group was the most homogenous group I interviewed. They consisted of two groups of school friends and another friend who lived near by one of them. They were all eighteen when interviewed and doing their A-levels with the exception of the last person who had already left school. Their experience with ecstasy was relatively recent and none had been doing it for more than a year. More recently, two months before the interview, they had all started clubbing together at two venues, which had cemented the friendships between the different members of the group. They didn't always go out together and during the course of the year of my writing up, and their years off, various members of the group left to go travelling. However during that time, whoever remained kept going, clubbing to one venue in particular. At the time of the second interview two boys were still taking ecstasy in similar quantities at the same venues but three boys had stopped and one who I did not interview had increased his drug consumption. He was taking very large quantities of both ecstasy and acid and as he got more involved in the scene he became more involved with the people who ran the club night, they followed. He then became the main contact for drugs for the rest of the group and his connections to the club owners meant that the prices of their ecstasy came down.

Except for him they all broadly shared similar patterns of drug use: all had taken ecstasy between two and four days in the last month and all had taken between five and twenty pills ever, with the exception of the school leaver who had taken over a hundred. All had used cocaine except one, two had tried crack once but

³⁹ This is an important point. During the course of my research some more people joined the group and as university approached it looked like some might leave. With this group I feel that my account is comprehensive with the others I am less certain.

⁴⁰ The sixth member who took the most drugs seemed reticent to be re-interviewed and by this time his testimony was seen to be very unreliable by the other members of the group. Despite this, I still feel that this was a significant loss to me.

none had tried heroin. The only other drug tried by at least four of them⁴¹ was amphetamine but none had used it in the last month and the most used had been four grams. In contrast, their consumption of cannabis was consistent and longstanding. Four had been smoking from age thirteen and all of them had been smoking regularly at sixteen. Only one had used it six times in the last month, the rest had all smoked it between twenty and thirty days in the last month. All but one claimed to have smoked over a thousand times, an admission of an almost daily habit.

Their style was anti-style which I think traces its inspiration from America; skate shoes, baggy pants and ethnic jewellery. Though these clothes should not be described as designer wear, some of them are branded and the group had a preference for clothes which projected their alternative/independent image. Though individuals within the group listened to different music at home, they all liked to hear the same music in the same clubs. Their shared rituals were largely rituals of drug consumption. They would congregate at one of their friends houses to smoke before the club, then go down to the club to take their pills at a routine time and then return to one of their friends' houses the next day to smoke and come down. In the club, when they arrived they would find a corner which they would designate their own. During the night they would go off to dance but periodically return to the corner of the club where they knew their friends might be, and this is where the intimate conversations integral to the ecstasy experience took place.

They also used the most slang to describe their clubbing experience. This includes the noun "koch" which was also used as a verb, as in to "koch" out. The koch was the name for the designated area of the club where they would meet up during the night. This is where they would talk, 'chill out', smoke 'weed', share water and conversation. At other times in a non-clubbing environment the word was used as an equivalent to 'chill out' and was often shorthand for going

⁴¹ Only two had tried LSD and had only used it a couple of times.

somewhere relaxing and getting stoned. Perhaps due to the frequency of the latter activity they also had their own term for joints, 'zoots'. A typical sentence might be, "I am going to roll a couple of 'zoots' and 'Koch' out". They also had their own term for buying drugs, which was to 'link up' which stands alongside the ubiquitous "score". Their other jargon was universal to the ecstasy takers I interviewed, 'Pills' are synonymous with ecstasy. The ecstasy experience is divided into the much anticipated 'coming up' and the much dreaded 'coming down'. The after effects of taking ecstasy are referred to universally as the 'come down'.

The other interviews really only frame these six. I interviewed six members of Group Two, most of whom had stopped using ecstasy and some of whom had cut down, but who had previously been regular users (from one hundred and fifty up to seven hundred pills⁴²). They were either at the end of university courses in London or just starting work after university when interviewed. Their ceased or dramatically reduced ecstasy consumption proved useful in providing a wider understanding of how and why some of the boys in the first group had also stopped. Group Three, the smaller group of students, provides a point of comparison to when they first started, as some of them were from a very similar background and part of London to the first group. At the moment they were at University⁴³ outside London. Their ecstasy use was more mixed and contained some very light users who were in the process of stopping and some regular users (from two to two hundred pills). Group Four was based abroad, and consisted of two British men and two women from North America. These interviews were fruitful as they contained the heaviest ecstasy users and helped illustrate what might happen if some of the first group continue or resume. In this

⁴² In Mixmag's "Biggest ever survey of drug use among British clubbers" (1,151 readers) they calculate that the average number of times ecstasy has been taken by their respondents was 161. However, the average number of pills taken per session was calculated at 2.82 which means that on average each person had taken 454 pills ever. Thus on average my sample is substantially below this though it does include individuals who have taken more than this. However I would suspect that the people who write to Mixmag may be at the higher end of the national spectrum. *Mixmag* (2000) 'Drug Survey', (p.62-79).

⁴³ I felt it was important to interview people at university as McDonald (1999, 596) reports "The regression results indicate a positive association of past drug use with higher education".

group, there were some very heavy users who had been taking ecstasy for many years combined with some new light users (from twenty to two thousand pills).

On the whole my respondents are well educated and articulate and thus able and willing to both understand the questions being asked of them and capable of the type of introspection which makes this research methodology rewarding⁴⁴. Subsequently, I am hopeful that their insights into their experiences with the drug will allow me to make wider generalisations about ecstasy use. I am also hopeful that their understanding of their own sub-cultures and their place in the wider youth cultures will be of more than limited interest⁴⁵. In the next chapter I explore these questions in greater detail.

⁴⁴Laski, M. (1980) *Everyday Ecstasy*, London: Thames & Hudson. Laski quotes Sir James Crichton-Browne approvingly, to the effect that the capacity to respond to ecstatic experiences was “determined by capacities which he equated with intelligence; and intelligence with class”: Firstly, I would totally repudiate both his anachronistic and her patrician association of intelligence with class. Secondly, I would want to replace the term ‘intelligence’ with introspection and lucidity. However with these provisos I think the point that different people will experience and express the same physiological experience very differently is an important one. An example of the point I am making is again from Crichton-Browne quoted from Laski. “On inhaling nitrous oxide to persons of average mental calibre they are pleasing and stimulating but in no way remarkable; but in persona of superior mental power they become thrilling and apocalyptic. A working man who inhales the gas intimates on his recovery that he felt very happy, just as if he had a little too much beer, and a philosopher announces that the secret of the universe has been, for one rapt moment, made plain to him”. (p. 142).

⁴⁵ Even so, in implementing my interviews with a number of very different Ecstasy users, I always felt that this part of my research was primarily about asking questions rather than answering them. In having such a small, yet diverse sample it is implausible to make universal statistical claims on their behalf.

5. The Interviews

Group Dynamic

Each group had its own dynamic yet every group shared certain structural similarities. Ecstasy use was a key ingredient in cementing friendships and was something that members of the group felt they experienced together. Their subsequent nights out were full of incident and adventure, which provided rich material for the maintenance of friendships. Individuals also tended to contrast their drug behaviour to others in the group, whether they took more or less drugs than others in the group¹ or had the best contacts with drug dealers². If friends moved away or dropped out from drug taking, this was then cited as a reason for the cessation of their own drug taking³. There was also a common evolution of drug experience, where one member of the group would try a drug and the rest would follow. This kind of imitative behaviour also happened in reverse⁴.

Unexpectedly, I found interviewees were more likely to under report their drug use rather than exaggerate it. The heaviest drug users were visibly embarrassed or ashamed to admit *to me*⁵, the amount of drugs they had taken during their

¹ "No there was always certain people who did more. It tended to be me, it tended to be the boys, obviously the girls didn't tend to do excessive amounts, the boys used to, it almost got to a pride kind of thing, it's sad really, but you want to do as much as your mate if not more".

² There was internecine competition especially in the group based abroad, over who was selling drugs to whom and who was further up the drug chain.

³ "Oddly enough me and my friends grew out of it together, which was kind of cool, otherwise it might have caused problems".

⁴ For example, my core group discovered LSD in the interim period between interviews and all of them had had some speculative experiences with the drug in time for the second interview.

⁵ In this footnote I am really reiterating Ken Plummer's point about the making of stories. "Likewise, in the great parade of sexual survey research, how far does the coaxing role of the interviewer have a part to play, even to the extent that many are more like researchers' stories than the subjects?", (p.29). Plummer, K. (1995) *Telling Sexual Stories: Power Change and Social Worlds*, London: Routledge. I stress '*to me*' as I do think that from my limited experience, interview subjects are very inquisitive and perceptive concerning an interviewers' attitudes and experiences. Peoples' sentient abilities mean that in an interview they can learn about you as you learn about themselves. As part of a standard interview technique I avoided making moral judgements and I tried to dissimulate about my actual experiences, but I found that a respondents

lifetime. This problem was compounded when I broached the adverse effects of their drug use. Talking generally about one's drug use to somebody who is sympathetic, is I think quite different to admitting the problems that drug use has caused you. This is especially the case when discussing the detrimental psychological effects of ecstasy use. Physical symptoms may seem more extreme, such as black-outs or weight loss, but I would also argue they are easier to acknowledge. This is often because they can be directly linked with the drugs used. The mutual understanding is, with the cessation of use, the physical symptoms will dissipate. To admit psychological problems is a potentially more damaging acknowledgement as the chain of causation is less clear. If someone is still taking drugs, they may be unwilling, for example to admit to depression as they may be confused as to whether this is a cause or a consequence of their drug use. Instead of conceding this mental problem, they may prefer to say nothing. This silence protects their perceived weakness or perceived culpability.

In fact, the depression and the drug use may be mutually inseparable, totally unrelated or the individual may not possess the degree of self-insight to attach the two. They may only experience themselves as depressed and may be unwilling to share such personal information with the interviewer. Thus on a number of occasions with heavy ecstasy users I felt that they were hinting that they suffered psychological problems but they were unwilling to be very specific about them, especially if they were still taking the drug.

The same kind of observation is relevant to the more positive affirmations given about the freedom felt at 'raves' or even the way ecstasy was used to explore the self. Again, it is relatively straightforward for an interviewee to admit to this but much harder for them to admit to what might attract them to this 'free' environment or to reveal the tensions in themselves that they wanted to explore.

counter question could immediately eviscerate my position of neutrality. For example, many of my respondents had answers, which demanded collusion or a denial, *like you know what its like when you combine GHB and Ecstasy don't you?* Thus I think, if I had been or was currently a heavy drug user their embarrassment would have been non-existent.

For example, it seemed, though no-one explicitly stated it, that some of the male interviewees were involved in the scene because they found in it an experience which provided a space for them to enjoy intimate time with their friends without the tension of constantly having to sexually compete. Indeed it is logical to posit that these feelings exist, as interviews with women 'ravers' have always stressed the lack of a predatory males as an attraction of the scene⁶. They could enjoy this type of socialising with their friends and the opposite sex without having to publicly attempt to either seduce women or act as if they were interested in doing so. For some of the young men I interviewed, I had the impression this was a tremendous relief, especially for those who were unsure about either their own sexuality or how to approach the opposite sex.

In conclusion I feel the most important thing I learned from my interviews is to be cautious. Talking to people in depth at different points of time and observing them in between makes one very cautious of snapshot methodologies and their resulting judgements about ecstasy users. Social practices are ordered across space and time or to put it historically, as time passes, perspective changes. The recent experience is often the most intense in the mind and thus drug users who have just started taking ecstasy or just stopped taking ecstasy have the most laudatory or disparaging view of the drug. Subsequently I expected that my group who had stopped taking ecstasy for over a year would hold less acerbic opinions of ecstasy use than those who had recently stopped. This was indeed the case and the former group summarised their experiences in much more neutral language, "*a phase*", *something they had 'grown out of'* or "*something they were glad to have done*" than the latter⁷.

⁶ See, Pini, M. (1997) 'Cyborgs, Nomads and the Raving Feminine' in Thomas, H. (ed.) *Dance in the City*, London: Macmillan, (p.159)., or McRobbie, A. (1994) *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, London: Routledge.

⁷ This statement from someone who had stopped for over a year is typically ambiguous "*looking back at them now as a person who doesn't take them anymore, I am just dogged by the whole falseness issue, but I don't really care about it because I had a really good time.*"

Methodological Problems

My view of the drug experience is similar to that expressed by Jock Young, "In short, the drug experience can only be understood in terms of an ongoing dialectic between the subjective mood of the individual and the objective⁸ psychotropic effects of the drug."⁹ The problem with the application of this logic to ecstasy users is the confusion that exists over both what constitutes "subjective mood" and "objective psychotropic effects". In the first part of this section I want to inject some caution into the theory that believes that what happens in someone's mind can be known by asking them to explain their behaviour once. In the second part, I simply want to point out that the effects of ecstasy are far from clear.

During the time I worked in the club I was in regular contact with ecstasy users and I often made attempts to explain my research to them and to see if they would be interviewed. This was a frustrating process as though many people promised to help, due to the illegal and clandestine nature of the subject matter, when it came to actually being interviewed they backed out. Sometimes this was due to the general malaise of apathy but other times I felt it was more to do with paranoia, the curse of many heavy drug users. However, when I did succeed, I tried to spend time with the group¹⁰ and with most of the groups, the member who introduced me to the others was someone I came to know quite well. The

⁸ "I agree with this dialectical model, though I am not sure that "objective effects" is ever an adequate phrase to describe drugs that have unknown effects on the human mind. There can not be any objective condition for drug taking; as the manufactured environment of the science lab is as contrived as the dance floor, as an 'objective' place to take ecstasy. Though I assume he means the effects of the drug on an individual in a laboratory setting. The importance, to use Zinberg's terms, (Zinberg, N. (1984), *Drug, Set and Setting: The Basis for Controlled Intoxicant Use*, New Haven: Yale University Press) of set and setting on the effects of ecstasy are enormous, as all the journalistic accounts of the drug reveal. For example when ecstasy first emerged on the West Coast of America it was called 'Empathy' and its effects and description was geared to its use in the home or in therapy for loving sessions of deep empathy. This way of using the drug and its name has been superseded by the word 'Ecstasy' and the more vigorous dance culture it might imply. For a discussion of the use of Ecstasy in Psychotherapy see Chapter Four of the Cohen, R. (1998) *The Love Drug: Marching to the Beat of Ecstasy*, New York: The Haworth Medical Press.

⁹ Young, J. (1971) *The Drugtakers: The Social Meaning of Drug Use*, London: Paladin., p.37.

¹⁰ Sometimes I actually went out with them, sometimes they went to the club I was working at.

advantage of snowballing is that with each interview, a weight of moral expectation is increased so that someone who is initially perhaps unwilling, may eventually feel obliged to accede. Though this may seem unethical it is in my view far preferable to advertising for volunteers with or without the incentive of pecuniary remuneration. My experiences made me sceptical of not only how representative but also how reliable my most vociferous respondents were.

Clearly this situation was far from ideal but I do think that by also being around my respondents in an informal capacity either at night-clubs or in other social settings, I gained further insight into the groups' use of ecstasy which supplements the material from the interviews. Indeed as many have found before me, the best stories or the most alarming admissions came after the tape recorder was switched off. This gradual intimacy with members of my groups, contrary to my experience with my ethnography, was not entirely beneficial. I found that the most revealing interviews were neither done with people I knew well or knew not at all. In the first example, I felt that the interviewee became embarrassed at disclosing feelings or experiences, which might unbalance a friendship expected to last beyond the duration of the research. With complete strangers, where I did not have a credible person to introduce me, I struggled to get any interviews done at all. I have also stayed in touch with each group over the subsequent year since the interviews were completed. Thus though I haven't been able to complete a formal longitudinal study on the other three groups, I know whether for example, those who stopped taking ecstasy have resumed or whether a current user now takes substantially more.

When an individual agreed to be interviewed, I conducted the interview in expectation that at least some of their friends they went out with would also be interview subjects. The reasons for my preference for groups of subjects, rather than isolated individuals are as follows. Firstly, from my work in the club and my more general experience I knew that ecstasy was a social drug rarely taken alone. I also knew that when people took it in clubs or at home they often did so

as a collective, even if this varied in size from a couple, to ten or fifteen friends. Secondly, I was hopeful that by listening to a variety of accounts about exactly the same night out or the exactly same batch of pills that the overall composite account to emerge would be credible and robust.

In another attempt to reduce the space for outright deception I combined the structured interview with a table for self-reported drug use (see appendix). This enabled me to cross-reference subjective statements, such as “I take loads” or “I have been taking drugs for as long as I can remember” with an unambiguous statistical record. However it was perfectly possible for the subject to be duplicitous on both counts and this is where I looked to other members of the group to confirm their accounts.

Though the information from each interview was private, during the course of interviews within a group an interviewee often referred to a friends’ drug consumption in relation to their own. Thus for example, it might emerge that interviewee number one might admit to having taken ketamine with someone, who had previously denied taking it to me. If interviews with ‘groups’ of ecstasy users helped increase reliability it also provided interesting information on the nature and meaning of ecstasy use.

To return to the second part of the dialectic, the pharmacological effects of the drug, there are also a number of complexities, which must be considered. The first problem is that different ecstasy tablets contain different quantities of MDMA (an average active dose is around 100mg though some effects should be felt at around 50mg¹¹) and many contain different chemicals altogether¹². Again, this is

¹¹ The results from ecstasy tests, which are published on the Internet, have revealed a wide disparity in the amount of MDMA contained in any given pill. For example, test results in April and May 1995 showed a variation between a high of 130 mg of MDMA to a low of 65mg of MDMA. Source: <http://www.ecstasy.org/testing/pillsDec95.html> , accessed, 18/11/99.

¹² An example of the discrepancies to be found can be seen in the tests N. Saunders had been doing and posting on the internet. In 1998 (admittedly a very bad year for pill quality) nearly three quarters of the pills tested only contained speed caffeine, amphetamine and methamphetamine. <http://www.ecstasy.org/testing/analysis.html>, accessed, 13/11/99.

difficult to measure accurately as ecstasy testing remains illegal in this country. The common drugs which are sold as ecstasy (MDMA) are MDA which lasts twice as long and has rather a more amphetamine-like effect. MDEA lasts a rather shorter time which is nearer to MDMA in effect but still lacks its communicative qualities. In the year of my interviews it was widely felt that the quality of ecstasy had increased dramatically and the ubiquitous Mitsubishi¹³ was responsible for a reawakened interest in the drug. Secondly, people take widely different quantities of the drug at any one time. In my sample this ranged from half a tablet to seven. Thirdly, individuals frequently mix the drug with other drugs. All my respondents smoked cannabis, either before, during or after taking ecstasy. Other research has shown that ecstasy is most commonly mixed with amphetamine but in my groups this was generally avoided because of a dislike of the latter drug¹⁴.

These difficulties are compounded by the uncertainties that exist over the actual short term and long term effects of ecstasy use. The work done by Release clearly reveals this. Their survey comes to the definitive conclusion that "ecstasy had little competition when it came to the best drug to take at dance events. 68% named it as their favourite drug to take at these events and this preference held

¹³ A new brand of ecstasy with the Mitsubishi car logo embossed on the pill. This pill was so common and of such consistently high quality that it merited a front cover on the club magazine Mixmag. However, even as I worked in the club, the quality started to change with the arrival of super-Mitsubishis (bigger and stronger) and some fake pills. When I conducted my longitudinal interviews a year later, the Mitsubishi was no longer the pill of choice.

¹⁴ This attitude ranged from the indifferent, *"I can't remember the quantities of speed because everyone else would have some and it was quite cheap. I don't take it any more, I have reservations about it, it always seemed to be around so every now and then you would have a dab but I had no concept of how much because it was so cheap"* to the conclusive, *"But I was never a big speed fan, I did it and I got to a stage where I was doing it sitting in, but I phased it out pretty quickly, because I just hate it. Speed is just, I can't handle the come down from speed. It's disgusting, it truly is disgusting, I can't handle it I don't like it, it's not good enough to warrant that, nothing is good enough to warrant that."*

More recently other drugs have come into the market, such as ketamine and GHB which are used in conjunction with the drug ecstasy as well as amphetamine and LSD. From my research, I would suggest that these drugs are used to supplement the ecstasy experience when a person has taken enough of them to warrant a reduction in its effect. As there is no cross tolerance the high produced will be as strong if not stronger than the buzz initially attained by ecstasy. For example *"I mean the thing is I don't really get high off ecstasy anymore, so I take GHB with my ecstasy and it makes it much stronger. I mean you get so wasted, so now when I take ecstasy its like the goal posts have moved a little bit from what was a high to what now I know it can be"*. Alternatively as in my main group other drugs started to be taken at dance effects when their use of ecstasy was perceived as too problematic.

across all age groups and both sexes". The most commonly mentioned positive effects, were "happiness, confidence and energy". Also, significantly, ecstasy was named as the second best drug generally, after cannabis but twice as popular as Speed / LSD and three times more popular than cocaine. However the Release survey also reports that "in terms of percentage claiming to have had any of the problems listed, the most problematic drug was ecstasy". The most common of these problems were nausea, blurred vision and vomiting. Thus they conclude that "interestingly, as well as being the most problematic, ecstasy was also apparently the most enjoyable¹⁵". Indeed, this starts with dispute over the appropriate ¹⁶ label and continues at every stage¹⁷. On the one hand, ecstasy is widely regarded as a safe drug, safer than aspirin¹⁸ with the chance of death more likely flying on a civil airline¹⁹. And according to the ISDD though "there have been over seventy deaths so far in the UK directly associated with the taking of ecstasy among otherwise healthy young people, it appears that there have been no deaths caused directly by the toxic effects of the drug²⁰". Instead "deaths have occurred due to heat stroke, heart attack or excess intake of water". The negative effects for long term users are according to Gossop²¹ relatively trivial, who lists them as "tension in the jaw and grinding of the teeth. Anxiety, heart palpitations and in a few cases paranoid delusions have been reported". In summary his conclusion is benign, "For many ecstasy users their main drug problem is how to buy the genuine product rather than a more dangerous substitute". There is no mention of neurotoxicity and long term damage.

¹⁵ The two further usual pieces of information they add to this paradoxical picture are that women both experience more of the positive and negative effects than men and that the youngest age group surveyed (15-19) year olds "stand out as particularly likely to experience problems".

¹⁶ Michael Gossop, for example, includes ecstasy as a hallucinogen, while in a recent paper (3/202/00) given to the Lindesmith centre, <http://WWW.maps.org/research/mdma/holland0300.html>. , Julie Holland MD states she has "real problem with MDMA being labelled a hallucinogen". "it has its own class, it's called an entactogen , named by David Nichols" (p.11).

¹⁷ There is no consensus on the duration of its effects but this is a rough guide. Its 'onset' is between twenty to ninety minutes, 'coming up' takes between five and twenty minutes and the plateau lasts for two to three hours followed by a 'coming down' of between one and two hours and 'after effects' lasting between three and twenty four hours.

¹⁸ Study by Drug Dependency agency in 1996, estimates Ecstasy has a mortality rate of 0.0002%.

¹⁹ The Independent 08th Feb 98

²⁰ ISDD. (1998), *Controlled Drugs: A Handbook for the Legal Profession*. London: ISDD

²¹ Gossop, M. (2000) *Living with Drugs*. Fifth edition, Ashgate: Arena ,(p.135/6).

On the other hand there have been several articles written that argue that repeated ecstasy use has a detrimental effect on rats' brains and more recent research has stated that it produces a similar effect on human brains²². The damage is supposedly both cognitive and psychological. This includes mid week depression and reduced scores in some memory tests.²³ The evidence is constantly being updated and thus I do not want to suggest anything is yet accepted as categorical, except that it is becoming clear that heavy MDMA use may cause medium or long term disruptions in short term memory and or some types of mental function. Even less straightforward are the accusations that ecstasy can cause depression and could be addictive. The first statement being less controversial than the second. Ecstasy works by altering the amount of serotonin in the brain. The drug works by "inhibiting the re-uptake of serotonin so that the messenger molecules hang around in the gap between cells and the message gets amplified. Ecstasy in addition to blocking the re-uptake, causes a surge of serotonin to be released into the gap²⁴". This causes the undoubted feelings of elation and empathy

On the other hand, ecstasy also depletes serotonin and when serotonin is released it gets broken down and metabolised away. The brain is thus left with less serotonin than when it started, worse there is evidence that in animals the serotonin axons(these are the places where serotonin is stored) are also damaged. This is more likely to happen at higher dosages though the evidence is that some of these axons will grow back. The consequences can be that "many users report feeling extremely drained after MDMA use many users also

²² The problem with much of this research is that it is ideologically driven, with many scientists aware of future funding grants, keen to prove that MDMA is a significant neurotoxin. Subsequently much of the research has been haphazard, especially as it has not been testing solely the effects of MDMA on subjects as their samples have included people who are taking a multitude of drugs. However, those who aim to discredit this research, are also often ideologically driven, committed to the legalisation of drugs and recognition of dance culture.

²³ Concar, D. (1997), 'After the Rave, the Ecstasy Hangover', *New Scientist*, June 21st. For a more measured view see editorial in the same magazine, 'Chill Out Man'..

²⁴ *The Economist* (1996) April 6th , "Better than Well "

experience post MDMA depression often on the second day after the experience and lasting for one to five days, although a small percentage of users report depressive symptoms lasting for weeks afterwards". However, as my interviews made explicit, respondents who had taken the same amount of the same drugs, experienced the after effects very differently. Thus, I would suggest caution before setting up a pharmacological model which reads as follows; Ecstasy use changes levels of serotonin (though this is probably true in large quantities) and thus can lead to a serotonin deficit and thus depression. As has been seen with the development Prozac²⁵, it is far from clear that serotonin is the sole cause of depression and it is also unclear how much an individual needs of it or how the lack of it, is translated into the conscious perception of "depression" (a concept which has its own debate over definition).

There is also contention over the addictive qualities of ecstasy. It is widely regarded as being a drug, which is not addictive in the way, for example opiates are²⁶, users do not always use the drug in a "compulsive" way. Yet in a recent study of three heavy ecstasy users Jansen argues that all three meet the World Health Organisation standard for dependence syndrome²⁷. Much to my surprise most of the ecstasy users I interviewed displayed all the features of this definition of dependence. The four indices of dependence routinely admitted were "A strong desire to take the drug; tolerance; progressive neglect of alternative pleasures and persisting with use despite evidence of harm".

²⁵ Kramer, P. (1994) *Listening to Prozac*, "Pneumonia is not caused by a lack of penicillin The brain is sometimes understood by chemicals used to alleviate symptoms. Thus depression must be caused by lack of serotonin because serotonin is what is used to alleviate it". London: Fourth Estate Paperbacks, p 52.

²⁶ Police Foundation, (2000) *Drugs and The Law –Report of the Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971*. "There is little evidence of craving or withdrawal compared with opium or cocaine. Ecstasy and its related compounds do not therefore seem to be as addictive in the same sense as other class A drugs." London: The Police Foundation, p.46.

²⁷ Jansen, K. (1999) 'Ecstasy (MDMA) Dependence. Drug and Alcohol Dependence'. The criteria for dependence syndrome are at least three of: "A strong desire to take the drug; difficulties controlling their behaviour; a withdrawal state; tolerance; progressive neglect of alternative pleasures and persisting with use despite evidence of harm". *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 53/2, p.121-124.

Most of my respondents knew the harm ecstasy could do before taking it and then persisted even while acknowledging the physical and psychological disruption it causes them. They all acknowledged an increasing tolerance to the drug²⁸, and most also admitted a strong desire to take the drug. The strong desire is not universal but is very apparent when asked if they would go to dance events without it, most would not²⁹. This initial burst of activity, especially for the younger users can be all engulfing³⁰ and they do neglect other pleasures and other friends. However, later on in their drug careers if they haven't stopped or began taking more, they are more likely to be able to perceive their own drug cycle and use the drug in a more controlled manner. Thus they are less likely to be classified as addicted according to Jansen's criteria.

In conclusion, the subjective effects of ecstasy use are far from straightforward. For example, even the reaction of each respondent in one group to one brand of pill taken on the same night differs greatly. In response to a question about the different effects of the different brands of ecstasy pills they had taken, I received this response. Four respondents mentioned a pill called Radiation; firstly, *"I recently took a radioactive but they are a bit trippy"*. Secondly, that *"Radiations are a really nice buzz but they give a terrible come down"*, Thirdly, *"Radiations are really mad, they made me rub my fingers together until the skin was worn away, my mate was chewing his lip, his lip and had drawn blood it was really mad, while for me I normally grind my teeth but with radiation's my eyes would not function properly"*. Fourthly, *"I mean it's a pretty universal drug, I mean you can just sit there and with the Radiations, X couldn't move he had just gone too*

²⁸ The speed of its increase depended on how regularly they used the drug.

²⁹ It can also be detected by looking at the money spent on clubbing on ecstasy. The young group all admitted that it took up all their income, and one had to steal from his parents to keep up. *"To be brutally honest up until recently, I was stealing money off my mum, but I have stopped doing it now because it is a bad thing to do, so now I haven't got any money but I am a morally better person, I wasn't getting given shit, I was stealing it"*.

³⁰ This quotation is from the younger group and I think was typical of them at the time of the first interview, and is a response to the question, Has taking ecstasy influenced how you spend your leisure time? *"Yeah definitely, it has taken over my whole life it's taken over all my music. All the sorts of stuff that I listen to when I go down to the clubs, the dealing and the chatting around, is about going to the next clubs, it's all we end up doing"*.

far, while I was just rushing all night". The other two boys didn't mention them by name, one of them said of ecstasy that the effects "depend on the pill-Mitsubishi's. I can't move my legs like, and diamonds I am just up but some seem to have ketamine in them or speed". The sixth boy, maybe because he had taken over a hundred chose not to mention brands of pills individually but said, "Yeah the effects are always the same but the situation is always different, the night might be different the lighting is always different, the crowd is always different, so the effects are pretty much the same but you always have a different experience, though you can get really strong pills which really mash you up." These discrepancies are important and add emphasis the importance of having a model which takes into account both the pharmacology of the drug but also the singularity of each users psychology³¹.

On Learning to be an Ecstasy User

In this section I want to use Becker's seminal article, "Learning to be a marijuana user³²", to help explain what I consider to be one of the most pertinent questions about ecstasy use, why do people stop³³? Firstly, his theory of a "learning process" can be applied to those who have just started their drug use. One of the advantages of ecstasy is that it is most commonly in pill form³⁴ so 'Learning the

³¹ The other curious piece of information was that from my group, who had stopped taking the drug, four out of six all mentioned a brand of ecstasy called "green apples" as their best pill. This may have stuck in their memory because they also identified it as the pill that Leah Betts took before she died.

³² I agree with Becker that it is futile to try to prove that my subjects' behaviour "can be best explained as the result of some trait which predisposes or motivates him to engage in that behaviour" (Becker, 1963, 42). Instead, what I am trying "to understand here is the sequence of changes in attitude and experience which lead to the use of [ecstasy] for pleasure"(Becker, 1963, 42). His schema is still useful despite the differences between the effects of the drugs. Unlike the supposed effects of marijuana which according to Becker "when first perceived may be "physically unpleasant or at least ambiguous" (Becker, 1963, 53), for those who either immediately like the ecstasy experience or for those who though initially sick go on to regulate their dose, the perceived positive effects are dramatic.

³³ The other question is why do people start. As I haven't interviewed non-ecstasy users I cannot answer this but can only document the kind of positive experiences those who do take the drug gain from it.

³⁴ Cohen, S. (1988) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and the Rockers*. And is thus similar to the amphetamines taken thirty years ago by the Mods and Rockers, and is, "Drug taking which mirrors, in its pill format least the bourgeois consumer notion of how to buy solutions to problems". Oxford: Martin Robertson, p.188.

Technique' is entirely straightforward. As the quotations below show, from two of the boys who are separately describing the same night at the same club spent with each other, 'Learning to Perceive the effects' and 'Learning to Enjoy the Effects,' are real issues for the novice:

D.S: *"Can you tell me when you first started to take ecstasy?"*

P: *"The first pill we did wasn't that strong. We took half each, it wasn't much and I was feeling quite conscious waiting for myself to come up and I wasn't doing myself any favours, then we each got the next half, left it for about an hour and that was when I first came up . The first one was pretty safe but I was tired and I was smoking draw at the time so I was sleepy as well, but the next time I took a pill without smoking or anything it was really solid. I felt wicked, it felt like no other drug, versus coke, its less money and the buzz is much more intense".*

D.S: *"Can you tell me when you first started to take ecstasy?"*

S: *"I went raving yeah, and it was the best night of my life, and after that I was like yeah, perversely enough I liked the come down as well, I quite appreciated smoking the draw".*

I have included the first quotation as it clearly depicts the dialectical relationship between the subjective mood of the individual and the effects of the drug. The fact that P was quite *"conscious, tired and sleepy"* meant the effects of the ecstasy were not that strong. However, the second time he took it when I assume these subjective inhibitors were not in place, the effects of the drug were overwhelming and *"it felt wicked, it felt like no other drug"*. For most respondents like S, P's second experience is their first, which suggests that the profound effects of the drug mean that learning to perceive the effects is not a significant issue.

However, learning to enjoy the effects is relevant to ecstasy users. Two of the respondents I interviewed were either overwhelmed at this stage or never felt like

they had got the balance right so were unlikely to continue. An example of the former:

"What I don't like about pills is like either you take a half and if nothing happens, you sit around for the whole evening and nothing happens, and ok maybe you can snort some poppers and you can come up for a little bit and feel quite giggly for a bit or you take a whole pill and you are basically rushing your bollocks off and you think this isn't good either. Like there isn't any happy medium. You can't control what is going on. I enjoyed it when I had got over the come up bit, I enjoyed that, it was really nice. But the rushing thing kind of stuck in my mind as a really unpleasant experience".

An example of the latter is the other girl in the same group, who had taken about twenty pills:

"I don't think I am the best person to take pills actually, because I don't let them come in completely because I don't really like it. Berlin was best, the music and the atmosphere is important on the effect. I still get the jitters when I am coming up especially if I am sitting down, I need to fend it off and dance. Maybe the effects are a lot different because I take it in different amounts".

Others are immediately sick but carry on regardless³⁵.

P: *The first time I was actually quite nervous so I didn't take very much. The second time I did one, so I thought I can handle this I know what I am doing, so I took two and a half and started yundering (being sick) everywhere, It was alright but it was a bit like I was too rushing I couldn't even dance so I just had to sit down, so after that I thought there is not much point. I felt that it is better to do half or three quarters, one at most, for the whole night."*

S: *"When I started I didn't really know what my limits were and I started having two but really I don't need that much at all cos we get nice pills, so I do half, three*

³⁵ Again there are parallels here with other drugs. G. Pearson observed an even more arduous effort to enjoy what is seen to be a far more addictive drug heroin. In his book on heroin users he comments "because it is certainly not always the case that the drug will initially be experienced as pleasurable. Indeed many people will persist in taking heroin in spite of the fact that it makes them feel unwell". Pearson, G. (1987) *The New Heroin Users*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.21.

quarters, I started off with one, then I went a bit militant for a bit meaning I did two a night. I dropped one, thinking it wasn't doing anything and then did another and then came up too much, and I chundered (was sick) once. It was silly I wasn't enjoying it that much".

Once past the initial stage as the Release survey has shown there are a great variety of positive or negative effects that will be experienced. However rather than just list them as has been done in surveys keeping with my methodology I will document how taking ecstasy is subjectively experienced. My findings do not contradict the survey work but they do show how difficult it is to elicit a single motivation from people concerning what they enjoy or dislike about their experiences. In order to illustrate this point I have included two large narrative accounts which describe the ups and downs of two of my respondents from the main group. (One in the main section, One in a footnote³⁶). They graphically show both the initial elation and the subsequent disillusion with the drug and help illuminate why people start and then eventually stop:

"Yeah so there is this big hype all week basically, we prepare for it, saving up our money and usually we won't talk about anything else all week, its like yeah, yeah we are going to the club on Friday its going to be phat and be brilliant. We were meant to link up the pills before we went, but that deal kind of messed up. So we had had to get them in the club, so for £10 I bought it and basically, it was a Mitsubishi. I was like playing around with it for a while but they said look you

³⁶ Here is another account from a boy in the group who also stopped taking ecstasy a year later. Firstly the positive effects at the time: *"Its nothing like anything else I do, that's why I like it. I never even thought about doing pills for such a long time, but after the first one it has taken over every weekend, I am either at the club or wishing I was at the club. It's just happiness, sometimes you don't want to dance, happiness is the main factor, you just feel happy, you just talk for hours just talk complete shit, everyone doing the same thing. Like I said its brought the like friendship closer, and when you are doing it its just like nothing else in the world, its like the best time in your life, it feels like nothing you have ever experienced before, but it doesn't really effect me outside the club sort of thing, When I am on it I am happy more energy, than you should have. Normally I am quite lazy never be fucked to do anything normally I go down to clubs, and I just sit there, smoke spliff, or whatever, but when I pop a pill I just want to dance or night."* Secondly the negative effects at the time: *"The only thing I have found, is when I am on the pills I haven't felt any side effects except, once when I had a big bout of paranoia..... It also interrupts my sleep routine- I have to sleep the whole of the next day and it's a kind of sickly sleep because even when you wake up you fell tired, it just wrecks your body, dancing overdosing on the energy so you fell tired all weekend and you feel alright by Monday"*

better take it soon because you know, you don't want to be carrying it around with you for too long. So I thought, Fuck it I'll take it and see what happens, if I die I die. So I took it, it took a long time to get up but when I did get up it was unbelievable, I was totally not expecting it at all, cos it took a long time it was about forty, forty five minutes later-and Bang just came up, just like that and I was dancing with P beside me and the music was going and going, at that moment this mad light effect spilled out on the dance floor using the mirror ball and all the lights were flashing and suddenly wow it was a mad experience, my head was like completely lifted.

The way I look at it now, was like being drunk but not having the nausea and the dizziness that goes along with it but being really like light headed and really unbelievably happy and kind of hyperactive. For the first fifteen minutes I'm like up, really hyper really dancing on the dance floor and then after 15 minutes I start to mong out a bit and the whole kind of lethargy kicks in.

In fact that first time I collapsed I kind of fainted. It was really weird. Basically I was dancing, trying to keep with the beat, but half way through the music was going at the same rate but my whole body starts slowing down, it felt like I was dancing in slow motion, like I was forcing myself to keep up. But that was all I could do, where as before, I was waving my hands in the air like this and going 'yeah yeah' all I could do now was kind of go like this, mmm, mmm, it just felt much better for me to slow down, cos I didn't want to force myself because I didn't know what was going on at the time, so I was doing this and my eyes were completely closed and didn't know what was going on around me, and it felt like every step I was taking was a step up, like up some stairs. Then the next thing I knew I was falling, I didn't actually realise I was falling until someone grabbed me, I think it was P and like they I headed me off the dance floor to this bit of the corridor where we usually hang out and put me in the corner somewhere.

And this was the best part because the people in this club were really really friendly and some couple who had helped my off the dance floor were giving me their water and undoing my shirt, letting me cool down and they were saying yeah look you have take it easy, don't worry, we've been through it before we'll

help you out. I was like, great yeah, wonderful people, unbelievable love you love you, love you lots, I love you man. All this, I just couldn't stop saying it and I was just sitting there really really happy. And I think the best part is that when you have a cigarette when you have a cigarette they are unbelievable just so much better. It doesn't matter how many you smoke, every cigarette is amazing, brilliant. So I just sat in the corner smoking, feeling unbelievable good.

I think really a lot of people were telling me just dance it off, so you can get out of the state of mind you are in now but I didn't want to because I just love that felling of monging out, just being up and happy. And the best part of all was like, was that night at X, a lot of the people were really friendly and I just got talking to lots of people. What I love doing is just talking to people, finding out about people, meeting people and listening to their stories.

And now I mean if anything the whole ecstasy experience has taught me to be much more open, and I hesitate to use the term to say that ecstasy has totally changed my whole view of life but I find myself being a lot more friendly to whole groups of people”.

The bad effects at the time were minimal:

“I don't like the come downs in the club because when ecstasy is wearing off, I couldn't move. I felt really depressed being in a club is a bad combination because it was in X a very hostile environment, eventually I had to leave. I tend to lose a whole day I have to get some sleep, but sometimes when I have been forced to go out I have some very strange experiences”..

These categories are based on this one account of a night on ecstasy. I am not suggesting that everybody experiences all these pleasures every time they take the drug nor that my list is necessarily exhaustive. But I am arguing that by separating them out one can get a better sense of how different aspects dissipate over time.

Aspect one

“ And some couple who had helped me off the dance floor were giving me their water and undoing my shirt, letting me cool down and they were saying yeah look you have take it easy, don’t worry, we’ve been through it before we’ll help you out”.

The more experienced user according to Becker “may reassure him as the temporary character of the unpleasant sensations and minimise their seriousness, at the same time calling attention to the more enjoyable aspects” (1963, 55). As S’s experience makes clear other more experienced users care and attention were crucial in transforming what could have been a traumatic situation into something mundane. Once his anxiety was soothed he was able to get on with enjoying the other aspects of the drug experience. Certainly not all clubs are as friendly as this but by having close friends around and marking areas of the club off, as a group they can solve or diffuse anxieties or problems. As with other leisure experiences this consistent and sustained time together helps strengthen bonds and continues after the club. This is another space where any negative feelings can be ameliorated by the group staying together and stressing the positive effects. This was put most vividly by a heavier user(from seven hundred or more) but all the groups did this, mainly smoking cannabis together to come down from the night before:

“Generally when you have finished all of you would go back to someone house and the first thing I would do is come in and I always find you have the come downs off drugs so you have to approach them differently. So that when I know I have finished with the clubbing and the dancing I totally switch off from that, so there is a change. Then when I am still up from the drugs I can make a cup of tea and if anyone can stomach it, I will give them some fruit so that everyone can get comfy basically, and go out and look at the sky. Basically get quite cheesy, do lots of very relaxing things, pamper yourselves a bit to what ever degree you can”.

Aspect Two

"Big hype all week basically, its like yeah, yeah we are going to the club on Friday its going to be phat (cool) and be brilliant".

This is the pleasure of anticipation as Gossop argues, (2000, 18) "taking a drug is not a psychologically neutral event³⁷. The psychological and social influences generated by users... are powerful enough to alter a user's response to the pharmacological effects of the drug itself". This excitement is not just in anticipation of taking drugs. It could also be in expectation of an appearance of a certain DJ, seeing your friends or a potent mixture of all three. This positive anticipation may well be reflected back by a positive drug experience, perhaps in spite of its unsavoury pharmacological compound.

Aspect Three

"So we had had to get them in the club, so for £10 I bought it and basically, it was a Mitsubishi. I was like playing around with it for a while but they said look you better take it soon because you know, you don't want to be carrying it around with you for too long. So I thought, Fuck it I'll take it and see what happens, if I die I die".

Thirdly there is risk: risk in buying the drugs, having the drugs and taking them, most of which is generated by the fact that they are illegal, though with ecstasy many of the users also voiced fears that they might just keel over and die. I think this quotation accurately captures the search for risk, which is at the heart of deviant behaviour. It is not just the courting of objective danger (though it can be)

³⁷ McDermott, P. (1993, 212) "The rave occupies a central function in the value system of ravers. It acts as an organising principle around which consumption of drugs can take place. Like many forms of recreational drug use, this pattern of MDMA use is highly ritualistic, ravers may spend Saturday afternoons preparing for the night's rave. The preparation may involve 'getting psyched up'.

but as Matza and Sykes point out it is the “search for excitement and thrills” by actively “creating hazards to manufacture excitement³⁸”. There is little chance of being caught with pill in hand and even smaller chance of suffering a fatal reaction yet in the mind of S it is a peril which must be surpassed. In my opinion these hazards can as easily be internal ones as external ones and taking drugs can provide a thrill of transcending a real or even imaginary risk to the well being of the self³⁹. Once this is done, the high commences and as his monologue makes explicit part of the pleasure is solely in its unfolding. The fact that there is a story to be told, this happened and then that happened, indicates this. These stories of drug experiences are extremely valuable and form the glue of nostalgia that keeps the groups’ interest and enthusiasm ongoing. This is despite the fact that with constant repetition of the drug experience the likelihood of a memorable deviation becomes rarer and rarer.

Aspect Four

“I was dancing with P beside me and the music was going and going, at that moment this mad light effect spilled out on the dance floor using the mirror ball and all the lights were flashing and suddenly wow it was a mad experience, my head was like completely lifted. The way I look at it now, was like being drunk but

³⁸ Matza, D. and Sykes, G. (1961), ‘Delinquency and Subterranean Values’. *American Sociological Review* 26 (1961), pp.712-719.

³⁹ This is something Katz mentions in relation to shoplifting another crime often committed by the middle classes, “the sneaky thrill is created when a person tacitly generates the experience of being seduced to deviance”(1988, p.53). Inexplicably Katz pays little attention to drug taking, an omission rectified by O’Malley, P. and Mugford, S. (1994) in their pithy article ‘Crime excitement and modernity’ in Barak, G, (ed.), *Varieties of Criminology: Readings from a Dynamic Discipline*. New York: Praeger publishers. Firstly they reiterate his stress on the seductive power of embracing risk, (p.192) “in short, whether we are considering major or minor crimes in Katz’s theory, the key is the process of transcendence. Its seductive power is in its contrast between an intolerable mundane reality in which actors find themselves, and an altered state of consciousness produced by moving up or flirting with and sometimes crossing the boundaries between rational and emotional control between order and chaos”. And secondly they refer to the use of drugs as an accessible if not acceptable means to this end (p.204): “Transcendence is aided by the consumption of drugs, the more powerful and exciting they are, the more rapidly and effectively they may effect the change of mood. A powerful illegal drug may achieve marked mood alterations and in doing so incorporates both a socially sanctioned method (commodity consumption) and a rebellious instance (illicit pleasure) that may enhance excitement.”

not having the nausea and the dizziness that goes along with it but being really like light headed and really unbelievably happy and kind of hyperactive”.

This is a description of ‘coming up’, the initial high. The high is a very potent mixture of energy and happiness, something which engages the body⁴⁰ and the mind, and “*unlike speed which does nothing for your head*”⁴¹ this hits both. This part of the experience most closely corresponds to the feelings of the sublime or the trance, which I mentioned earlier. As another boy in the group said of the same club, “*X: its a much much tighter atmosphere everyone is loved up on ecstasy, everyone’s on a wicked level*”. Again as Gossop argues, the immediate social circumstances in which the drug is taken can also be powerful enough to alter a users response to the pharmacological effects of the drug itself. Indeed as experiments have proven⁴² when people do not understand the way they feel they may look to those around them as guides to the appropriate interpretation of what might in fact be quite nebulous feelings such as increased heart rate or hyperactivity. It also means that in clubs such as club X, where my respondents perceived there to be universal drug use, inhibitions are likely to fall as people will see in front of them only other people are in a similar state to themselves. This group did differentiate between groups of potentially hostile dissimilar people made placid by ecstasy and more passive people made even more so by the drug. Yet even with this distinction being made and looking at my other interviews this drug inspired amiable atmosphere was almost always attained. The “*shared euphoria*” and the feelings of closeness and intimacy were best

⁴⁰ I do not think the general terms often applied to drug experiences are very useful in relation to ecstasy, though the experience could be described as sublime. For two different definitions of the sublime Kant, “a negative pleasure –a darkly beautiful inevitably painful pleasure that arises from some intimation of eternity” taken from Richard Klein,(1995), *Cigarettes are Sublime*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, p. 2. Or more recently, D. Nye who describes the collective experience of the sublime as is best described as a feeling of loftiness filled with awe, a ritual that produces bonds of solidarity without uniformity of belief. Nye, D. (1994), *The American Technological Sublime*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press. p.xiv.

⁴¹ Here is another respondent comparing speed with ecstasy. “*Speed didn’t appeal to me because the point of taking something and grinding your body into the ground never really appealed to me, I guess I did hear about people getting rushes off speed but never what you got off a pill but some people would report back that you know, it would just keep you up all night but you wouldn’t get a rush. I never really had an amazing experience off speed anyway even when I did take it. I have been fucked up on pills, just in a mess, but really enjoying it talking shit and stuff*”.

⁴² See Gossop (2000, 19/20)

guaranteed by being surrounded by friends which, as a group, acted as a shield against any wider hostility:

"If I go with my core group of friends its good music and good drugs, and it's a really fun night, we are just like running around dancing, I totally love to dance, talking having interesting discussions, relating in different ways, just playing . It almost like you are in a big padded room for twelve hours. You know now and then you will have one of those E nights when everyone is running around and they are so happy and you are connecting with everyone on the dance floor and the normal social barriers slip away which can be quite embarrassing later. For that moment it is almost like a perfect moment, and it kind of exciting you go out you don't what is going to happen, its just a long crazy hail, every night is different you don't know where you are going to wind up".

Aspect five

"15 minutes I start to mong out a bit and the whole kind of lethargy kicks in. but I didn't want to because I just love that feelling of monging out, just being up and happy". He also mentions this towards the end of the quotation this is another pleasurable aspect of the drug and explains ecstasy previous use in psychotherapy and why some couples take it together⁴³. In clubs some respondents drew attention to this aspect and the intimate chats that were associated with it as their favourite part of the experience. Certainly pure MDMA taken without any speed outside of a club can be experienced as something mellow rather than frenetic, *"personally the thing that I prefer, once just a friend of mine that I hadn't seen for a while we were at a house party that was in my house and we just nipped upstairs and we had found a pill and we were already on some and we just split it and just swallowed it and listened to a bit of music and smoked couple of spliffs, and just had a chat, it was just a really nice chat,*

⁴³ *"Normally I do with it a friend. I don't like to do them by myself. Doing them with a boyfriend is different. I have done it but it is a bit rude, but doing a pill and being in bed with your boyfriend is quite fantastic".* Though for the male the experience can less enjoyable, *"my girlfriend doesn't do many drugs and I tried to fuck her once on pills and it just didn't happen, there was no action down there".*

cause e does just produce really quite cheesy comments and stuff, We were talking about things like its really good to have a friend like you and that kind of thing was great conversations when you wouldn't mind talking about relationships with someone on a quite a deep level or felt so at the time which was good bonding. I bonded with a lot of people which I prefer".

Aspect six

"When you have a cigarette, when you have a cigarette they are unbelievable just so much better. It doesn't matter how many you smoke, every cigarettes is amazing, brilliant".

Another attribute of the ecstasy experience is its ability to make mundane actions or tasks interesting. The most often mentioned activity is dancing. This may be partly physiological as the body provides its own stimulus to the brain during vigorous dancing or listening to loud music. However, heavy users report that ecstasy's trans formative potential can be extended to anything and those I interviewed mentioned *"taking them, though just one, while I wander round town"⁴⁴,*

Aspect seven

"And now I mean if anything the whole ecstasy experience has taught me to be much more open, and I hesitate to use term to say that ecstasy has totally changed my whole view of life but I find my self being a lot more friendly to whole

⁴⁴ Or another respondents experience, *"If myself and a girlfriend, if we are in the flat alone and listen to a bit of music, its like okay, do you want to do half or a whole pill or whatever and we might do half a pill, or even wandering around by myself. I used to do, when E first came out and it became slightly cheaper it was like ok, there was me and my mate called Ted, we wondered what s all the weird situations you could you take it in, walking around, sitting on a train , sitting on a bus, going to a cocktail party,, especially the train one, we sat on a train to Glasgow from London we took a pill just before we hit Peterborough and we took another pill somewhere on the way past Newcastle just to see what it would be like".* Or another *"because we were in the countryside, there was this small stream and that, near school and this was attached to a trout farm and we would pop half a pill and fish and was that quite common".*

groups of people". If this was only mentioned by a minority of the group two out of six, it was still felt quite keenly. The overwhelming feelings of warmth force interaction with people who the respondents know are very different from themselves⁴⁵. This can be revelatory purely in itself or because it pushes very shy people in to interaction which they would normally never have. Forced to reflect on it afterwards they can talk of ecstasy in quite reverent tones, another example is from a heavy drug user. He describes the long term effects of ecstasy as follows:

"I really think there has been some real long term effects. I mean I was saying, I was bit fucked up and I like I think it made me much more open, self-confident sociable, and really I put that down to ecstasy. I have got a lot more friends and I am a lot more confident with people and I really put that down not so much to the drug but to interacting on the drug. It breaks down barriers and some of the behaviour becomes normal, so now it is normal for me to go up to people and not be a little worried about what they might think about me and I really strongly believe it and I have seen it in a lot of people."

Aspect eight

"The first time I collapsed I kind of fainted. It was really weird. Basically I was dancing, trying to keep with the beat, but half way through the music was going at the same rate but my whole body starts slowing down, it felt like I was dancing in slow motion, like I was forcing myself to keep up".

These extreme or ambiguous⁴⁶ experiences provide amusing anecdotes and stories, which become part of the lore of the group. Taking ecstasy in clubs

⁴⁵ *"Stay in the group most of the time but, all your inhibitions go, so normally I am quite shy and nervous and I don't chat to people I don't normally know but when I am on pills I will chat to anyone dance with anyone",*

⁴⁶ *Another example from a boy in this group is "I went there for my birthday last year and I dropped two pills and I did some acid and I completely lost the plot and id didn't know where I was and I ended up going out of the club half way though the night and everyone had to stop me because I was just tripping out and sit me at this table and I went to sleep for I don't know how long but I woke up under the table with a glow stick hanging out of my mouth. I was completely mash up, it was funny."* As Becker says, "finally he

allows a drug hierarchy to form at which people can excel; who got the most high, who lost it the most, who did the most outrageous things, all of which add to the unpredictability of the evening and ultimately to its nostalgia.

Aspect nine

“And the best part of all was like, was that night at X, a lot of the people were really friendly and I just got talking to lots of people. What I love doing is just talking to people, finding out about people, meeting people and listening to their stories”.

The fleeting but friendly encounters are the inspiration for the utopian urges which surround ecstasy culture. The idea that their club environment is a mixed social space that operates better than the straight world outside is premised on this sort of experience. This kind of interaction adds a social dimension to the drug experience something missing in other drug cultures and it provides a safe environment for people to interact in more outgoing way than they have the confidence to do elsewhere.

The bad times

As already recorded the negative effects mentioned at the first interview were for both boys, trivial. They fitted into what is expected by surveys, paranoia, tiredness and mild depression and subjectively they were mere asides compared to their respective eulogies. A year later the kinds of problems admitted may well fit into the same categories on a survey but as both these boys' accounts (again the second boys' account is in the accompanying footnote) illustrate, they are qualitatively different. In this section I want to examine why these negative effects have become so magnified in my respondents minds over time and again instead

teaches the new user that he can “get to like it after awhile”. He teaches him to regard those ambiguous experiences formally defined as unpleasant as enjoyable.” (Becker, 1963, 55). I would only add that the process may not be so much a taught one but one which is mediated by the group.

of reducing the effects to one word, for example depression look at the whole variety of aspects. Before doing this I first want to address some more general points about the damage of ecstasy use, over time.

Firstly, there is by now the familiar problem of disclosure. I found that the heavier ecstasy users made allowances for their feelings and altered work schedules or drug schedules so that low feelings are expected and integrated into their week. Thus they are then less likely to say they are depressed. This is in contrast to novice users who are either shocked by these effects or overwhelmed by them, so will readily admit to, for example being depressed.

There are also two points to be made about the effects of the drug. Remarkably, considering many of my respondents both took large amounts and different sorts of drugs at once and had been taking them for a long time, only two out of the wider sample mentioned incidents of being badly ill. This would corroborate research which sees ecstasy as a relatively safe drug in terms of mortality⁴⁷. Secondly, it has been informally (Reynolds argues this in his book *Energy Flash*) widely reported that the loving effects of ecstasy wear off over time leaving the user with a drug very similar to standard amphetamine. However, from my respondents only the two thousand plus ecstasy user mentioned this effect. The other heavier users described the experience more of becoming bored or overly aware of the loving effects rather than noticing an absence of this kind of effect. It has also been argued that if ecstasy is left alone these loving effects come back. Interestingly from my respondents, it seems that after having a break from

⁴⁷ However the respondents who did, told stories which were quite dramatic, “*I had quite a few times funny times on pills though. I had one really bad do round my girlfriends flat, when we had been out Friday, Saturday and on Sunday we stayed in watching Telly and I cained a pill because I had no college on the Monday and I just started to come up on it and I was standing up in the kitchen, and I reached forward to get this glass out and I started to stagger backwards and I was almost losing it completely, almost convulsing. I was really in a bad way, and I felt very detached from reality and she said do you want an ambulance and I thought about it and I had to say I don't know because I was proper fucked for about ten minutes. That sticks in memory as being quite a bad one. It was just not enough sleep, food, it was the same pills I had been doing all weekend, it was just constant wear and tear on the body. The body saying oi*”.

ecstasy the initial effects did return. This may be of interest as it may indicate that any psychological damage may not be permanent.

Once again it is instructive to turn to Becker to help explain why ostensibly, the same symptoms, are viewed very differently. He argues that someone will cease the act of drug taking when the user redefines the drug as not capable of “producing pleasure”. His last sentence is, “the act of using the drug becomes impossible only when the ability to enjoy the experience of being high is lost through a change in the user’s conception of the drug occasioned by certain kinds of experiences with it”(1963,58). This, as Becker points out, is a subjective decision based on an individual’s experience and interpretation of the pharmacological effects of the drug. In this section, I have divided them up the negative effects into three different aspects⁴⁸, physical, cognitive and psychological.

Aspect one: Physically

The repeated use of the drug results in incremental increase in physical problems. My respondents recorded an increase in the recovery time for the drug, though as I mentioned earlier different respondents adopted a variety of strategies which often reduced their discomfort. Though the first boy did not mention this process, the general view voiced was as follows. *“I definitely feel that I have been clubbing at least four days after I have been clubbing while before I could go clubbing and the next day I would be mashed up but by Sunday I would be fine and then I could go to school on Monday or whatever. But now its like go clubbing, mashed up on Saturday, mashed up on Sunday and still feeling the effects on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday so if I go clubbing two consecutive weeks I don’t have much time to recover”*⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ And once again the divisions are not meant to be exhaustive but are there to give an idea of the kinds of problems, ecstasy users experience over time.

⁴⁹ This is how another respondent in the group summarised the experience, *“Yeah I mean the first few times it was fucking wicked and to be honest you always felt like that basically, you always felt really happy no*

Aspect two: Cognitive

"I have stopped taking them because, one I am not too happy about the way that it has affected my brain. I have noticed to a certain extent that I have been doing more bone headed things than I used to do. Basically, I have been caught out being lazy minded, doing things that I wouldn't do before. They aren't major things but it's enough to make me think that about whether its good for me to actually keep doing this if this is happening to me now it might be better for me to quit while I am ahead".⁵⁰

Despite the fact, (as recorded elsewhere that research has been inconclusive about the damage ecstasy does to the brain) this was significantly more of an admission than purely noting the existence of a midweek low after weekend high. From both of these accounts one can see the development of cognitive problems and with the heaviest ecstasy users memory loss was also reported⁵¹. The problem with directly linking the two as my respondents did was at the time of the second interview they were still smoking large quantities of cannabis and regularly missing sleep.

Aspect three: Psychological

"I thought this when I was at Homelands(the name of a clubbing event) and I saw the amount of people who were just fucked out of their heads, absolutely awful, people were just dribbling and everything". I was gradually feeling bored,

matter how shit your body was feeling, shaking and chewing your lip off yeah, but then it started to feel less and less like that and the come downs got worse and worse, I never used to get the come downs , not really, I can't remember having any really bad come downs, it was probably happening, but I wasn't able to attribute it to that cause, so on the Thursday I was probably depressed but I just probably thought oh well I am just depressed" .

⁵⁰ *"There has been a three months change around, because I could feel my brain turning to mush, and I knew I had university coming up and I had to get myself back to academia and I tried reading some books, and I tried to read but I couldn't concentrate for longer than five or ten minutes, so I thought there is definitely something wrong, definitely something wrong, so I thought I would cut down".*

⁵¹ With the heaviest ecstasy user from abroad, this was made manifest in a complete inability to remember the quantity of drugs he had consumed and some quite startling repetition of anecdotes.

everything that was fairly the same and I was really scared that I would get too dependent on ecstasy to have a good time, I mean what's the point of having a good time at all if you have to depend on something to have it. I hate the fact that when I am at a club everybody does this waiting, this waiting that everybody does, just waiting to score and that annoys me, because it shows, it just really disappoints me because people are a little bit too dependent on it, like they won't have a good time until they get a pill. So I recently went to a club that played hip hop and drum and bass⁵²".

This is the most intriguing aspect and the one, which in my opinion directly relates to giving up the drug. The first point here, is that self- reflection was important in the acknowledgement of dissatisfaction with the experience. The more this group took the drug the more the negative effects increased but also the more they became conscious of the whole experience and how reliant they were on the drug to enjoy it. As in leisure experience the element of repetition can lead to that experience becoming boring, the amazing conversations being repeated, the best friends never being seen again, as articulated a year later, for example. *"I don't enjoy it as much as I used to, because its like anything. The first time I smoked draw I was in hysterics for three hours and now it just mellows me"*. However, for most, it was less an expression of boredom, but more one of

⁵² *"So I tried to take a half for the whole night and I could feel that when I was taking a half I was enjoying the evening and I found that I was still enjoying the evening and found that I was enjoying the evening more and I could feel that I was enjoying it for the right reasons. While I was carrying on with the pills I would analyse more and more while I was there I could think yeah I am having a really good time at the moment then I was thinking, actually I am having a really good time at the moment or I am having a good time because I can feel lots of drugs running around my body so I thought I will try to cut out the drugs and see if I enjoy the night, and I was enjoying the night more so I was getting more out of the night, I could remember what was going on, so I thought if I can do it on a half I can do it on none, and I liked it. But it was that more and more you do something the more and more you analyse what is actually going on, and I could feel that it was just a physical thing rather than anything psychological more and more, the psychological side was taking over and it was hindering the physical, even though physically I was feeling really good I was rushing and I wanted to jump up and down or whatever, it felt it artificial, all those people running around, going I love you love you. At the end of the day you never see any of them before in your life and you know five minutes later they are not going to remember you. Physically they were still delivering,, but there were bad physical effects on me, for example I am such a skinny bastard and it is only since I stopped taking pills that I started putting on weight. As soon as I stopped I just noticed that I was feeling better and better as person I could use my brain and I was feeling more and more proud of myself"*.

recognition that is of importance in these narratives. The recognition that much of what they are experiencing is artificial and contrived. They were able to see how many of the things they liked about the experience were merely a product of the drug they were taking and there were also significant pleasures to be enjoyed which were not contingent on the drug. As a gap opens up, they realise they can enjoy for example, the social aspects of clubbing and the music without a drug experience, which is often becoming more and more problematic.

However, there is again reason to be suspicious that this is a uniform experience. In my interviews with current ecstasy users, some expressed a much greater attachment to the drug than others and some respondents expressed a greater dislike of the drug than others immediately after they stopped. I cannot give a scientific explanation for this but my suggestion is that for some people ecstasy use is accepted as something enjoyable but peripheral to their identity and they do not mistake the high for anything other than a drug induced experience. For others, the experience is so overwhelming that they attribute to ecstasy a much wider range of effects and importance. Thus when they are enjoying it they tend to confuse the effects of the drug with wider changes in their personality and when they give up the drug they do this in reverse, attributing wider personality problems to the effect of the drug. Yet it is also worth adding that they may have been something unconscious in the articulation of such discontent. As to move away from something you have been enjoying, it may be necessary to castigate it in severe terms to stop yourself being drawn back into that activity and this may explain the stridency of their language.

Despite the strident rhetoric this did not mean that they stopped taking drugs altogether. Instead, they continued to enjoy the sociability or the play aspect of clubbing while using drugs such as LSD or cocaine, which they perceived as being less harmful. Meanwhile, I felt that those people from the other groups who were unable to give up did not do so because they could not recognise their dependency or the artificiality of their pleasure. Instead they were unable to

conceive of life without the friendship groups or intimacy that the drugs allowed them access too. I am also sure that over a prolonged period of time they would develop further problems or more significant occurrences of the same problems mentioned above.

Hard Drugs

"I wouldn't touch heroin. Definitely not. Some of my mates have been going yeah yeah lets just smoke it, lets just try it but I don't really want to try that , cos if you look at draw addicts like they're all happy, they might not go that far in their life but they're happy; If you look at coke addicts they might just blow all their money but if you look at heroin addicts, nah, they just look all skanky".

Amongst this group there was a universal mistrust and disdain for heroin based either on general perception or on personal experience⁵³:

"I wouldn't touch heroin or crack they're scary drugs, a lot more harsh. I have seen people fuck up on heroin and crack, when you are stoned it's all about having the giggles, and munchies (hunger induced by smoking marijuana) and on pills it's raving but like with Charlie(cocaine) as well it can make you into a completely different person".

As a group they all made strenuous efforts to separate their drugs of choice, ecstasy and marijuana from heroin/crack and the basis of this distinction was their perception of the very different effects and risk of addiction. They felt that heroin/crack could seriously damage your personality making you "aggressive" or "skanky". Even worse was the fear of addiction:

"I wouldn't like the idea of drug use becoming permanent rather than recreational" even though "you hear about the good things it does, you think about how habit forming it is. It tends to get you fucked up, I mean the way I see

⁵³ In most cases this animosity was also extended to crack cocaine.

it, is like I'm hooked on cigarettes so I don't want to try anything too habit forming".

These attitudes are typical of their peers, if one compares attitudes to marijuana use as opposed to heroin use. A recent MORI survey of a 1645 adults aged between sixteen and fifty nine looked at the percentages of people who ranked various kinds of drugs as very or fairly harmful. In the relevant category of sixteen to twenty-four year olds, around ninety eight percent put heroin in this category but only thirty per cent thought cannabis deserved this categorisation. When asked to name three top priorities for the police, sixty six per cent chose targeting "dealers who sell heroin" and only "eight per cent chose dealers who sell cannabis"⁵⁴. This evidence is reinforced by *The Release Survey* (Table, 5.3) that includes a table on "percentages thinking these drugs should be illegal to possess, by sex and age" in which heroin gets the highest rating of 61% and cannabis the lowest of 7%⁵⁵.

On the other hand, their inclusion of Ecstasy as a drug which is much less dangerous than crack or heroin seems to be only typical of people who take it, rather than young people at large. In the identical part of the MORI survey 92% ranked Ecstasy as "a very or fairly harmful drug". However when you return to *The Release Survey* though respondents clearly see it as a more problematic drug than cannabis they also see it as a very different drug from heroin. Again looking at the same table cited above only 17% of people said the possession of ecstasy should be illegal compared to 61% for heroin.

Out of all my respondents, only one admitted taking heroin (he had taken it twice two years ago) but he was *"up for doing anything just to gauge an opinion of these things"* though he ruled out PCP, because *"it does actually scare me"*. The

⁵⁴ Both tables can be found in full in "Drugs and the Law," on pages 33 and 35 respectively.

⁵⁵ See also the British Social Attitudes Survey in 1995 (Jowell et al., 1996) also quoted in the Release survey "in which 33% thought that cannabis should be legal compared to 61% who favoured prosecution for possessing small amounts of heroin".

other person hadn't taken it but said *"I won't go looking for it. But yeah, I suspect that some day someone will turn up with heroin and say do you want to try some and in which case I will probably go yeah, as has happened with lots of drugs"*.

Supply

"Yeah, I get it from a friend or a friend of a friend"

As Becker observes "If an occasional user begins to move on toward a more regularised and systematic mode of use, he can do it only by finding a more stable source of supply than more or less chance encounters with other users, and this means establishing connections with persons who make a business of dealing in narcotics" (1963, 63/64). Research, into the supply of ecstasy so far illustrates that many people don't bother to reach this level (*The Release Survey* showed that for 50% of its respondents their source of drugs was from a friend who does not sell regularly, the *Mixmag Survey* showed that 70% of its respondents had sold ecstasy) but it also shows that many others do (From the Release survey, 39% buy ecstasy from a dealer who sells regularly⁵⁶ (Table 3.7). More specifically, in terms of the location of the drug dealer, research indicates that many people buy their drugs in night clubs (Forsyth, 1996, 107, 41.4% of his respondents bought ecstasy, at a dance event) but it also shows that most buy it away from clubs (while 65% last scored at another location). Beyond this, little is known about the trajectory of ecstasy dealers except for a small description of one dealer "Abby the ecstasy dealer"⁵⁷. He is portrayed as an "example of what we termed trading charities-drug dealers, not primarily in it for the money, but because of an ideological commitment to the drug and the associated culture" (pg14). Meanwhile at the level of personal interaction Malbon (1999, 121) argues that "for most clubbers, decisions about whether to take drugs, where to get them, how much to take and when to take them are indeed made as a group. As this form of decision making appears popular because it gives the illusion of

⁵⁶ Unfortunately, the table is not split into types of drug.

⁵⁷ Dorn, N. Murji, K., South, N. (1991) 'Abby the Ecstasy Dealer'. *Druglink* November/December pp14-15

taking the responsibility for choices about taking drugs away from the individual clubbers.” Overall, I would argue that the picture is vague and misleading.

In fact, firstly, though my respondents depended on one person to buy the drugs for the group, the actual process of drug taking was an individual one. One of the surprises of my interviews was despite the closeness of each individual to others in the group, when it came to the amount of drugs taken, people had their individual patterns of drug use. As my section on learning to be an ecstasy user illustrates, people have different reactions and different tolerances to the drug and their drug taking reflects this. They take them at different times and in varied amounts⁵⁸ and consequently there was no desire to escape behind an illusion of group responsibility.

Secondly, the second misleading inference about the supply of ecstasy is it is far removed from the avaricious world of heroin or cocaine dealing. I would take issue with the idea that dealers at this level are motivated by philanthropy (to do so is to be guilty of exactly what Thornton (201,1997) cautions us against, mistaking the way “youth subcultures characterise their own activities for the way they actually behave”). From watching them in action and by cross-referencing my interviews, I would argue that the idea of dealing because “*you are helping your mates out*” or that you give pills away “*because its just what you do*” are just neutralisations to protect the dealer from their real, less palatable motives. These are not necessarily totally pecuniary. They could be using the extra income to support their own drug habit. However, all the dealers made money and although they all employed a sliding scale, with their friends paying less than strangers, from observation, I knew that even close friends were paying above the cost price. All the dealers liked to maintain this position of monopoly over the supply of the drugs. This was not so much because it allowed them to generate large

⁵⁸ All the groups contained a mixture of people in terms of frequency, quantity and method of use. The best example of this was the group based abroad. They contained one individual who never took more than one, one person who took between one and two, another who took between three or four depending on how much speed he took and another who would only take ecstasy with very large amounts of GHB.

quantities of money (it did not) but because it propped up their position of power in the group. They accrued kudos, from having the connections and they could use their access to cheap drugs to lubricate friendships. There is a fine line between their common activity of giving away half a pill to a friend due to genuine warmth and the more mendacious motivation of the cocaine dealer who gives out free lines in an effort to keep his customers. Over time peoples' motivations change and this distinction may collapse or be reinstated.

The other side of buying ecstasy is buying it in the clubs, as all the research illustrates there are dealers in them who sell pills. For example, in the first club where my group used to go to for a period of time, there was open dealing. *"I used to go to a club every week and get them from a guy we would call the 'Mitsubishi man' and we would get fucked and we thought they were quite nice. He was at X; he just walked around openly, going pills, pills."* As I have already mentioned research also shows punters are equally likely to get their pills before hand. In this section I want to cast some light on how these decisions are made and put into practice⁵⁹.

All my evidence suggests that ecstasy takers only use club dealers as a last resort. And then when they are in the club, as recent research has shown, punters are very cautious about who to buy their drugs from⁶⁰. They cannot depend on ecstasy being as openly available and more importantly as good quality, as the quotation above declares. However, this does not prevent them buying at clubs. The reasons for this are that the whole business of scoring drugs

⁵⁹ Forsyth, (1996,109) makes the following points about drug dealing in clubs. " That the drugs available at raves tend to be somewhat restricted" and secondly, that stricter searches at the door might mean "that users might put themselves at greater risk by ingesting larger doses of drugs immediately prior to entering a club, rather than being able to judge gradual increases in dosage from conditions in the club". My ethnographic evidence corroborates his first point but none of my respondents took their drugs before entering a club to avoid detection. Instead, they employed basic techniques of concealment, (putting the drugs in their pants and socks) and then take the drugs in the club.

⁶⁰Shewan, D. Dalgarno, P. Reith.J, (2000) 'Perceived risk and risk reduction among ecstasy users: the role of drug set and setting'. *International Journal of Drug Policy* 10 p. 431-453.
In terms of identifying people who sell drugs in the club, the focus groups articulated that they would look for the "happiest person" or someone who "didn't look threatening, (p.439).

is an unpredictable one. For those who are embarking on their drug career the contacts might not be available and as with my first group there might be no option other than to use club dealers⁶¹. Then even when these contacts are established there may be several problems. Pills that have been expected may not turn up⁶², pills that are meant to be good might turn out to be bad and extra money might be available that might not have been budgeted for⁶³.

All of this uncertainty is good for the club dealers. The kind of business they are open for is reflected in the times that as security you have to be most alert to drug deals. From my ethnographic experience I know, that an hour after the club opens, people will be arriving and taking their pills and people without them will be chatting to those who have them, to see if they can find some for themselves. The next burst of activity is much later, after three am, when people who have brought pills in within them come down from them and decide that they want to stay and they want to stay high. Again this is a busy time as they will search around and often find pills. This behaviour seemed quite common with the heavy pill takers who were taking four pills or more a night, as they lost track of exactly how many they had consumed in search of a good time.

⁶¹ This was how the first group initially attained their drugs. *"The owner helped us get some pills for us I said to J I want to get to half so I talked to the owner and it was a really good experience because P was going totally ecstatic, going I rate you so much, I love you man. He goes that's cool man listen, I can get you the pills on the other side of the dance floor, the owner of the club actually arranged the pills for us. Normally we get linked up through someone we don't know which is kinda risky and something which I do not like to do at all because one of my mates, A got gypped, he took a pill which did not do anything so I am especially aware of that because you don't know what you are buying as well so its well good, to know that I have a friend who can link up the pills for me"*.

⁶² As a member of the group who had stopped explained "we only did it in clubs if we had to, if our connections were not working ".

⁶³ This is an example from the main group, of the often chaotic approach to attaining pills. *"I had no money and no pills or anything but I had some glow sticks so this geezer came up to me and I said I ain't selling them so he said he would swap them for a pill so I said yeah alright then. He had two pills, Mitsubishis and unmarked pills, and he said if I were you I would go for the unmarked ones because they're fucking strong, yeah there live man. I said are you sure about this, and he said if you don't believe me I'll wait for you until you come up . So I swapped these glow sticks for this pill and I did it in a half, and 20 minutes later I was so right up, I have never done a pill like that in my life,, I was on another planet I don't know what it was , I ran up to the stage, and it was wicked"*.

Beyond club land there is little information on how these networks of friends obtain the drugs⁶⁴ and who the bigger dealers are and how the two make contact. A recent comparative study of European drug markets came to the conclusion that “ it is important to recognise that most drug crime is petty, disorganised opportunistic and very unsophisticated⁶⁵”. They were not referring to middle class people buying and selling ecstasy but they could have been. Most of my sample consisted of friends who had sold a few pills on to their friends to make either enough to pay for their own drug consumption or merely out of convenience. The supplier or the buyer at this level was often interchangeable depending local networks of who, lived where and who knew who. Thus one person might pick up for example five pills from someone else in the group and sell two of them on to another member of the group but this process might be reversed the following month.

However each group contained at least one person who had gone further up the drug chain and had been involved in selling hundreds or thousands of pills. All of these individuals who sold larger quantities of drugs, took relatively more drugs than the others in their group. An introduction to an ecstasy dealer will be typically, a local person known to the respondent from school, the local area⁶⁶, or through the family⁶⁷. For this Group A was the one who took initial responsibility for supplying the pills:

⁶⁴ For example, Sherlock, K. and Conner, M. (1999), ‘Patterns of Ecstasy Use Amongst Club-goers on the UK ‘Dance Scene’’. *International Journal of Drug Policy* 10, pp. 117-129. “It is noticeable that contrary to popular myth drug dealers are the least likely source of ecstasy introduction to new users..... most common are 62.6% introduction by male friend followed by 22.6%, a female friend”, p.123.

⁶⁵ Ruggerio, V. and South, N. (1995), *Eurodrugs: Drug Use, Markets, and Trafficking in Europe*, London: UCL, p.129.

⁶⁶ Here is another account from the university group: “*I had this friend who lived in Wanstead and he was a couple of years older than me and stuff, but I hadn’t seen him because he had left my school. And I saw him in the street and we went back to his house and we were chatting and stuff, and I went basically do you know anyone who can score me E’s and he said yeah,, I can and he got me a few and we went, about four of us and him went to X*”

⁶⁷ This is an account from a member of the group who had stopped taking the drug. “*My sister used to go out with this dealer towards the end of school and to tell the truth I used to get them from him, he used to sell really really good doves and swallows, and they used to set up parties ,so I would get them off him and they were so good. I remember with my sister and we went down to the place with the guy and he bought 5,000. I remember she had a bag with 5,000 in*”.

"The guy who I bought my first draw from, but he got arrested and the school asked him to leave, so now he is at college ,and he has moved up the scale. He started off on one ounce a week and now he is up to three ounces a day, started messing around with coke a little a bit. He lives about an hour away so I get 10 and share them around. I pay, for alright pills around £55, and another 5 for travel so its around £60 for good pills it can be £60 or £65 so its not too bad".

Subsequently, as they got more involved with one particular club, they befriended people who ran the club. At this point the most regular clubber and the boy who took ecstasy the most, found himself in a club environment very similar to the one described in my ethnography. Once trusted by the main people there, he could buy in bigger quantities which guaranteed a lower price and better quality. Again, it is worth stressing that this is a gradual and disorganised process where the only factor that is certain is the further someone progresses into the drug scene, in effect the more drugs they and their group consume the more likely they are to meet more and bigger dealers⁶⁸.

In my opinion the question remains how did these young middle class students acquire thousands of pills and from whom? If we accept Parker's thesis as accurate, the simplest answer is ecstasy is now easily available and thus a jump up the drug hierarchy becomes easier to accept. Intuitively, I would add that

⁶⁸ Here is an account from an individual who had finished university and had dealt drugs to finance his time there. He started his career at " school which was next to the museum gardens where a lot of my kind of people used to hang out and smoke and sell drugs of various descriptions". As he got more and more involved in the scene he met people who were better connected, " you just end up meeting people like that if that's the kind of person you are then you tend to think a bit like them and go to the same places that they might do. In fact I am quite nervous of things like that, I don't like the idea of going up to some stranger and asking for any type of drug. Usually, when I met somebody maybe we knew we were each on some drug, and we would start talking and get to know each other a bit and eventually it would come out, and sometimes I would be introduced to some people by friends". However even with these connections buying large quantities of good quality ecstasy proved problematic. "I would only buy then in hundreds if I knew they were decent If you see what I mean. I personally would have to take one even if I knew the guy quite well, 100 can go from 4-7 , depending on how far they have had to travel, depending on how many there were to start with. Am I getting half of what's left of a batch? , I mean usually to the lower end of this scale, If I was going to deal it would be in LSD or skunk primarily. The reason for LSD being because I could get hold of it very easily, it is a very small drug, and the LSD I could get hold of was of the highest quality in comparison to the other drugs I could get hold of, it is manufactured in this fair city , there are a few good chemists down here who are making decent LSD basically".

students are quite safe people to do business with as they have a lot to lose and are unlikely be capable of any of the deceptions or the violence that underlies the drugs business elsewhere. However though my ethnography sheds some light on who these people might be there does not seem to have been enough research done, to give any concrete answers. Both academic⁶⁹ and Police sources⁷⁰ agree that British organised crime is anything but organised and is best described as opportunistic. Therefore those people higher up the echelons are often changing. This seems to be particularly the case with drug dealers who maybe regular entrepreneurs who sometimes buy into an illicit venture⁷¹. There also seem to be broken chains of production (though this could be to do with attempts at secrecy) which separate those producing the drugs from those importing them and from those dealing them, with each chain knowing little about the lifestyles of each other. Therefore without very risky ethnographic work I am unable to provide further illumination.

On the police and security

"Its better safe than sorry, better safe than sorry, I try to stash draw in my shoe, pills in my wallet, easy to get rid of".

Unfortunately for both these notoriously macho institutions the people I interviewed were not intimidated or too worried by their unwanted intervention. To deflect attention the most precautions people took were trying to minimise the amount of drugs they had on them and if they did have some on them, hiding them in their underwear or socks or keeping them where they could be quickly be

⁶⁹ Hobbs, D. (1998), 'Going Down the Glocal: The local Context of Organised Crime'. *The Howard Journal*, 37 (4), pp. 407-22. Especially "the notion of organised crime, particularly in the current vogue form of 'transnationality' needs to be reconsidered in the light of empirical research which indicates that ever mutating interlocking networks of locally based criminality typifies the current situation". p419.

⁷⁰ Stelfox, P. (1998), 'Policing Lower levels of Organised Crime in England and Wales'. *The Howard Journal* 37 (4), pp. 393-406. For example, "There is certainly no evidence of a UK equivalent of a Mafia type organisation", p. 410.

⁷¹ Chu, Y. (2000) *The Triads as Business*, London: Routledge. For example, "Thus it is a mistake to see drug traffickers as pure gangsters. In reality those who are responsible for smuggling large amounts of heroin to consumer countries are international business entrepreneurs, who treat heroin trafficking as a way of making fast money", p.114.

disposed of. Despite taking only these rudimentary precautions only two had been cautioned for possession of cannabis. However even after suffering what was felt to be harsh treatment, little impact was recorded. P described his mate's experience: *"He had about a spliff on him. They fucked him over, got photos of him, fingerprinted him. gave him a caution and he got taken home to his mother by a social worker at four in the morning"*. The respondent himself, was less forthcoming in the interview and he didn't mention his arrest but said that he *"tended to be in clubs when I take drugs, so I don't worry and I don't carry much on me"*. The other guy to be caught did change his behaviour but perhaps not in the way the police intended:

"Yeah, yeah if I ever walk round my area, to the station or whatever I can walk one route which involves walking through a big estate , or another way by the police station , so what I normally do is walk by the police station cos a couple of times I have been walking through the estate and sometimes there is a bit of trouble in there and there is police hanging around outside, they don't know, I mean I don't know anyone around my area , I' m friends just with a couple of people. They don't know if I am involved or not, so they will pull me over and start asking me questions, so I normally walk in front of the police station".

Outside this group, this kind of pattern continued. Only one of the sample had been arrested for anything more than possession of cannabis while two more of the twenty had been caught for cannabis offences, all of whom had received a caution⁷². The lack of police interference is more extraordinary as most of the sample had a daily habit and some dealt to sustain it. The only respondent who had been arrested for possession of a class A drug as his account⁷³ shows had a

⁷² I will look at the implications and reasons for the lack of police interference later but for now it is worth stating that the group were typical of wider drug users in that they were far more likely to be arrested for cannabis offences than for harder drugs. Cokery, J. (1998), The Home Office Drug Seizure and offender statistics, Supplementary tables United Kingdom." Table S2.28 tells us that in 1998, 96,381 people were arrested for offences under drug acts concerning marijuana with 48,480 ended in a caution. For the same year for ecstasy type drugs the respective figures were 3,099 and 911 (Table S2.22).

⁷³ *"The first time I was sixteen outside this club, when a copper goes Oi come over here, and I had some drugs in my wallet and I decided to run which was a very stupid idea as I ended up in a dead end. Then the police beat me up,, they got me on the floor and they were like kicking me and stuff and then when they got me in the van then the police realised I wasn't a hardened criminal and stuff. He said he was really sorry*

very mixed experience with the police which again seems to have made little impact on his drug dealing activities: *"I get it in the club or before I go, I don't think they can arrest me in the club, I buy it and take it there. Never really thought about taking precautions to be honest"*.

Furthermore, from actually observing the main group over a period of months I am confident in saying that even the routine measures they purported to take to conceal their activities were often forgotten. For example, both of the following statements were often contradicted: *"I don't do anything stupid enough to get arrested, I don't walk around with lots of drugs on me, I wouldn't smoke a spliff in the street"*⁷⁴.

It has been frequently implied that clubbers are intimidated by searches on the door and will buy drugs inside "avoiding the risk of bringing them through security themselves" (Malbon, 1999, 123) or will take all their drugs at once so to avoid the risk having drugs found. However, I found that clubs were felt to be a safe environments to have and to take drugs, and the following statement was typical of my respondents attitudes:

"To say that I have had to be overly cautious when taking any illegal substance would be an over statement. Because really it is more relaxed, because if we were doing illegal drugs in an environment which we had to take extreme precautions then we probably wouldn't do it, because you don't want to do that, in that kind of environment. Though, actually I have smoked weed during school

for like beating me up and I had some weed on me and a bit of speed . The charging officer worked with my mum in H and I had some fake ID on me so they didn't have to call my parents, so I just got a caution that goes after three years.

Then two years late I was outside my girlfriends house in Greenwich, I had some drugs which were stashed in my sock, unfortunately I also had my dad's computer in the car. They thought I was suspicious so they took me down to the station and they searched me and found some weed. They were very much right. Your nicked I'll see you in court. But when it ended up in the court I got a conditional discharge. The third time..."

⁷⁴Generally it was felt that carrying marijuana was much less risky than carrying around pills, as this typical quotation documents, *"Worry, no I don't anymore because I don't have pills on me but I used to fucking worry about it when I had twenty pills on me. Now the most I have on me is three ounces of skunk". Because it is in the car and if I get pulled over with three ounces of skunk I don't think anything really bad is going to happen"*.

sometimes we go out and where we usually smoke cigarettes we smoke weed and to a certain extent I don't like that because where we go to school it is in the city and sometimes you get policemen going past and I get very paranoid, so I don't like doing it under those types of circumstances. The thing is I have never been to anywhere where I have had to be sneaky or cautious about it, so I think on the whole the whole atmosphere is really relaxed".

Indeed my time on the door also confirmed this impression, we never called the police even when we caught people with hundreds of pills on them. Despite this blasé attitude my respondents were perceptive to changes in the club environment and some mentioned that a certain club was clamping down and thus they would not be so blatant about things. As J said about a club he frequented: *"He just walked around openly going pills, pills, but the police have done a big crackdown in the clubs in central London and a lot of people are getting busted – but at club X it's OK."* This was a familiar tale and my respondents knew which clubs employed stringent searches and which ones did not. The gossip which fills the hiatus between each night out would include bits of information passed around by contacts with a club's hierarchy or from other clubbers so that all my interviewees felt their risks of getting caught or punished if caught were minimal.

Subculture, club culture or no culture?

Traditional British theories of subculture have taken such a recent battering that to attack them now is to attack something of a straw man. Their preoccupation with the contradictions of class position and their over elaborate re-interpretations of moronic behaviour, has drawn criticism from both pre-eminent empiricists⁷⁵

⁷⁵ For example, Hobbs' typically wry attack on the Birmingham school (Hobbs, 1985, 121) "None of my respondents was apparently aware of facing contradictions, and the initial tentative adoption of a specific style appears to have stemmed from a subsequent interest in their own appearance rather than an attempt at solving contradictions within the parent culture".

and theorists⁷⁶. In regard to club cultures, “taking of youthful discourses literally” and thus mistaking the way “youth subcultures characterise their own activities” (Thornton, 1997, 201) for the way they actually behave, has lead to youth being idealised as overly political or as Malbon also points out overly utopian. As a result, Thornton (1995, 162) in relation specifically to clubbers, surmises. “I am forced to conclude that subcultures are best defined as social groups that have been labelled as such. This is the most convincing way to account for the fact that some cultural groupings are deemed subcultural while others, whose practices may be equally arcane are not. Scholars need not embark on longwinded attempts to define the indeterminate (like subculturalists discussed earlier), nor need they explain subcultures out of existence by referring to class dichotomies (like some sociologists of youth)”.

Meanwhile the idea of drug based subcultures could be seen to have come under attack from a completely different source, arguing that they can no longer exist because drug taking is now a norm, part of culture not sub-culture. This is the drug normalisation thesis at its strongest and this is how H. Parker's argument has been presented by his detractors. “For many young people taking drugs has become the norm and the prediction that over the next few years certainly in urban areas, non drug trying adolescents will be a minority group. In one sense they will be deviants⁷⁷”. Therefore, drug taking is no longer a marker of sub-cultural cache in the way it was only thirty years ago, for both the working class and the bohemian.

Yet, I would agree that in both his more recent books Parker has moved away from this generalisation and instead is arguing more realistically that “heroin and cocaine are not included in the thesis. Similarly chaotic combination drug use

⁷⁶ The most trenchant critique of Hebdige et al. is in my opinion by Stanley Cohen (1997) in the ‘Symbols of Trouble’, in the Gelder, K and Thornton, S. (eds.) *The Subcultures Reader.*, pp.149-162.

⁷⁷ Quotation from (Parker et al., 1995, 26) reproduced in Shinner, M and Newburn, T. (1999) ‘Taking Tea with Noel: The Place and Meaning of Drug use in Everyday life’. In N. South (ed.) *Drugs; Cultures, Controls and Everyday Life*, London: Sage, pp. 139-159.

and dependent 'daily' drug use form no part of our conceptualisation⁷⁸. Thus "normalisation in the context of recreation drug use cannot be reduced to the intuitive phrase 'it is normal' for young people to take drugs: that is both to oversimplify and overstate the case. We are concerned only with the spread of deviant activity and associated attitudes from the margins towards the centre of youth culture where it joins many other accommodated deviant activities such as excessive drinking and casual sexual encounters and daily cigarette smoking". This is certainly how my respondents viewed their activities. They saw their drug taking as very different from those who took 'hard' drugs such as heroin and crack and they perceived their own drug taking as unremarkable.

However, I would still want to classify some of my respondents as a subculture in the traditional sense, for example, my main group, when interviewed initially⁷⁹. This was partly because they took a variety of hard drugs, drugs that have never been reportedly been used by more than ten per cent of any age group and drugs which are still illegal. (This is despite the dramatic changes in the availability of drugs⁸⁰.) Thus, as groups who felt that they were surrounded by

⁷⁸ Parker, H., Aldridge, J. and Measham, F. (1998) *Illegal Leisure: The Normalisation of Adolescent Recreational Drug Use*, London: Routledge, p.152.

⁷⁹ When their drug taking abated and leisure activities become more disparate then they become just a group of friends. As Thornton observes (1995, 200) club cultures are "ad hoc communities with fluid boundaries which may come together and dissolve in a single summer or endure for several years". This is not to say that Hamersley et al's 'Patterns of Ecstasy Use by Drug Users'. *British Journal of Criminology*, 39, (4), p.637 general observation that "the important point to take from both tables is that ecstasy users even the most involved users have lives beyond drug use" is wrong. But it is to argue that the important proviso needs to be added that for heavy ecstasy users virtually all leisure activities connect to their drug use in some way. So for example leisure activities which they take as indicative of diversity could actually be connected to drug use. For example from their Table 6 (other activities indulged in at least monthly), playing computer games or going to the pub could be subsumed under a more general drug culture rather than being separate from it. Thus playing games could be a way of dealing with the 'come down' and going to the pub, a place to meet before a club or to score drugs.

⁸⁰ As Shinner and Newcombe correctly observe, these dramatic changes are "Firstly, in the second half of the 1990s, there are relatively few young people who are prevented from using drugs because of their scarcity. Secondly, the vast majority of young people will therefore be presented with a real or active decision about taking drugs" (1999, 151). They are also correct in characterising recent British drug use as "Overall, changing patterns of drug use appear to have taken the form of a steady increase". However their judgement that "British data that are available do not support the contention that changes in patterns of drug use since the 1950s are indicative of major epochal change" (1999, 149) seems strange. Though the increase of drug use is an evolutionary one, by the end of the century the amount of people who have tried

drugs and by other drug takers they were relatively common⁸¹ but also as groups who actively chose to take these drugs, they are still relatively rare.

I think this is also so, for the second reason, that their behaviour conforms to the sub-cultural norm as defined for example by Clarke, "their lives were creatively bound together by the four "modes of symbolic construction through which style is generated by subculture: dress, music, ritual and argot"⁸². They were of the same age, went to the same events, wore the same style of clothes, listened to very similar music and discussed their leisure activities, with jargon that only they or others like them could understand. They also demonstrated shared rituals of drug consumption, purchasing and concealment, inside and outside the club environment. Indeed, despite Thornton's plea for the centrality of the media in subcultural definition and the circulation of 'cool'⁸³ her definition of what constitutes a *club* culture(as opposed to *sub*-culture) is in fact identical to Clarke's. Club culture contains (1997, 200) "a cluster of subcultures which share this territorial affiliation, but maintain their own *dress code*, dance styles, *music* genres and catalogue of authorised and illicit *rituals*".

In arguing for the centrality of individual behaviour over media attention, I am not trying to erase the media as an important influence on my group's lives nor as an

cannabis has at least quadrupled and a whole new range of drugs exist which at least ten per cent of the population has also tried. In my opinion this is indicative of major change.

⁸¹ This attitude of my respondents is best summed up by this comment on the normality of taking drugs, its "not normal but not abnormal". This is a more verbose example of this attitude from the core group, "To be honest, all my close friends except for one do it and a couple of them were like I don't really want to do it, they didn't have any problems with me doing it but they were like don't kill yourself be sensible with it, but now they have tried it themselves they are like yeah they like it." The heaviest drug takers either saw drug taking as all prevalent or took the ideological position that there was no difference in the use of all drugs legal or illegal and thus most people took drugs. In my opinion, the later response is a good example of what Matza and Sykes, (1957) call the "Techniques of Neutralisation". "In this sense the delinquent has his cake and eats it to, for he remains committed to the dominant normative system yet so qualifies its imperatives that violations are 'acceptable' if not 'right'". He does this in this case by the "condemnation of the condemners". 'Techniques of Neutralisation: A Theory of Delinquency', *American Sociological Review*, 22, p.667.

⁸² Clarke, J. Hall, S. Jefferson, T. and Roberts, B. (1975) 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class' in Gelder, K & Thornton, S, (eds.) *The Subcultures Reader*, London: Routledge, p.108.

⁸³ She is in my opinion over stating the importance of the media. She states the amount of" media coverage, creation and exposure correlates in complex ways to the "the difference between being *in* or *out* of fashion or high or low in subcultural capital". (Thornton, 1997, 203)

important agent in the assembly of what is cool. However what I am arguing is, that firstly my respondents neither had a passion for any single medium nor viewed any media without some cynicism⁸⁴. And secondly that though some people may be attracted to the culture in pursuit of cool, my respondents' overriding preoccupation was with something much more prosaic, safety.

Returning to the evidence in support of my first argument that my respondents used a variety of media sceptically, no-one in my core group engaged with "subcultural media". They neither bought magazines nor fanzines, preferring to spend all their money on drugs or clubs. The few respondents in other groups, who did read them, were split between those who enjoyed their coverage⁸⁵ and the bigger drug takers who surprisingly were quite critical of their coverage of ecstasy use: *"I think it is ridiculous. The article '100 best drugs' I just don't understand, it's not interesting, it doesn't say anything new. They glorify it so much. But people who go every week and take pills every week surely it becomes routine. It doesn't have to be glorified, I don't find it interesting reading about skunk or cocaine with stupid, stupid pictures"*⁸⁶.

⁸⁴ I am aligning myself with Sonia Livingstone and her arguments for the active audience. See Livingstone, S. (1996) *Making Sense of Television: The Psychology of Audience Interpretation*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann. This is to say that my respondents interpreted the media in the light of their own experience and were aware of any underlying political positions any given commentator took. More broadly the idea of a moral panic has come under intense criticism (McRobbie, 1994, 198-219) or Murji, K. (1998) *Policing Drugs*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 69-82, more recently and though most of the critique is valid I wouldn't want to dispense with the term entirely. Yes, the media are not monolithic and yes, it is best to characterise the media today as the multi-media. Yes, interest groups will leap to the defence of most new "folk devils" and yes moral panics are mostly just "intensification's of existing ideological norms which often centred on the "fascination with the other". However the most popular media are still owned by small number of companies who are more likely to support certain views which encourage us to believe in folk devils be they paedophiles, drug dealers or steamers. Also it is my opinion a useful label to describe, not just the coverage of ecstasy by the media but individual episodes like the reporting of the death of Leah Betts or the "Range Rover killings". These events did prompt a heightened level of concern, increased hostility towards those associated with the activity and an exaggeration of the seriousness and commonness of the threat.

⁸⁵ *"I used to read them for the record, Mixmag DJ. Obviously they didn't promote it but they didn't act up against it, but how can you, if you are a clubbing magazine cos you know as well as everyone else knows, that drugs are a big part of clubbing culture"*.

⁸⁶ *"The magazines reflect the attitude of their readers, rather than shaping them. It has gone much more druggy recently with all the good pills in club-land and to be honest with the staff of Mixmag doing a lot more pills and writing about it"*. See also: *"There are certain aspects which are good. They have taken on the duty to inform- but they trivialise it up to a point. It would be better to get to a situation like in Amsterdam where you can find out what's in your pill. If they could provide that kind of information it*

Instead the media most respondents engaged with were either the tabloids or the broadsheets. Unsurprisingly, as the media often treats criminal stories as a commodity, “whose audience or market values may be higher than its value according to other criteria of relevance, accuracy or concern about the events’ real significance”⁸⁷, they were not digested whole. Instead, what emerged was that the broadsheets were seen to provide more balanced coverage than the tabloids or the government⁸⁸. Though the criticism most consistently voiced was that the media’s insistence in reporting every death apparently caused by ecstasy was creating an erroneous image of the drug⁸⁹. Meanwhile, information about the effects of the drug was often gathered from the Internet or from people close to them. The experiences or opinions of family or friends, seemed to be crucial in the decision making process about where to go and what to take⁹⁰.

would be more useful. Ok they are partly there, but let us not forget that people have died from shit pills. They have taken on the duty to inform but if they can expand that”.

⁸⁷ Barak, G. (ed), (1994) *Media, Process and The Social Construction of Crime: Studies in News Making Criminology*, New York: Garland Publishing,

⁸⁸ This distinction was made by my respondents who might be critical of the media yet support the position of status quo, in regard to ecstasy and the current drug laws. Only two out of the six thought that ecstasy should be legal and this proportion was reflected in my other interview groups. The heaviest drug users were most likely to support a change in the law. Interestingly most of my respondents did not, as they were not worried about being caught and despite taking the drug viewed its wide spread availability as potentially dangerous. Still their attitude to the government was unlikely to be positive, for example: “*The Government gives off signals that drugs are inherently wrong but they can’t be very convincing. Not with Liam Gallagher at Downing Street, who is a cocaine addict and Tony Blair shaking his hand and then with Jack Straw’s son being arrested*”.

⁸⁹ For example from the core group: “*Newspapers take an over exaggerated delight in reporting on any death they know but do not report that a huge percentage of kids taking it have been taking it for a long period of time.*”

⁹⁰ An example of the pre-eminence of the personal over mediated knowledge is the way that everybody except the foreigners referenced the death of Leah Betts as off putting but then went on to try the drug. As I don’t have a group of similar young people who have not taken the drug I cannot ignore the fact that the story of her death may have put others off experimenting altogether. However again from my core group this kind of account for the reason they took the drug is typical, “*Yeah there was that whole Leah Betts situation that went down a few years ago yeah ago. I was dead set against ecstasy for a while. I was suspicious of it because firstly, you don’t know what the effects are and I heard about all bad stories in the press about it and I was anti ecstasy for a bit and I was content to smoke my weed whatever but the effect it had on Jim was what really prompted me. Because Jim was the person that was never really into house music and he got into happy house, the way it changed him after he had been clubbing a few times, he was telling me it is a whole different world and I was thinking wow it really has changed him, I was really interested in seeing what it was like*”.

In fact, Thornton presents another argument about sub-cultures which is far more relevant to my study. She argues that these groups, though they do contain a utopian element and vague anti-authoritarian sentiments, are also ridden with their own pejorative distinctions. These are made manifest in cultural differences which may not be examples of "deviance/dissidence but rather of discrimination/distinction". Thus she argues that youth cultures desire for classlessness is in part only a "strategy for transcending being classed". "A means of obfuscating the dominant structure in order to set up an alternative." Even worse that club cultures contains a pernicious split between the "hip" and its antithesis the dreaded "mainstream", which is characterised as feminine, white and working class⁹¹.

This argument builds on the established theory of Bourdieu, that "nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies" and applies this insight to modern youth. My empirical material supports Thornton's observation that youth are more likely to stress that "other crowds are assumed to be homogeneous, so their own crowds are perceived as heterogeneous," (1995,111) and that they will disparage the 'other' as mainstream in precisely the terms she describes (minus the feminine aspect). This is the first groups description of the crowd at the first club they went to:

"The Majority are white Reebok classic and tight jean wearing twats. Well if you saw them in the street, there are the sort of people you might even cross the

⁹¹ The debate over whether ecstasy culture is inclusive or exclusive has also been taken up by Malbon who I think accurately argues that it isn't anywhere near as inclusive as it purports to be, however the fact that it contains aspects of utopianism is of some significance. He sites Richard Dyer's argument to the effect that this is a general feature of entertainment, "Two of the taken for granted descriptions of entertainment, as 'escape' and as 'wish fulfilment', point to its central thrust, namely utopianism..... It presents head on as it were what utopia would feel like rather than how it is would be organised". Dyer, R. (1993) 'Entertainment and Utopia' in Dyer, R. (ed.) *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London: Routledge.p273. There are though two points that can still be made, firstly some clubbing crowds are more inclusive than others and secondly that the club environment still offers a relatively mixed leisure environment if one includes not just the composition of the crowd but the amount of interaction among them.

road. They're beer boys, but when they are inside they are all loved up and safe and I chat with all of them⁹²”.

The club they then chose to go to regularly was as predicted, described as “mixed” and the people though still seen as different from them did not attract the same level of snobbery, “ I like X because you get a big diverse crowd and most people are Australians but you also get South Africans and you get lots of French people, not so much of this club has an 18-30 feel about it, that's why I like X better, the atmosphere is much more relaxed and you get this communal feeling at X⁹³”. With the other groups, who had all been participants in several club scenes, the tendency was repeated. This manifested itself in a blasé attitude to the club scene they were currently in or had just left but a more disparaging view of their early forays. This is an example from someone in the group who had recently stopped, comparing their beginning club experiences to their later ones:

“Young people, everybody out of their face basically. It was worse at the hardcore raves actually, at the hardcore raves, it was like everybody walking around chewing gum, going alright mate, alright mate, are you having a good time? That was a lot more of a drug crazed atmosphere, that was at the hardcore raves. At the house clubs you tended to get a bit of an older more up market clientele. You would also get everybody glammed up with the glitter on their faces”.

The weakness with Thornton's position and by extension Bourdieu's, is in their eagerness not to “see youthful discourses as transparent windows on the world “

⁹² Here is another description, “You have your 89 ravers and they look fucked up, I'm not sure what they are wearing and then you have your beer boys with their Ralph Lauren's and tight jeans. Trevor's, Essex boys...

D.S: Are they similar to you?

“I hope not, it was the first club I went too, I do like the people in there even though they're not like me.”

⁹³ Here is another account of the same club, “They are all Australian in there – all a bit older I think we are the youngest people in there, there are a lot of hippies in there, they are the good vibe tribe, everyone in there is well safe, really nice people.”

they instead collapse the whole experience into a series of distinctions⁹⁴. These distinctions are solely based on taste with no reference to the existence of actual empirically verifiable reality. This is apparent for example, when Thornton contrasts the popularity of the club especially in contrast with the quintessentially British Institution the 'the pub'. The four reasons she gives for clubs popularity (late licence, more escapist décor, the concentration on youth fads and fashions, and facilitation of people with like tastes, be they musical, sartorial or sexual) may be true but the reason most vociferously voiced by my respondents was the lack of violence. This was expressed by both men⁹⁵ and women⁹⁶ by the former in the fear of fights and the latter as the dislike of unwanted sexual attention. I would argue that these strongly voiced views are not evidence of mere distinctions but are accurate appraisals of risk. The violence induced by alcohol in pubs⁹⁷ far exceeds the drug fuelled violence at clubs. In this sense club culture

⁹⁴ I have used this word deliberately as it is the title of P. Bourdieu's (1984) most important book, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

⁹⁵ This was an argument put forward by the group now abroad "“Have you seen anyone who is violent on ecstasy and have you seen anyone who is violent on alcohol? Think about it nine lads together, that typical pub crawl where you have six lagers and three bitters and 12 seconds to drink it in before you get to the next pub, and after a while you tend to see the different reactions in people and you always going to have 1 or maybe 2 of them who are going to cause some aggro, you don't have that”. These sentiments were from the group who have now stopped, “I mean sometimes you meet people, but in the club your talking to someone and it tends to mean more, it is much more friendly in a club. I know that is the effects of ecstasy but people are much more docile and open but in a pub, you know I have seen fights break out in pubs serious fights and alcohol makes people belligerent. And in pubs people lose control in pubs and they do in clubs and parties, but in a very different kind of way. There is something about alcohol which makes people think it is quite alright to express their opinion if you see what I mean in any way they feel alright, as I said in clubs there is quite a bit of freedom but there are still restrictions which you would be quite happy to enforce. Like you wouldn't push somebody out of the way, or have a go at somebody because you feel like, everyone is your friend. While in a pub there is a lot of, everyone else is an arsehole, kind of thing”.

⁹⁶ “One cool thing about being at a rave especially as a women is that people don't hassle you or hit on you and stuff, or it is real easy to tune it out. When I am E'ing and stuff I don't want to deal with male attention, I am out with all my friends and the pick up vibe is just not part of it, or it is real easy to deflect with your eyes. While drunk people are going to a club to scam, its that whole meat market thing, there not there to dance and have fun all night, it's a completely different vibe and you can feel it and sense it, its obnoxious and especially when you are fucked up wondering around on drugs, and these guys are hassling you or whatever or being loud and obnoxious. Alcohol and drugs do not mix when people are on them, it's a drag”.

⁹⁷ Deehan, A. (1999), *Alcohol and Crime: Taking Stock*. Home Office Policing and Reducing Crime Unit. It is important to be as sceptical with the statistics about alcohol and violence as I have been with ecstasy and mortality. Therefore it must be mentioned that despite the fact that a high proportion of violent crime is committed by an intoxicated person (50-80%) research has concluded that, “there is no simple relationship between alcohol and aggression; situational factors play a significant role; and there is a complex role between expectations and aggressive acts” (p. 8). However, it is becoming increasingly clear from Dick Hobbs' new work on bouncers and the night time economy, that violence is both endemic in the night time

does provide a genuine alternative in the same way bohemian culture was beginning to offer in the late sixties and seventies. As Young argued a culture based around drink⁹⁸ is very different from one based on drugs. Of course what is more subjective and distinct to each group is the perception of how safe a particular crowd is for them to be in and how much they value the fear/excitement of feeling under threat. In some clubbing cultures the image of being 'dangerous, authentic, or street'⁹⁹ is coveted, in others it is not. In my respondents this was not seen as important and they disparaged other club scenes for being more violent than the ones they had chosen but I fully accept other clubbers with different backgrounds, and/ or agenda will seek clubs on the other end of the spectrum.

Typology of Ecstasy Use

drinking culture and is routinely used as an instrument of enforcement by bouncers. In his study, Lister, S. Hobbs, D., Hall, S and Winlow, S. (2000) 'Violence in the Night-Time Economy: Bouncers: The Reporting, Recording and Prosecution of Assaults', *Policing and Society*, 10:383-402. of "police investigation files, as well as violent crime statistics recorded over a three year period, (01/01/96-01/01/99) from the six city centre beats of Eastville division. Almost 70% of the city centre violence occurred between 21.00 hours-0.300 hours; at least 29% of the offences were recorded as occurring within licensed premises" (p.386). Also, for example, from the same article despite the caveat that "predominantly bouncers attempt to defuse aggressive situations through the spoken word" (footnote 7), "their occupational culture is geared towards dealing with violence in the most effective manner they know how, yet at the same time preventing harm to themselves. Therefore, when confronted with violent postures, challenges or incidents, the (re)action of the bouncers, who have traditionally, by requirement, been physically able men, is often to overcome the violent threat with greater violence" (p.387).

⁹⁸ (Young, 1971, 137). He describes alcohol's subversive properties as being completely- "subsumed by the work ethic". A drug used to "relax and re-fresh before the inevitable return to reality".

⁹⁹ And at these sorts of venues, violence or the threat of violence may be more common. These passages are two examples of people talking about the less salubrious clubs they have been to. The first is from the group at university: "*The spirit of rave really, friendly or stuff in central London like X at the Y. And fucking hell, the 'Island' in Stockwell. And I stopped going there after a geezer was shot on the door and people would try to mug you inside. Lots of people were just trying it on, not real violence but people wouldn't get out of your way and you had to just push past them, and it was an intimidating atmosphere. But what made me stop going was when we went to X in Dalston. I went home but my friend was walking through Hackney and some geezer who had been to the rave pulled a knife on him and said give me all your money or your drugs. And I thought fuck it I don't need to be going to these places and be putting myself in danger*".

And from group one, "*But you have to be careful at X it is a much more hostile environment because I remember one time when I went out there a fight broke out and I didn't realise this because I was so completely gone. I was sitting in the corner and this fight broke out in front of me, some women got tripped up and some water got spilt and some got spilt on me but I didn't even realise this. I do get the feeling that the atmosphere is not as great in X as it is in Y, I have never met anyone I really hated in either club but in X I tend to be a bit more weary of the people*".

Each respondent had an early experience with cannabis and then a couple of years later tried ecstasy. They had a universal dislike of hard drugs and near immunity to police interference, except for the occasional caution for possession of cannabis. Initially, they had heard bad things about ecstasy, especially that one pill can kill you. However, the message that the government and the press sent out is so negative that it made them cynical of its veracity. They are not just attracted to the drug but are attracted to a scene which is less aggressive and less based on dating than what is seen is the primary alternative, alcohol based youth culture. The drug itself is readily available through informal contacts and compared to other drugs is inexpensive in relation to the powerful high it provides. Their first ecstasy experience is impressive (especially compared to other drugs they may have tried), though due to their inability to guarantee quality combined with its strength and its tendency to produce immediate minor physical side effects, some can be quickly put off. Those who continue, especially when they use it in a club scene can be overwhelmed. The novelty of the whole experience, the positive high of the drug, the warm, unthreatening nature of the ecstasy driven club scene is seductive. During the initial period, current friendships are perceived to be strengthened, as shy people find their voice, the drug breaks down social barriers, and the frequently shared intimacy of dancing together late at night makes pre-existing bonds tighter. These profound experiences will influence their leisure time, changing their social lives and using up some if not all, their surplus income.

Most groups will have quickly established a routine, They will have their favourite clubs/music/ DJ's they follow and they will have established their drug rituals. This will usually mean one of the members of the group using a connection to buy the drug in advance for the group at a reduced price. This is preferred to buying drugs in a club because this market is perceived to be more expensive, more unreliable in terms of availability (not always dealers with enough pills there) and quality(the higher chance of getting a bad or fake ecstasy pill) . Once

in the club, they will socialise with others, though most will also leave with the group they came with. Inside, some people will spend the majority of the time dancing, others talking to their friends, depending on the individual and the effects of the pills. Hardly any money will be spent and most feel that paying inflated prices for water is a potentially dangerous imposition. Afterwards, they will come down together at someone's house and will smoke marijuana to 'chill out'.

Every group will go clubbing with a different intensity. This will be primarily determined by the amount of money and time and space available. Money for entry, drugs and travel; time for the mandatory late nights and days spent recovering, and space to smoke and come down without interference. In my group, those at university had more of both than those still at school or those working. All of them will develop an increasing tolerance to the drug. People will have to take more to experience the same high. At this point some people decide to increase the dose, some people also experiment with other drugs, some do both. This can be to do with the peculiarity of a local drug scene (a certain drug is easily available) or the influence of one member of the group. On the other hand some people have already reached a dose that they feel uncomfortable exceeding due to money constraints, physical constraints or psychological constraints.

While building up a tolerance to the drug, users will become increasingly aware of its negative effects. Already they will be feeling fatigued the next day but they will also be more aware of the dreaded 'come downs'. This will leave them deflated and possibly depressed the next day and increasingly at the beginning of the week. The heavier dose and the mixing with other drugs may bring on symptoms of paranoia and anxiety and they will notice that some members of the group are taking far more ecstasy than others. If living at home, they might be worried that their new behaviour is becoming increasingly obvious to parental scrutiny. The initial feelings of revelation and universal love will begin to be

tempered due to both the frequency of the experience and the increased perception of the drug effects.

On the other hand the group would have made more contacts in the drug world and will be able to get better quality ecstasy at a much reduced price. The same process of familiarisation which dulls the high also makes people more confident about using the drug. They will no longer fear that they will suffer immediate adverse consequences. The drug will be used in other scenarios, at home with friends, after the club, in the bedroom. Routines will be developed to help cope with the negative effects.

At this stage the main predicates for when ecstasy use will cease are the frequency the group goes clubbing and the quality of the local drug market. The quality of the local drug market will be influenced by where they are in the country and to some extent the amount of police interference. The higher the intensity of use in the poorer market, the greater chance of cessation and vice versa.

Meanwhile what was an exhilarating, pleasurable novel experience has become routine, artificial and disruptive. As the effects of ecstasy become less engulfing people realise that the defining feature of their night is the drug. The drug determines the 'loving' atmosphere, vitalises the music, and energises them to stay up all night. The problem is they have to use more of the drug to feel the effects running a greater risk and causing more adverse consequences. Experiences, which were initially considered funny, such as fainting or hallucinations, will lose their appeal, and if schedules change, leisurely come downs will be now perceived as unwanted hangovers. Thus, they will stop and as one member of the group stops the pressure increases on the next and so on. After they have stopped taking ecstasy they will either stop clubbing altogether and gravitate towards other leisure venues(bars, pubs) or they will go clubbing to other sorts of music or continue clubbing to similar music but stay out less late.

They will carry on smoking dope and may increase their use of other substances especially alcohol to fit in to their new leisure options. Their ecstasy experiences will soon become part of the groups' nostalgia. Some individuals will recollect ruefully at time wasted, others time daringly well-spent. Some will never use ecstasy again but others if their circumstances change and they again have the time, the money and friends who do the drug, will experiment again. If this happens, a similar process will repeat itself. After a long break the initial effects of ecstasy seem to return and people may find themselves repeating a familiar cycle.

However, despite all the adverse conditions and effects others will not only carry on using more frequently but in greater quantity. Some people are completely seduced by the experience, which has two key components; the drug and the social life. Clubbing which combines the two will be at the epicentre of their week and as they find themselves more deeply involved in the scene they will want to and be able to go out more frequently. Both the price of admission and the price of drugs will continue to fall with their increased contacts. They will have access to larger quantities of ecstasy and will want to prolong the high so will start to take it when most clubbers are coming down or in increasingly mundane situations. The consequences are that its effects become less and less potent. To counteract this trend they will look for other drugs which allow them to stay high in the club environment combining it with hallucinogens (acid, ketamine,) and other stimulants (speed, GHB). The consequences of this kind of heavy mixed drug use are severe especially as they are likely to find in the other club environments others with similar patterns of heavy drug use. This type of drug use is likely to have a detrimental effect on that person's progress and will only cease in the event of outside help, near death experience or sudden change of environment.

Clearly, the great majority of people fit into the first category and I think it is impossible to predict just by a basic interview or questionnaire who will graduate

to the second kind of drug use. However what is abundantly clear from my sample is that it is not random and by spending time with each group it was evident that people who had a deeply felt sense of insecurity relating primarily to their family background were the ones in the later category. Ecstasy driven clubbing was particularly attractive to them, because not only did the high, provide mental relief, the club environment supplied feelings of friendship and intimacy lacking elsewhere.

6. Dystopia

In this section I will use the contrasting evidence from my two empirical studies to make a number of different arguments. As stated at the beginning of my thesis, my underlying idea is the idea of the 'commodity chain', a concept that thrives on contrast. As the methodology demands I have looked at a location, the club, as a key area where the drug is both consumed and distributed. I have also looked at distribution: The dealing of ecstasy by both groups who visit the club and bouncers who work at the club. I have also looked at consumption, the way the drug was used by both groups and in the second section I have looked in detail, at the subjective experience of those who take the drug over a period of time. In both pieces of field work I have also looked at regulation and contrasted the growth of severe drug laws with their *laissez-faire* enforcement.

In the next two chapters I want to place my material into the broader theoretical debates that my empirical work touches on. These debates cannot but be broad, as most modern criminological theorists recognise that crime cannot easily be divorced from the wider society that surrounds it. More specifically neither can recreational drug use. As Howard Parker argues "Each of the main themes in the modernity debate appear to connect to the drugs story we are about to tell. The new widespread availability of a whole range of drugs packages, marketed in the 1990's mimics the process of commodification and global trading and consumption patterns identified in contemporary social theory. The way in which drug use has interwoven itself into fashion, music, dancing, partying indeed drinking right across Europe corresponds with theoretical ideals about global markets, the ascendancy of consumption and the transportability and Trans-nationalisation of youth culture" (Parker, 1998, 31).

I will therefore be placing my work within both the debates about modernity as well as more traditional criminology. On the one hand it fits into the current theoretical debates over an all consuming consumer culture, globalisation and the increased speed of technological change. On the other, it can also easily be placed into the debate over the normalisation of crime, the rise of a culture of control and the criminal as a rational actor who makes an informed decision over the relative profit of selling drugs versus the risk of being caught.

However, I will also be arguing that despite my evidence at first sight seeming to run concurrent with these orthodoxies, it raises several critical anomalies. That is, from my evidence it seems that many of the previously mentioned arguments are exaggerated. Firstly, a global consumer culture may not be as pervasive as it first seems and rather than it being all consuming, it follows the patterns of 19th century colonisation from core to periphery. Secondly, the seemingly novel and eye catching manifestation of popular culture may in fact have strong antecedents. This history of continuity raises several problems for the idea that illicit leisure and its regulation has changed dramatically. Thirdly, that my evidence is far less depressing than criminologists like to acknowledge and runs contrary to the three big gloomy current ideas: the normalisation of crime, the increasing control of British society and its sociological convergence with America.

In conclusion, rather than just leaving a confused balance sheet, I will also offer some alternatives to the current narratives available. It is my position that far from seeing the replacement of a class society with a consumer society, we are seeing its continuation. Rather than speculating that the grand narratives of the enlightenment have been abandoned again, we see their persistence. Subsequently, we have a capitalist society not dissimilar to its 19th century predecessor driven and harnessed to the growth of technology. This dynamo has paradoxically created new technological tools for the state to exercise its control yet at the same time it has created many new distractions and, in combination

with enlightenment beliefs, the possibility of enjoying new freedoms increasingly managed by the market. These freedoms are in some respects conservative as they reduce the chance of an alternative emerging to challenge capitalist society, at the same time they are experienced by people as deeply rewarding. However these freedoms are not enjoyed equally nor are the new controls imposed equally, instead both are subject to the structural inequalities endemic to a class society.

These inequalities are played out on the battlefield of public and private space. For those who are unable to gain access to private space or mass private space their criminality will be under strict surveillance and they face arrest and draconian punishments. However for those who have access to their own private space or the new equivalents much can be enjoyed. It is my argument that ecstasy use and the growth of club culture is another example of the freedom, some might say licence, available to the wealthy young of industrialised nations. A space for those who can afford entry into clubs where drug taking can be enjoyed with relative impunity from the wider laws.

Dystopia

"Is the view of nature and social relations on which the Greek imagination..... is based possible with self-acting mule spindles and railways and locomotives and electrical telegraphs? What chance has the Vulcan against Roberts & Co., Jupiter against the lightening-rod and Hermes against the Credit Mobilier?... Is Achilles possible with powder and lead? Or the Iliad with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine? Do not song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer's bar, hence do not the necessary conditions of epic poetry vanish?" (K.Marx, Grundrisse, pp.110-1, in Swingewood, 1977, 27)

As this quotation reveals there is a strong connection between the debate on the importance of technology and the existence of mass culture. In this section I will set out the theoretical argument for the existence of global consumer culture and its impact on contemporary mass culture with specific reference to the drug ecstasy. This is essentially a dystopian picture, which characterises ecstasy culture as a repressive anodyne adjunct to encroaching consumerism. The starting point for this narrative is the criminological and sociological convergence over an ideal construction of the past. Previously, this fantasy of a crime-free folk culture where the working class are both law abiding yet politically active has been used as a big stick to bang down on any commentator who dares to praise the present. However, as Geoffrey Pearson points out, though both right and left agree that "there was, in the past, a haven of tranquillity", it is a claim made on at best, flimsy historical evidence¹. If we ignore the abstractions of the literary elite² as Alan Swingewood asserts we do, we are left with the far more unsettling picture of life, before mass literacy, education and communications as "hard and brutal, dominated by illiteracy, superstition and servility, squalor and poverty."

Yet if this sanctuary has been reluctantly abandoned, an alternative more robust one has been found in the more recent but no less attractive late fifties and early sixties. Here is a period of time where crime rates were still low and post-Wolfenden people were beginning to enjoy the same kinds of liberal freedoms they do today. This is seen as an idyllic time, the standard of living had increased but the disparity between rich and poor was not as great as it is now³. It was also

¹ Pearson, G. (1983) *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*. London: Macmillan, "'Reclaim the Night!' says the Feminist slogan, confronting us yet again with that nagging difficulty : because it is not clear where we can locate historically a time when women were, in fact, free to walk the streets without the possibility of harassment or molestation.", p.235.

² Eliot and Leavis are typical of this school of thought. Eliot's critique is of an "emergence of a society deliberately organised for the making of profits and through the influence of advertising and mass education, 'the depression of standards of art and culture'. Eliot's critique of modern society is therefore built around the failure of capitalist institutions to create the kind of moral commitment he associates with traditional religion".(Swingewood, 1977, 7-9).

³ Gabriel, Y and Lang, T. (1995) *The Unmanageable Consumer: Contemporary Consumption and its Fragmentations*, London: Sage. This is a situation also present in the rest of the world, UN development data between the 1960's and 1990's shows that the income of the richest 20% grew from 70% to 85% while the share of the poorest 20% fell from 2.3% to 1.4% of world GNP (p.25).

before the significant changes in the social conditions for young people were to initiate their deleterious consequences. It is only since the 1960's the young have had an increase in both leisure⁴ time and purchasing power⁵, even if some of this new time has been involuntary. These factors have meant as Cohen observes, "new years of unmarried life and twice as much pay" (Cohen, 1980, 20) and have been instrumental in the formation of British youth's multitude of cultures. These new trends have also created corresponding changes in the way people spend and value their leisure time, with large scale recreational drug use, clubbing, multimedia and package holidays all innovations of the last two decades.

This leads onto the second part of the argument, these changes have had big consequences and a dynamic consumer society has replaced this pre-sixties idyll. Sociological theory was quick to notice and label this rapid movement as inherent in capitalism, "all that is solid melts into air"⁶. And to argue that most recently the pace has increased, now live in a society that moves forward akin to a juggernaut⁷, indeed a juggernaut equipped with a "turbo"⁸. This turbo-capitalism has overtaken the nation state and replaced it with the global economy and accelerated away from the hardships of production to embrace the consumer society. The evolution of a prosperous service sector economy with new types of

Giddens, A. (1998) *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, "In the UK the gap between the highest paid and the lowest paid workers is greater than it has been in the last fifty years. Over the last twenty years the poorest 10% have seen their real income decline", p. 105.

⁴ Argyle, M. (1996) *The Social Psychology of Leisure*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, Leisure is defined as "The general enjoyment of freely chosen activities carried out for no material gain", p.4.

⁵ Bourdieu, P. (1984). If economic power is primarily the power to keep economic necessity, then the young with no mortgages, spouses or children are free to indulge. They do this in the same way as others in 'conspicuous consumption' or spending money on gratuitous luxury 'drink, drugs, clothes', p.55

⁶ From the communist manifesto but also the title of M. Berman's (1983), brilliant book on modernisation. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso.

⁷ Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity. He uses the metaphor of a juggernaut to describe the way our world is moving, though it may be worth noting that considering the post-modern arguments about the abandonment of the grand narratives of history (see for example, Lyotard, J. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, that the most striking feature of the metaphor is not its implied precariousness but that we are still moving forward .

⁸ Turbo-capitalism: Edward Luttwak's phase (1995).

leisure and consumers has provoked big claims for consumption's consequence. M. Davidson views consumption as the basic mode of all our activity and states "most people have a minimal relationship to both production and distribution"⁹. Meanwhile, Miller announces that "Consumption is at the vanguard of history" and argues that a consumer society now exists: "The consumer society exists when as in industrial societies today, most people have a minimal relationship to production and distribution such that consumption provides the only area left to us through which we might potentially forge a relationship with the world" (Miller, 1995, 1 and 17).

The crux of this argument can be reduced to the simple statement that people are now driven by that which they do not need¹⁰? Or in Galbraith's¹¹ far more eloquent words, "Were it so that a man arising each morning was assailed by demons which instilled him with a passion sometimes for silk shirts sometimes for kitchen ware, sometimes for chamber pots, etc there would be every reason to applaud the effort to find the goods. But should it be that this passion was the result of his first having cultivated the demons, and should it also be that his effort to allay it stirred the demons to greater and greater effort, there would be questions to how rational was his solution. Unless restrained by conventional attitudes, he might wonder if the solution lay with more goods or fewer demons".

Thus our wants cannot be reduced to our needs and our wants do not have any self-limits built in. This logic can be applied to the consumption of ecstasy and is

⁹ Davidson, M. (1992) *The Consumerist Manifesto: Advertising in Post-Modern Times*, London: Routledge, p. 203.

¹⁰ This is a question which has provoked much debate but no resolution. What are needs and what are luxuries. Clearly this depends on the cultural and historical position of the person in question. However despite this, various authors have tried to make a variety of distinctions. For example, Douglas, M. and Isherwood, B. (1996) *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, London: Routledge, Engel's law, "Necessities are defined as those goods which are bought in the same quantities regardless of change in prices or incomes. Luxuries are those goods which an individual will cut down on response to a drop in income" (p.69). Another attempt by Belk, R. (1995), 'Studies in the New Consumer Behaviour' in (Miller, 1995): "A more promising avenue of enquiry, distinguishes between low and high-involvement consumption and seeks to demonstrate that the personal meanings of consumption are greater in the case of high involvement products. There is some evidence that enduring involvement with a product category like automobiles or clothing results in greater use of such products to define the self....". (p. 71).

¹¹ Galbraith, J. (1985) *The Affluent Society*, 3rd edition, London: Deutsch, p.126.

a problem for those who see drug use as part of delinquency and an effort to “manufacture excitement” in the face of boredom¹². In a consumer society not only are new wants and aspirations created but these desires are infinite. There are few limits on the pursuit of excitement. Indeed its pursuit is constantly encouraged. Thus, the provision of new goods or new leisure spaces is unlikely to prevent the quest for more and better fun. The meeting of a need may help but only if that need is static and in the case of leisure this is not the case. This is reflected in my empirical work, which shows there are numerous people using ecstasy who have had the greatest of access to every conceivable legal leisure option. Their search for a high is not bounded by any fixed ideas of happiness but instead the frequent intermixing of drugs is indicative of a constant striving for more.

Indeed, there is also evidence from my field work that ecstasy can be fitted into this emphasis on consumption and seen as a commodity as much as a drug. Though its symbolic and practical value was contingent on whether someone took the drug or not. In my ethnography, when working with people who didn't take the drug the drug had a strictly instrumental value. Though worthless to them personally, in the club environment, it was a currency nearly as popular as money. It could be redeemed at face value(ten pounds), exchanged for a favour or kudos in the internal economy or swapped on the barter economy .

However for the ecstasy user, an ecstasy pill represented something much more, especially if embossed with a brand that was reputed to be of high quality. Ecstasy was seen as having a definite image, very different from 'harder' drugs such as heroin and crack which were perceived as dangerous and addictive. Ecstasy for my respondents was seen as a ticket into a new range of

¹²See Young (1971) “Their culture attempts of provide solutions to these particular problems and when there is a disparity between peoples' aspirations and their means of achieving them a situation occurs which sociologists term anomie. In face of this contingency, people tend to create new means of achieving their aspirations or will alter their desires to achievable ends. i.e. boys who lack excitement and whose leisure activities are staid and uninteresting may create excitement in illicit ways”. (p. 83)

experiences but it quickly became essential to purchase it, to attain the same feelings again. And as predicted by consumer theory, demand was not static, it took on a more and more significant role both financially and psychologically in the lives of my respondents.

This process as Galbraith notes is circular, the more things produced to solve our desire for fun or alleviate our boredom, the more we demand. Drug use is no exception to this rule that consumption and production are inherently bound together. My respondents were avid speculators in the trying and mixing of new drugs and the market had recently produced new drugs to aid this new 'need'. As Galbraith (1985, 126/7) goes on to say. "If the individual's wants are to be urgent, they must be original with himself. They cannot be urgent if they must be contrived for him and above all, they must not be contrived by the process of production by which they are satisfied. For this means that the whole case for the urgency of production, based on the urgency of wants falls to the ground. One cannot defend production as satisfying wants if that production creates the wants¹³".

If production and consumption are so clearly bound together, why the desire to stress the importance of the latter over the former? The answer, so it is argued, is because the class contingent bedrock of entertainment has been eroded and many people either lack a job or will change jobs consistently through their lives. The decline of religion, the breakdown of the nuclear family and the failure of the old ideologies¹⁴ has left people bereft of their old certainties, vulnerable to the allure of material happiness in either the form of endless possessions¹⁵ or the

¹³ A similar point is made by Marx in *The Grundrisse* "Production thus produces consumption; first by furnishing the latter with material; secondly, by determining the manner of consumption; thirdly by creating in consumers a want for its' products as objects of consumption. It thus produces the object, the manner and the desire for consumption. In the same manner, consumption creates the *disposition* of the producer by setting him up as aim and by stimulating wants". Quoted from McLellan, D. (1971), *Marx's Grundrisse*, London: Paladin, p.36.

¹⁴ The recent elections was marked by the failure of the old left and old right.

¹⁵ Tomlinson, D. (1990) *Consumption, Identity, Style*, London: Routledge. "In its endless incarnations style has overwhelmed the perspective of modern consciousness", p.55.

visceral temptations of hedonism¹⁶. Again, the substantial rise in drug use since the 1960's and in particular the recreational use of ecstasy in clubs can be seen as a good example of this. The argument is also normally buttressed by supportive references to 'globalisation'¹⁷. Not only are these hedonistic, conspicuous consumer habits part of a British way of life but they are also part of western life and are already becoming or will become part of global life. The evidence for this is the global upsurge of branded or luxury products that have previously only been confined to the west. Again, the use of ecstasy in Europe, America, Thailand, Russia, and India may seem to be an example of this¹⁸.

This surge in global capitalism has brought benefits of affluence and freedom with it. The ability to experiment, to value and explore our emotions has been adopted by mainstream culture. Thus as P. Mignon declares: "The ideas of the

¹⁶ See Baumann, Z. (1988) *Freedom*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press. "Reality as the consumer experiences it, is the pursuit of pleasure", p.76.

¹⁷ In this section I will be making an argument based on what Sklair calls the culture-ideology of consumption. Sklair, L. (1995) *The Sociology of The Global System*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf. The Consumer Ideology of Capitalism is the third in a triarch that includes The Trans-National Corporation, and the Trans-National Capitalist Class. This does not mean I am reducing Globalisation just to this one aspect but I am examining it in more detail because of its relevance to the debate over the use of ecstasy. However, I am sceptical about other aspects of the theory. My caution can be reduced to one statement. To focus on the novelties of our society and to create theory to account for them is much easier than to take specific examples and see how the new global changes and trends in the world react to and fit into the historical context out of which they emerged. In this sense I am neither in A.Giddens'(1999) terms, a radical or a sceptic (*Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*. London: Profile Books). For example, to take two of his examples that are definitely new global phenomena, "more than a trillion dollars is now turned over *each day* on global currency markets" (p.10). Secondly, the speed of growth for media technologies, it needed a mere four years, after it was made available, for fifty million Americans to be regularly using the internet. Meanwhile it took 40 years for radio in the United States to gain an audience of 50 million (p.12).

On the other hand there are counter examples, the movement of population may be one. Though immigration is today seen as a big global issue it may be that there was more population movement before the 1990's than after it. (Especially, see the forced migrations caused by the world wars). Those uprooted by second world war "numbered some forty-six million in east central Europe alone between 1939 and 1948", from Mazower, M. (1998) *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. London: Allen Lane, p217. Two other empirically dubious examples given by Giddens himself are the process of "reverse colonisation" an extremely minor process compared to the extent of the trade and GNP disparities between North and South. Most glib, though, is the statement "nations today face risks and dangers rather than enemies, a massive shift, in their very nature"(p18). The example given is the war in Kosovo, surely a revealing statement about the limitations of global theory. As this could never be endorsed by the Serbian government old or new nor the Kosovans and their military representatives the KLA.

¹⁸ Drugs have always been at the forefront of global trade as G. Pearson points out in the case of heroin, "linking such dissimilar places and lifestyles as those of the street users of the ghettos in New York and the drab streets of Liverpool, with poor peasant farmers in the opium fields of the North -West frontier of Thailand and the formerly notorious French connection of Marseilles".(Pearson, 1987, 117)

avant-garde or the bohemians have been popularised. The ideal of making oneself visible, of being yourself and doing it for yourself, is no longer the privilege of a minority"¹⁹. Drug taking and club culture are seen as just this kind of opportunity and therefore superficially, the rise of mass culture looks less regressive than progressive.

However, that ignores the second argument over content. That is, that this freedom of expression, is in fact heavily prescribed. What has replaced actual servility, squalor and superstition is a form of imposed commercial entertainment, which revels in and promotes these attributes. In its most modern form this argument views mass culture as doubly pernicious. Not only does it promote acquiescence and servility to a consumer hegemony but it also does so by subduing rebellion to the consumer imperative²⁰.

This theoretical critique which can include the explosion in recreational drug use, works at both the level of individual and society and can account for the arrows of causation to go either way. Entertainment in capitalism is "an escape from the mechanical work process, to recruit strength in order to face it again"²¹. "Our society distinguishes itself by conquering the centrifugal forces with technology rather than terror, on the dual basis of an overwhelming efficiency and an increasing standard of living" (Marcuse, 1964, x). This occurs as the individual's search for transcendence becomes "swallowed in consumerism but that

¹⁹ Mignon, P. (1995) 'Drugs and Popular Music: The Democratisation of Bohemia', in Redhead, S. (ed.), *Rave Off*. London: Ashgate Publishing, p.191.

²⁰ Most recently Baumann (1995, 62) is arguing along the same vein, that our conception of freedom has itself been taken in under the umbrella of consumerism. This has the positive effect of democratising self-construction in self-assertion. Identity is no longer only open to a minority who has to impose its will on others. Instead "it is free from such limitations and it can be in principle be employed by everybody at the same time, " as consumer symbols are always on offer for the creation of any identity. The problem as Baumann (Introduction, 1995) expresses it, is, if freedom of expression has become synonymous with consumer expression the people excluded from consumer expression are doubly penalised. They cannot buy into new consumer identities and are given additional "stigma and deemed unable to handle freedom. They are then patronised as not being able to handle their freedom and are eventually construed as dependent".

²¹ Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1944), *The Dialectic of The Enlightenment*, London: Verso, p.137. Obviously this happened after their writing but Marcuse does mention drugs in *The One Dimensional Man* as another method used by the state, in creating the one dimensional society by soothing and prolonging the stupefaction of the populace.

consumerism is ultimately rather hollow and unsatisfying. The pursuit of selfhood may involve seeking liberation through consumption by indulging in more extreme forms of experience, but in so doing one risks mere conformity to a consumerist imperative²².”

In the example of ecstasy and rave culture, the history of the scene shows, in the space of five years , that it had metamorphosed from free outdoor parties with a relaxed dress code and eclectic audience to indoor, highly priced pay events with their own expensive uniforms and elitist door policies. An original, alarming, youth movement had quickly been commodified, packaged and emasculated ready to be sold back to the young at a profit. Ecstasy has provided a breach for manufacturers into the youth world and with soft drink ads and the opening of clubs, they have used what has come to the surface to the most profitable effect²³. As my interviews show, the scene generates a feeling of rebellion and risk without any apparent political ideology. Instead, the concerns are only hedonistic, ‘what are the best drugs or where are the best clubs’. It has become an example of modern consumer rebellion, “Not only, automatically channelled into the world of commodities, where it can be comprised and appropriated, but it also becomes commodified itself. One can then become a rebel by mealy indulging in the right type of consumption (Lang and Gabriel, 1995, 151)”.

My respondents only felt part of something when they had taken the drugs and it was this which was the crucial gateway into the scene. As rebels or agitators they were quickly neutered by the pleasures of ecstasy and dancing. Even worse, their pursuit of pleasure has expanded the reaches of commercialism as licences have been extended and whole new times of the night have been colonised by consumption²⁴. The capitalist hegemony is impervious to attack.

²²Malley, P. and Mugford, S. (1994), ‘Crime Excitement and Modernity’, in Barak, G. (ed.) *Varieties of Criminology*, New York: Praeger Publishers, p.2.06.

²³ See also (Davidson, 1992) on the fashion industry. “Fashion which codifies, simplifies and sometimes even diversifies sub-cultural styles for the market place. The fashion industry simultaneously stimulates its own market and drains the energy form its sub-cultural prey”, (p.201)

²⁴ It’s not just clubs that are now open late night/ early morning but also restaurants and taxi ranks.

Despite the diametrically opposed class positions, the security team and interviewees held remarkably similar values and aspirations. Both groups recognised the laws and the policing of the laws as acceptable even though their behaviour frequently transgressed them. Both groups had similar conservative aspirations to get high, find a mate and to make as much money as possible. The difference being, in the intensity of the pursuit and the lack of options for the former group in achieving these aims.

To take another example of these processes in popular culture one can turn to recent developments in black subcultures. As Anthony Bicat wryly observed thirty years ago, "The children of the affluent society were identifying and still are, with the American Negroes, their poverty and suffering were striking, and still strike a responsive chord in children of a society that in the words of its leader never had it so good"²⁵. However what happens if American black culture is no longer interested in expressing its poverty or suffering but rather is selling itself as "attractively packaged pseudo-rebellion" (Gilroy, 2000, 179). This is another example of the encroachment of a mass consumer culture as reggae, garage and hip-hop artists unite to sing about their jewellery and their cars. Thus Marcuse is correct on all counts, the "spiritual, metaphysical and bohemian occupations....are no longer contradictory to the status quo and no longer negative. They are rather the ceremonial part of practical behaviourism, its harmless negation and are quickly digested by the status quo as part of its healthy diet" (Marcuse, 1964, 14).

This depressing picture is augmented by the more specific trends intentional or unwitting, which emerge from recent studies of social control²⁶. These trends are widely accepted as a move towards the diffusion of control through the increased

²⁵ Bicat, A. (1970), 'Fifties children: Sixties People'. In Bogdanor, V. and Skide, R. (eds.) *The Age of Affluence, 1951-64*, London: Macmillan, p.331.

²⁶ Cohen, S. (1985) *Visions of Social Control: Crime, Punishment and Classification*, Cambridge: Polity. I have taken my definition of social control from the introduction of his book,. "Social control - the organised ways in which society responds to behaviour and people it regards as deviant, problematic worrying, threatening troublesome or undesirable in some way or another" (p.1).

use of technological innovation for surveillance. As Foucault argues, punishment “leaves the domain of more or less everyday perception and enters that of abstract consciousness; its effectiveness is seen as resulting from its inevitability not from its visible intensity²⁷”. The fact of its inevitability is greatly increased by two factors. Firstly, that despite sincere efforts to the contrary which ostensibly included a full scale attack on many of our key institutions of control, the process has created “wider, stronger and different nets” (Cohen, 1985, 38) . Overall “the system enlarges itself and becomes more intrusive subjecting more and newer groups of deviants to the power of the state and increasing the intensity of control directed at former deviants” (Cohen, 1985, 38). Secondly, again due to a range of imputed motives²⁸ the birth of information technology and the ubiquity of CCTV the state is both more likely to see and know more about all of us, guilty or innocent. Thus to paraphrase Cohen, the new modality of control throughout society is the panoptic. The subject was to be observed, retrained and rendered obedient and the prison comes to symbolise all forms of punishment (Cohen, 1985, 26).

Again in the course of my ethnography one can see these changes in evidence on the ground. Both outside and inside the club cameras were set up to control drug dealing and to prevent theft and fraud. Legislation²⁹ has been passed both to monitor security personnel more closely and to expand the breadth of the criminal law in precisely the way Cohen predicted. Not only will the heavy

²⁷ Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Allen Lane, (p9).

²⁸ Miles (1998) argues that more control is the inadvertent effect of good intentions. “The aim of CCTV in the 1980’s was to create more user friendly cities. The downside of the equation appears to be the emergence of a world reminiscent of George Orwell’s 1984, a controlled environment where nobody is free from the gaze of Big Brother”, (p.60)

On the other hand Robins, K. and Webster, F. (1999), *Times of the Technoculture: Information, Communication, and the Technological Order*, London: Routledge, argue that though the “principles of disciplinary surveillance, do have non-technological and Benthamite origins in the architecture of Panopticon. Technologies have increasingly been deployed in the twentieth century to render the exercise of power more efficient and automatic” (p.103). Their use cannot be explained by one function. Instead they coherently argue that “information and communication technologies have performed two distinct but related functions.”on the one hand they have been mechanism for social management, planning and administration ;and on the other, they have been at the heart of surveillance and control strategies” (p. 92).

²⁹ There already exists the Barry Legg Bill, and more intrusive legislation is currently being predicted. In terms of regulating, doorman the Private Security Act is expected to substantially increase scrutiny.

sentences for drug dealing effect those actually involved in the trade but also new legislation may impinge on those who allow this to happen on their premises or are merely complicit in the knowledge that it is happening. Thus the government is fulfilling both Garland's and Cohen's accounts of a culture of control completely. Their strident rhetoric is a textbook example of 'acting out'. The government's refusal to acknowledge that preventing drug taking is now beyond their control.

There is of course another crucial facet of the current dystopian vision. Crime is becoming normalised as Garland states "crime has come to be regarded as an everyday risk that must be routinely assessed and managed in much the same way that we have come to deal with road traffic -another mortal danger that has become a normal feature of the modern landscape" (2001, 106).

As is implied by the language, in this England is becoming closer to America. Once again support can be found for these hypothesis from both empirical sections. Both groups of people were convinced that their law breaking was unexceptional, both classes³⁰ were used to criminal behaviour by both their peers and themselves and had become accustomed to it from an early age. The security team pursued their drug dealing to make a profit and were unlikely to venture into other criminal activity if the financial reward was not commensurate with the potential financial gain. Meanwhile the ecstasy takers were actuarial in their appraisal of their drug taking. They made complicated decisions based on expense, intensity of high and risk of injury in their choice of drugs. More broadly, as argued elsewhere, both groups accepted the situation as it was and were comfortable in the fact that drugs were freely available(Normalised in Parker's terminology).

³⁰ The experience of crime, though not necessarily involvement in, is seen as vital by Garland in explaining the middle classes punitive reaction to rising crime as they suddenly (beginning of the seventies) found themselves in, and directly experiencing, this crime explosion.

The only light perceived in the gloom is the existence of blind spots within contemporary cities, such as where I worked, where control is not so ruthlessly exercised. However these areas are characterised as urban racial ghettos which are not places of resistance but areas where control from outside and internal control have not impregnated³¹. These areas, because of their lawlessness, offer an increase in excitement and potential to provide the kinds of risky, different environments my respondents seek when they go out clubbing, “areas of disreputable pleasure in which otherwise reputable people dabble”. (O’Malley and Mugford, 1994, 210). The existence of these so called liminal zones, again, so it is argued to be found on both sides of the Atlantic, also offers an explanation for our continued fascination with drugs and drug taking. As something is inadvertently rejected it becomes more attractive and in turn this can lead to seduction. The continuation of this argument is that pleasure can be gained from transgression and thus by extension in the taking of a risk. Thus, again even an increased standard of living does not neuter the seditious aspects of pleasure. By eliding Freud with a more modern critique of capitalism, the argument is constructed that our most libidinous instinctive urges are either expended in the dull routine of work or harmlessly expanded on the range of new technologies.

To sum up, the dystopian picture has a variety of hues. Firstly, ecstasy can be seen as another global product of great importance for young people whose consumer life styles take precedence over old fashioned work. Its use in night clubs is an example of the increasing colonisation of the new consumer times by new consumer venues. The increase use and dealing of drugs as well as the draconian measures to prevent their increase conform exactly to the broader patterns of modern day crime and crime control. The involvement of both the working class and the middle class in the consumption and distribution of drugs suggests both a mass consumer culture and one of normalised crime. Yet

³¹ This logic as O’Malley and Mugford (1994) point out, may be to accept that these people who live in these areas are inherently different and therefore “reconceptualize some behaviour only at the cost of racism” (p.200).

beyond the headlines and the occasional festival it is a conservative culture where genuine dissent is quickly neutered by the combined effects of drug abuse and commercialisation. Confined to the worst areas in the city, with a racial division of labour being more pertinent than class, the worst aspects of American culture are evoked.

7. Utopia

In this chapter, I want to use the evidence thrown up by my empirical work to provide a sustained critique of the last section. What I am arguing is that though theory has been sensitive to change it has also neglected older trends which are as important. Therefore I am agreeing with the previous argument that consumption and mass consumption are more important than ever before and it is much harder to see a clear alternative even in the traditionally subversive arena of mass culture. I would also agree that at the level of legislation there has been an increasingly uniform approach from both political parties that has combined draconian legislation with situational thinking to produce the appearance of an invasive and controlling order. There is also no doubt that the drive for experience and pleasure is not bounded by any notions of necessity or want and that drive is both harnessed and provoked by a dynamic market.

However, I am also arguing that this prognosis is over gloomy because theorists make the mistake of relying on what Scott calls public transcripts, rather than hidden transcripts. They ignore the way the law is actually enforced and fail to look at the way people adapt to its inconsistent enforcement. It is my argument that if they did, they would find that traditional working class resistance and creativity still exist as it has done for hundreds of years and that modern Britain looks less like the terrifying spectre of America and in is fact more united than it was perhaps twenty years ago.

I am also arguing that by neglecting the hidden transcripts and by concentrating on the spectacular and the new they have neglected the fact that things have not changed as much as they might imagine. This continuity is apparent at three levels, the same people are being caught and punished, Secondly, the same enlightenment standards are being enforced over the perennial distinction

between public and private space. And finally, capitalism has continued to grow, with technology as its key dynamo making the appearance of more youth cultures and drug cultures more likely.

The theoretical tools I have used, originate from an attack on hegemony and false consciousness and they are applicable to those who see mass culture as homogenous or the culture of control as a given. Hegemony as defined by Gramsci¹ is "The spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group". This leads to false consciousness, which completes the dominant group's mastery, as the subordinate groups are not aware of their own best interests as a group or class.

These concepts have been subject to a trenchant critique by the American anthropologist, James Scott². The vital point he makes based both on his own ethnographic observation and more general historical and anthropological evidence³ is on the importance of the hidden transcript. In Scott's words "for the study of power relations, this perspective alerts us to the fact that virtually all

¹ Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, p.12. The rest of the quotation is as follows, "the intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise firstly- as above and secondly- "The apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. This apparatus, is however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed."

This rather nebulous concept has been under consistent attack due to its simple dichotomous assumptions. In fact intellectuals hold very different positions in lieu of the establishment and the 'masses' have their own organisations which mediate between the dominant fundamental group' if such a group still exists. Increased social movement, the power of trade unions (though declining) and the different(though increasingly less so) political parties can make this concept unwieldy.

² I will refer to two of his books, the first based on a long ethnographic study and the second a more broadly based elaboration of the former. The first is Scott, J. (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press. The second, Scott, J. (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. He reverses Gramsci's argument: "Gramsci is, I believe misled when he claims that the radicalism of subordinate classes is to be found more in their acts than in their beliefs. It is more nearly the reverse. The realm of behaviour –particularly in power-laden situations – is precisely where dominated classes are most constrained. And it is at the level of belief and interpretations- where they can be safely ventured- that subordinate classes are least trammelled" (1985, 322).

³ In doing so I think he can be seen as a vital political link with the earlier but equally well observed work by Erving Goffman.

ordinarily observed relations between dominant and subordinate represent the encounter of the public transcript of the dominant with the public transcript of the subordinate.... Social science is, in general then, focused resolutely on the official or formal relations between the powerful and the weak... Thus when they start to theorise hegemony, they frequently confound what is inevitable with what is just, an error that subordinate classes rarely if ever make. This conclusion stems from a surface examination of public action in power-laden situations that overlooks both the "hidden transcript" and the necessity of routine and pragmatic submission to the "compulsion of economic relations" (Scott, 1990, 13).

The hidden transcript is the crucial idea in the second book and seems to be a natural development from Goffman as it "characterises discourse that takes place "offstage" beyond direct observation by power holders. A back region or back stage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression is fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course". (Goffman, 1969, 114). As he observes "throughout Western society there tends to be one informal or back stage behaviour and another language of behaviour for occasions when a performance is being presented". (Goffman, 1969, 129.).

The hidden transcript, according to Scott, has three a priori aspects: firstly the "hidden transcript is specific to a given social site and to a particular set of actors". Secondly "is that it does not contain only speech acts but a whole range of practices". This may include what the modern state defines as crimes, such as theft and bribery. Finally "it is clear that the frontier between the public and hidden transcripts is a zone of constant struggle between the dominant and subordinate –not a solid wall"(Scott, 1990, 14).

His second important argument is that a "hegemonic ideology must by definition, represent an idealisation which therefore, *inevitably creates the contradictions that permit it to be criticised in its own terms*". The ideological source of mass

radicalism is, in this sense, to be sought as much *within* a prevailing ideological order as outside it". Thus as he puts it in the second book, "The point is simply that subordinate classes to be found at the base of what we historically call revolutionary movements are typically seeking goals well within their understanding of the ruling ideology. "Falsely conscious subjects are quite capable it seems, of taking revolutionary action"(Scott, 1990, 78)⁴. If we accept his theoretical points as being applicable to my ethnography, then a new argument can be constructed. That is that much of what happened in relation to my study was part of a hidden transcript rather than an open transcript and that what I found was a type of resistance that has a clear historical lineage and context.

Firstly, I want to look in detail at how the hidden transcript operates in the club in what Goffman calls back spaces. These 'back' places are essential to the policing role of doormen and are also the same places, which are used, in their criminal activities. In the club these spaces consisted principally of the fire exits, the staff toilet, the VIP room⁵, the sound room and the owners office. The owners office was divided into two sections, the first stored the monitors for the CCTV cameras that were placed on each bar and the second was just for the owner to relax in. In the first section of this room and in the sound room, which had a panoramic view of the club, the surveillance was conducted. The other areas

⁴ He also goes on to argue that, "a historical examination of any rank and file revolutionary mass movement will show that the objectives sought are usually limited and even reformist in tone, although the means adopted to achieve them may be revolutionary". For a brilliant recent exposition that in my opinion, vindicates his thesis, see Figs, O. (1998), *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*, London: Pimlico. This is a meticulous study of a peasantry with very limited objectives couched in the terms of Tsarist Russia manipulated by a small intelligentsia to greater ends. For example, rather than see the peasantry as ideologically gifted and motivated, he argues for example in relation to the commune, "but the reverse was closer to the truth: the commune existed *because* the peasants were poor, it served to distribute the burden of their poverty, and as long as they were poor there would be little incentive for them to leave it. For better or worse the commune's egalitarian customs had come to embody the peasantry's basic notions of social justice and as the events of 1917 would prove, these were ideals for which they would fight long and hard" (p. 241).

⁵ The VIP room fits uneasily into this dichotomy. Its use depended on the busyness of the night. When empty it was fully a back region, where 'business' could be conducted. On busy nights, doormen would 'police' it but it was accepted that the level of enforcement would be negligible.

mentioned above did not contain surveillance equipment but they were also back regions or blind spots away from view.

The important difference between the different 'back' places was how you gained access to them. The fire exits, the staff toilet and the empty VIP room were used by the doorman and the staff as these spaces were only open to employees of the club. Access to the owners' office and the full VIP room was contingent on who you knew and how much money you had. The back places functioned as criminal spaces as they were away from surveillance, and thus illegal transactions could take place. If disturbed, as a member of staff, it was always possible to explain away your presence as legitimate as these spaces were also used for legitimate activity. For example, fire exits were not just there for an emergency but were also of primary importance for the preservation of order. Punters would most often be searched in the fire exits and it was in these blind spots that the violence, which did occur, was administered⁶.

The same separation of back and front space was apparent with my respondents if only in the more mundane settings of their own homes. All of the younger respondents took for granted that they had their own rooms providing a haven for them to take drugs, hide drugs and come down from drugs. None of my respondents mentioned any overt interference from a parent in this space forcing them to curtail their drug consumption. Rather the tension they felt was experienced in the front spaces, such as at the family table or on family trips out at the weekend. For example:

"I only got two hours sleep before my parents forced me to go out with them. It was a very strange experience because I was walking around the shopping mall and everywhere I turned I could hear house music being played. There was a children's' playground and I walked over there to see if the music was coming out

⁶ The reason for this is more to do with the rules of interaction than with the desire of the doorman to be devious. When you are in a confrontational situation, as police ethnographies confirm, it is best to separate the offender from his or her friends. This enables a conversation to be had without interference. It also allows you to assert your physical authority over the punter as when they are on the dance floor they may be part of a group which is in fact more numerous than the door team.

of a speaker but it wasn't. It was a very strange experience but it wasn't a scary experience in fact to a certain extent it was quite pleasant, it was very relaxing and though I was still tired I could handle the things I wanted to do⁷".

Their ability to conceal their drug use followed a pattern that was again first noticed by Becker. "This consists in learning to control the drug's effects while in the company of nonusers, so that they can be fooled and the secret successfully kept even though one continues participation with them" (Becker, 1969, 70). Indeed all my respondents had first learnt to conceal their marihuana use before disguising their ecstasy use. The best ruse for the disguise of ecstasy use, was to admit to clubbing but not drug taking. Clubbing was a generic enough activity, which didn't necessarily equate to ecstasy use in their parents' eyes. Due to the late nights involved it could also be the source of their morose child the following day.

Returning to the club, if backspaces are essential for the smooth running of door team yet they are routinely places for illegal transactions why were they not under the more general surveillance the rest of club was. The pragmatic answer is that resources are finite and the first priority for the owners was protecting his money on the bars. The second point is more important and can be inferred by looking back on the definition of policing I am using in reference to our activities on the door. 'Policing is the set of activities directed at preserving the security of particular social order'. Policing is directed and it is directed outward, so it must have a base from which it is directed. It is my argument that these blind spots have to exist, as there is always a level of authority that has to observe those below them.

This distinction between public and private space is far more accurate than a panoptic metaphor. As the latter implies that a small number of people look out

⁷ Another example of their anxiety D.S: Did your parents ever find out?

"No my parents never found out, but I can remember stupid things when I had some in the inside of my pocket. Three pills, brought it out, came out in front of my mum. You're taking unnecessary risks."

on all of our activity with assiduity while the former implies a hierarchical structure where enforcement is more likely the further you are down the ladder. It is this concept, which as my empirical work shows, more accurately describes the way that both large numbers of people are given massive licence and also how other groups of people experience the wrath of vigorous policing. The crucial question now to address is how do people gain access to these private spaces? It would be nice to believe that this is due to their propriety but we have already established that this is not the case.

Instead I am arguing that access was highly coveted to all these areas and was granted to those with capital in the form of money or contacts. This hierarchical structure was repeated at every level of the illicit, in the club. Starting from the bottom the street dealers who were locals and mostly at the bottom of the drug hierarchy. They were often drug users themselves in the area, in which I worked they were black but in other areas they would be white and they were exclusively working class. They dealt drugs in public space to people in the queue and to people coming up to the club. Subsequently they were policed by the real police and their activities were most likely to merit a legal sanction. They are the people who make up our prison population⁸ and those who are most often victims of stop and search. As a recent study concluded "the police are suspicious of young, working class males as indeed they commit a high proportion of street crime and the yield from stop and search is presumably highest for this group. And precisely this section of the population is more likely to be out at night to be on the street because of school exclusion⁹". These people are most likely to be

⁸ "43% of the prison population said that they left school before the age of 16 (compared to 11 per cent of the population generally and only 8 per cent had qualifications beyond an 'O' level" and almost three times as many of those under 25 were unemployed before their imprisonment, compared to the population generally. Morgan, R (1997) 'Imprisonment: Current Concerns', from .Morgan, R., Maguire, M., and Reiner, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. Oxford; Oxford University Press, p.1161/2.

⁹ Mooney, J and Young, J. (2000) 'Policing Ethnic Minorities: Stop and Search in North London', in Marlow, A. and Loveday, B. (eds.) *After Macpherson: Policing after the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*. Dorset: Russell House Publishing (p.80). Attention has quite rightly been focused on the connection between race and being stopped. I do not want to address this issue at length but do want to comment that class is at least as important variable as this determines if people are liable to be in public space and thus arouse the police's attention. This is reconfirmed in this study, "if anything, this corroborates the surmise of

out and about in public spaces. The next tier of activity belonged to the more affluent dealers who either knew someone or had the money to buy a ticket to get into the club. They could make more money than the street dealers outside but the closer they were in appearance and in operation to them the more likely they were to stand out and thus the greater likelihood of being caught. The dealers who did better were people who at least in appearance, corresponded to the predominate crowd, as it was harder to single them out. All these groups were effectively operating in what for them was the private space of the club (away from police surveillance) but in the public space of the club environs under the scrutiny of the security's policing.

The third tier of activity were the staff who had free rein of the club but were lower in the employment hierarchy than either the security or the owner/management. They had to avoid both the electronic surveillance of the latter and the security. This was manageable in the short term by bribing security and making use of fire exits but most of these bar staff turned entrepreneurs were soon fired. The fourth tier were the security who had nobody policing them except the head doorman and the owner and often both were complicit in all the illegal arrangements. They monopolised the 'safe' spaces and when friends of either were at the club they were protected from any interference.

The broader point to emerge when the structure within the club is compared to the social world of my respondents, is that the enforcement of the law is contingent on where you are in this hierarchy. My respondents as a middle class, mainly white group felt immune from police interference in the private space of their homes. They also assumed effective ownership of some private space within their home, where sometimes large quantities of drugs could kept

our earlier 1995 study which used the metaphor of trawling. The police trawl in those areas where they can make some level of arrest..."(p.83). Also see Fitzgerald, M.(1999) *Final Report into Stop and Search*. Metropolitan Police Online. "The people who get searched by Metropolitan Police Officers are not a representative cross section of the population of London. They are drawn from the population which is present on the street in the places and times when the police are most likely to undertake searches" (p.7).

away from their parents. In public space, though my respondents were weary of police interference, it was not a big cause of concern as they were unlikely to be stopped and searched and even if arrested, they were unlikely to be convicted. In the club they recognised that they were more vulnerable to policing by security and were thus very unlikely to try to sell drugs in the club, but they also knew that many security teams were involved in the trade and unlikely to do anything to them.

This is important because it raises uncomfortable questions about the validity of current drugs laws. I would argue that different drug takers and dealers are being policed very differently despite the drugs they use sharing the same classification under the law. One of the central reasons for this, is the way that these drugs are dealt and whether they are part of a street drug market or a market which has the luxury of enjoying an affiliation with private space in the way that drugs in the club did. It may also be that the street market is more dangerous to those involved and to the public at large, as it was in my area but the law does not acknowledge this, only the police do informally with their enforcement strategy.

This, in my opinion, has significant ramifications though they are hard to quantify. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the enforcement of the law onto those who are most visible merely because they are easy to apprehend, would provide a reason for resentment. An example of this in practice is stop and search (even if it is undertaken without overt prejudice). There are obvious problems in a power that is often used to apprehend those in public space with small amounts of class A drugs while others deal in large amounts of class A drugs near by. What is worse is that the police often miss these drugs altogether and apprehend only those with small amounts of class C drugs¹⁰.

¹⁰ Fitzgerald, M. (2001), 'Ethnic Minorities and Community Safety'. "The largest proportion of arrests from searches was for drugs; and data from pilot sites confirmed that the majority of these drug arrests were for personal possession of small amounts of cannabis". In Matthews, R. and Pitts, J. (eds.) *Crime, Disorder and Community Safety*, London; Routledge, p.150.

I would also contend that this argument in relation to the policing of the club and drugs has a wider historical relevance. Public and private space has a long political history and in Britain I think that there is an analogous situation developing with recreational drug use as has happened with homosexuality and prostitution obviously without the resolution to decriminalise the activity¹¹. Though the period of Wolfenden has been subject to sustained attack about the relative tolerance or intolerance of those who implemented the reforms¹² what hasn't been challenged is the expansion of tolerance to acts in private. Homosexual acts and prostitution are now legal in private and that is recognised as important by academics on both sides.

However what has also happened away from the legislators, is that commercial entrepreneurs have created other areas where both of these practices can go on for a profit yet still be treated as private space. Saunas¹³, strip clubs, bath

¹¹ In some ways this is a historical anomaly as the Wooton's report recommendations were not taken up by Mr Callaghan.

¹² The National Deviance Conference, (ed) (1980), *Permissiveness and Control : The Fate of the Sixties Legislation*, London: Macmillan. 'Reformism and the Legislation of Consent' . Hall, S. (p.8). The most apt description of the attitude of reform at the time comes from Wolfenden, "There are some things which were better swept under the carpet than lying about on top of it". (HMSO, 1957, 42). This publication and Newburn, T. (1992), *Permission and Regulation: Law and Morals in Post-war Britain*. London: Routledge are of the view that the Wolfenden and the reforms of the Home Secretaries Butler and Jenkins were conservative paternalistic reactions to what were in effect moral panics.

However, Davies, C. (1992) *Permissive Britain: Social Change in the Sixties and Seventies*. London: Pitman. As the title of the book implies, sees the changes as genuinely permissive. My argument would be that they were both, often conservative reactions which were permissive in their effects and were the result of change in the way people behaved and more importantly the inability of the government to control this behaviour.

¹³ Empirical support for my argument in the case of escort parlours comes from the Police Research paper series. In two separate reports they make the same point "There were no convictions for saunas/ parlours in the police division for 1997, perhaps suggesting that those owning / running parlours were adhering to the police message.". (p25) in May, T., Edmunds. M., Hough, M. (1999), 'Street Business: The Links between sex and drug markets'. *Police Research Paper Series Paper 118* and in May, T., Harocopos, A., Hough, M., (2000), 'For the love or Money: pimps and the management of sex work'. *Police Research Series Paper 134*. "Off street establishments such as massage parlours and saunas flourish in some areas. Although it is illegal for such premises to offer sexual services, police regulation is generally minimal, and intervention will occur only in response to public complaint. A recent case in the South West saw a judge throw out pimping charges against several massage parlours on the grounds that there was an 'unwritten rule' that parlours would only be prosecuted if a complaint has been made against them-leading to a reasonable expectation that a well-run operation would not attract police attention" (p.9).

houses¹⁴ and in my opinion night-clubs are examples of this. They are a compromise, which allows these activities to exist discreetly, to generate income and be under some form of control, even if it is normally under criminal control. This is seen as preferable to activities being carried out in public space or in spaces where there is no regulation¹⁵ These spaces are culturally and politically interesting in themselves and also because they are policed privately. They often harbour a “privately defined order, policed by private employed agents that are in some cases inconsistent or even in conflict with the public order proclaimed by the state¹⁶.”

Though Shearing and Stenning coined the term ‘mass private property’¹⁷ to primarily describe shopping malls which physically contain within them large chunks of what was public space, I think the term can equally well be used to describe these other sorts of spaces. They contain activities, which are legal or tolerated by authorities in private but are often severely punished in public. They are spaces, which are apogees of modern culture, spaces of great freedom but also commercial spaces. They generate such large amounts of income that their owners can afford to pay for private security to provide the policing. This then completes a vicious circle as private security are much more inclined to provide

¹⁴ Leap, W. (1999), (ed.) *Public Space: Gay Space*. New York: Columbia University Press. This book documents the use and battle over public and private spaces by gay Americans. The row over bath houses is reminiscent of the row over night clubs, they were also threatened with closure as “enterprises that involve the exploitation for profit of an individual’s willingness to engage in potentially lethal forms of recreation” (p.10). However they were allowed to stay open if they were under intense internal surveillance. This outcome is predictable and if my argument is correct would still mean that some unsafe activity will persist in the ‘back spaces’.

¹⁵ It could be argued that the police have tried to do the same thing with the control of football violence and have encouraged fans into the stadium where their violent activities are easier to control rather than in the street or in public space where things are harder to monitor. (See, Marsh, P., Fox, K., Campbell, G., McCann, J. and Marsh, J. (1996) *Football Violence in Europe*. The Amsterdam Group. The risk of doing this and the same logic could be applied to clubs, is by over regulating the primary space (club or football ground) people may avoid it and take their violent or drug taking behaviour back into public space. The Polices’ ability and commitment to do this, may be a reason why Hobbs’ recent study has picked up so much violence at night in city centres.

¹⁶ Shearing, C. and Stenning, P. (1987) ‘Reframing Policing’, in Shearing, C and Stenning, P. (eds.) *Private Policing*, Newbury Park, C.A: Sage Publications, (p.14).

¹⁷ Shearing, C. and Stenning, P. (1982) *Private Security and Private Justice*, Montreal: The Institute of Public Policy, (p.42).

an order which is compatible with their general mores and their financial interests than to the wider legal code¹⁸.

The problem that the law creates and that the existence of these spaces exacerbates is that there is an entry requirement of cultural or economic capital. I am sure that they contain the same kind of hierarchical structure as I have witnessed in the club, with relatively mobile consumers able to buy different degree of services and exclusivity depending on what they can pay and who they know.¹⁹ In this, they are joined by the owners and senior management. Conversely there are those at the bottom who are unable to pay and may be members of already vulnerable groups and are most likely to be victims of intermittent police enforcement. Again like the club world, these spaces are largely policed by the working class but the space itself is very mixed. It is an area where intimate inter- mixing goes on between all ethnicities and classes to an extent rarely found elsewhere in society. Therefore those who are either wealthy or have good connections or both, buy their way into a more tolerant libertarian society. It is the converse process of the way capital allows you, with good lawyers or gated communities to buy your way out of being heavily penalised by crime. This is exactly how the club worked. The more you knew or the more you could pay the more likely you were not to be caught by any kind of authority and the less, the more likely.

The second argument, also using this dichotomy between public and private space or public and hidden transcripts has an impact on the debate over existence of popular resistance. Rather than seeing mass culture as bereft of any resistance, it alerts us to the danger that that prognosis may be built on two misconceptions. Firstly it may be built on the observation of the public transcript

¹⁸ As Shearer and Stenning correctly argue they “are an essentially preventive force which measures its success in policing, not in terms of the apprehension of offenders or the clearance of offenders but in its ability to prevent future losses from occurring”(Shearing and Stenning, 1982, 54).

¹⁹ Humphreys, L. (1970) *Tea-room Trade: A Study of Homosexual Encounters in Public Places*. London: Duckworth. His ethnography also revealed a hierarchy of access and risk. Those who had money and connections knew who and where to avoid.

due to the failure to attempt any ethnographic work capable of revealing anything else. Secondly, even if ethnographic work has been done, any signs of resistance or rebellion may be ignored because they do not meet dogmatic ideological expectations.

My ethnographic work would vindicate both these points. The way the security team and other subordinate groups behaved did show the existence of resistance even if much of it was expressed "within a prevailing ideological order". And, secondly and this is hardly surprising as the club itself can be seen as a continuation of trends in British youth culture rather than a post-modern deviation from them. The constant thieving, coarse language and predatory behaviour of most of the employees are characteristic of any working class group working in an inhospitable environment for ruthless bosses. Even more striking was the way that doorman always existed in a janus faced world²⁰. Their drug dealing and fencing were for their own benefit but could only be profitable in the owners club. Therefore they were constantly trying to curry favour with him on the one hand and retain a respectable face to the public and on the other carve out a patch to sell drugs. This was very successful and the owner frequently had

²⁰ Again this has strong historical precedents. Duplicity has a clear history in English working class culture and Bailey, P. (1998) *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, instructs us to look more carefully at the way the English working class reacted to reform and the role their so called respectability played in the nineteenth century. His argument is that other historians have been over willing to prescribe behavioural consistency. "In consequence, they have scarcely taken into account the likelihood that respectability was practised in a more limited and situational sense than that of a lived ideal or permanent code of values, and thus have passed over the potentially fruitful proposition that respectability was assumed as a role (or cluster of roles) as much as it was espoused as an ideology" (p.32). Two indicative examples that he gives of the calculative function of working class respectability are as follows. "Lay workers in Bolton noted that occasional booms in Sunday School attendance could be attributed to the announcement of some treat or excursion and were never sustained beyond that point,....". "Among early football teams formed by working men in the seventies and eighties a good number were connected with religious bodies, yet the short-lived nature of these connections and the ease with which they were severed suggests that, in the practical and eclectic fashion of their culture working men used such institutions as a convenient and socially neutral locus for realising their own initiatives, taking calculated advantage of the various amenities at their mentors' disposal" (p.39). For a more recent example of the same behaviour, Hoggart, R. (1957), *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with special references to publications and entertainments*, London: Chatto and Windus, is useful, "Or the peculiarly mean form of trickery which goes with some forms of working class deference , the kind of obvious fiddling of someone from another class which accompanies an over-readiness to say 'sir' , but assumes – in the very obviousness with which it is practised – that it is all a contemptuous game" (p.75).

people surrounding him, who he called friends yet were constantly castigating him in private.

Obviously dealing drugs and thieving lack the glamour of resistance as conceived by other rural groups but as argued earlier the maintenance of a double face and the effort to gain wealth or advantage has lead in other circumstances to events of gravity. Thus the drug dealers among the security and among my respondents can feel in some sense vindicated in their rebel status. They not only operate outside of the financial strictures of government taxation but also run the risk of government sanction and are often demonised in the most crude terms, "rat on a rat".

This is where resistance is to be found, in the world of work and occupational culture rather than in the analysis of the meaning of a leisure culture. This has clear historical antecedents and does not need the over-elaboration and over-interpretation often provided by cultural studies which masks rather than aids what it going on. The second theme, follows from Chesterton that "the Englishman was more interested in the inequality of horses than the equality of man"²¹ ". That is that English popular culture has been both hedonistic and liable to cause self-harm for centuries. From the bloody origins of football through to the chaos of the country fair popular amusement has always been mocking and intemperate. The Historians Golby and Purdue capture this well when they cast the libidinous figures of Punch and Judy as the defining metaphor for popular culture. "The anarchic figure of Punch still personified much of popular culture, mocking dignity and authority and applauding those who by their wit cheat both

²¹ Quoted from Bailey, P. (1978), *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: rational recreation and the contest for control, 1830-1885*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul (p.174). This may be part of the reason of their long held antipathy for revolution . As the Chartist Julian Harney, observed to Engels, in 1846 "The body of the English People without becoming a slavish people, are becoming an eminently pacific people. ...To organise, to conspire a revolution in this country would be a vain and foolish project": from Wheen, F. (1999) *Karl Marx*, London: Fourth Estate, (p.196).

the rent collector and the hangman.... He was no threat to society but neither was he a suitable subject of reform²².

Despite the continual manifestation of popular merriment and mockery, authorities have been no less consistent in their disapproval and willingness to try and prompt reform. Again the actors have changed, from politicians, and religious reformers, to the police, the media, and perhaps even academics²³. The clearest statement of this trend from above was "rational recreation" and "muscular Christianity" which looked at setting up sober alternatives to the music hall and popularising sports to increase the physique and discipline of the errant working classes. The concerns then were with excessive and self-destructive drinking and the cruelty to animals, which accompanied or provided the content for public entertainment. The application of enlightenment standards of rationality has seen for example, the abolishment of all kinds of animal fighting and the introduction of rules, ring and gloves into boxing.

If we look at Hobbs, a hundred years later a similar tone is re-emerging. The argument is different, now it is commercial agencies who are seducing the post-industrial workforce into an unregulated night-time economy premised on aggressive hedonism²⁴. Thus the working classes are being duped by the suggestion of liminality which in reality is just another excuse to sell cheap lager. Certainly Hobbs is right: the urban landscape has changed, and the levels of violence are worryingly high but the question remains what should people be doing instead. Without attacking his main descriptive argument that this culture is often violent and exploitative, there is no attempt to suggest a realistic alternative. The attempt at sanitising the music halls of the nineteenth century

²² Golby, J. and Purdue, A. (1999) *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750-1900*. London: Sutton Publishing, p201-202.

²³ It always came from different ends of the spectrum in the nineteenth century, "working class radicalism and proto-socialism shared with middle class radicalism and liberalism a belief in the individual's capacity for self-improvement, provided he was set the right example, given proper opportunities for education and imbued with the correct doctrines" (Golby and Purdue, 1999, 184).

²⁴ Hobbs, D., Lister, S., Hadfield, P., Winlow, S., and Hall, S. (2000), 'Receiving Shadows: Governance and Liminality in the Night-time Economy', *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(4), 701-717.

soon failed and any attempt to create clubs without drugs or pubs without alcohol may be equally short lived. It is my argument that popular culture has already been largely sanitised and by drawing massive pejorative attention to any new development all that is achieved is the provision of an incentive for it to change or mutate or go further away from public space. This again is a standard re-iteration of a nineteenth century process where an attempt to contain and isolate the delinquencies inherent in popular recreation rather than having the desired effect, instead prompted further resilience and adaptation.

Yet, even if it is advisable to look closely at the occupational culture in the club for resistance rather than the open transcript beloved of cultural studies, I still think that when we turn to ecstasy culture the urge to create a single narrative of a commercial culture fostered on the mass from above or from within should also be resisted²⁵. Firstly, if we apply Marcuse's argument to rave culture, that it is a debilitating strategy used to keep young people down, this is not only contradicted by the evidence above but also by the vast amount of time and energy respective governments have spent trying to eradicate ecstasy use. Not only is it illegal but the state, in the form of the two main political parties who have both been in power during the growth of its popularity have expended considerable financial and political energy in preventing its growth. This includes the familiar paraphernalia of the most zealous of causes, war, complete with its rhetoric and a drug Czar. Furthermore, the media, especially the media with close connections to the state has not greeted the rise of ecstasy use or rave culture with equanimity. Instead, as with every other significant British youth culture over the last fifty years, it has responded with a series of moral panics. Thus making each of these youth cultures Teds, Mods, Rockers, Hippies, Punk

²⁵ The intriguing thing about ecstasy culture is in the end, it is irreducible to one single outlet. It offers much more. We could take for example Freud's (1964, 114) criterion that when life is hard we soften it by various palliative measures. He lists three, firstly, powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery. Secondly, substantive satisfactions which diminish it and finally, intoxicating substances which make us insensitive to it. Though, superficially the use of ecstasy would seem just to fit into category three, my interviewees answers, would mitigate against this. In fact the use of the drug can be seen to serve all three of these functions in any one individual in the course of their drug career.

and Rave at one time synonymous with the outbreak of serious public disorder and dissent.

Secondly, it is not clear that ecstasy culture was ever an exclusively working class manifestation nor is it uniformly dominated by the consumer imperative. The contention has been that youth cultures are founded in a spark of authentic working class rage, which is squashed by commercialism so that now there is no gap between the two states. However, I would argue that these cultures always contain a tension between commercialism and authenticity and also gain much of their power by containing a hybrid of contributors. This is partly to do with the actors themselves who personalise the culture given to them, providing it with a variety of distinctive nuances. As Willis' pointed out in his study of working class boys, "Though much of this style, and the music associated with it might accurately be described as arising from purely commercial drives and representing no authentic aspirations of its adherents, it should be recognised that the way in which it is taken up and used by the young can have an authenticity and directness of personal expression missing from its original commercial aspirations" (Willis, 1977, 17). Thus for my respondents, there was a feeling of participating in a more loving, less violent, culture. The different clubs they visited represented different stages in their development and were often indicative of a particular stage of their adolescence. Meanwhile, the drugs they used often represented or were used as a means to explore particular feelings or difficulties unique to each respondent.

The hybrid class origins of the scene were there from the beginning (as the best books on rave culture by Collins and Reynolds) document. This mixture is still reflected in the rave scene today. Though my respondents were not part of it and though it doesn't receive any of the press the commercial scene does, an alternative/underground scene still exists. This alternative is based in squat parties often frequented by the bar staff and bar backs after the club closed down. These were still being held in disused warehouses or pubs and were free

to get in and were often explicitly anti-capitalist in their rhetoric. The same sort of caution should be exercised when defining black culture as commercial as once again there are subterranean channels of non –consumerist expression both existing in Jamaican reggae and American hip-hop²⁶. However once again it requires either an ethnographic approach or a rejection of the spectacular to be aware of these different political styles or messages.

In both the punk scene and the hippies before them there was also a mixture of the commercial with the political. “For every person who saw the necessity of getting into the world of becoming politically active and thus translating their original commitment of punk into a fierce organised protest campaign, there was another who wanted to get out of the world. To disengage, to sort out the turmoil within their own heads, whether in a more protected musical environment or inner space itself²⁷”. Indeed, the decline of punk is attributed to the loss of this diversity²⁸. In Jonathan Green’s recent account of the sixties²⁹ it is clear that although there were a number of people entirely committed to their anti-establishment sub-cultures there was also many who were not. He quotes ‘The People’ as early as 1967, commentating on the existence of eighteen year old Neville, categorised as a ‘plastic hippie’. “By weekday an unexceptional clerk, Neville dragged up in the full hippie kit at weekends, ‘ready to spend forty-eight hours in the world of the Flower Children”.

Clubs have also always been spaces where the mixing of different classes and races, characteristic of these youth cultures has been at its most intense. As Marek Kohn³⁰ argues in his book on the birth of British drug culture, “ the

²⁶ Both musical forms are constantly mutating and often reflect the moods and politics of their respective listeners.

²⁷ Savage, J. (1991), *England’s Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*, London: Faber and Faber. P.421.

²⁸ (Savage, 1991, 468) “Lacking a centre, everyone lost power. The ‘arties’ lost their contact with the social mix, which had given the original Sex Pistols so much of their bite and the result was laboratory pop. The social realists claimed an aesthetic radicalism, but in damming the ‘arties’, they lost contact with the forms and the ideas which could make their political radicalism resonate beyond the slogans of the day”.

²⁹ Green, J. (1999), *All Dressed Up : The Sixties and the Counterculture*, London: Pimlico. P.214.

³⁰ Kohn, M. (2001) *Dope Girls*, 2nd edition. London: Granta Books.

creation of the drug underground was of specific interest to cultural modernity. It disrupted several highly sensitive social boundaries of sex, class and race and packed these destabilised ingredients into a confined space” (2001, 8). These are the general themes that emerge from my empirical work and in both eras they were not free floating but grounded in a specific, location, today clubs and then the theatre. A re-emergence of what Khan argues existed, “ A vertical section through a horizontal society, the world of theatre and entertainment seems an obvious conduit for the movement of drugs from the street classes to the servant-keeping ones, from Soho to Mayfair” (2001, 54-55).

As previously pointed out, without wanting to sentimentalise what exists today, the parallels here are obvious: the intermingling of different people, the close proximity of the affluent and the criminal and the existence of a self-contained world with its own lists of characters and specific roles. Then the main players were the chorus girls, effeminate aristocrats and the Chinese, today it is doormen, the sons and daughters of the middle classes and a whole range of ethnic groups. In both eras these flamboyant casts attract police and media attention which is disproportionate to the threat they pose which is mainly to their own physical and mental safety.

These previous arguments raise a number of problems for the current criminological paradigm. Firstly, the axiom that we start from the fifties and early sixties and look forward is the first part of the argument worthy of critical attention. Though there are good fore-mentioned reasons for seeing this age as better than that immediately followed, we should avoid as Young argues, “ the ever present temptation politically, is that of nostalgia to attempt to retreat to the inclusive world of the 1950s and 1960s”³¹. As he points out the rebellion of the sixties was not a rebellion to keep things the same but must have been prompted by dissatisfaction with the status quo. I would also argue that it is vital to

³¹ Young, J. (1999), *The Exclusive society :Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity*, London: Sage, p.vii.

acknowledge that the generation my research engaged with is a generation born into the freedoms of the post sixties without any experience of the low crime rates that previously existed. They do not look back at the fifties but at the seventies and eighties as points of comparison. If we compare the youth cultures of today and we also include unemployment³² and ethnicity and the enormous opportunity to earn in the black economy, mainly through drugs as a big revenue earner the new millennium does not look nearly as black as the polarised late seventies and early eighties.

It is also worth noting that the failure of Marxism is often left out from these contemporary critiques. This is a serious omission for a number of reasons. Firstly, the critique that structural inequalities are responsible for crime in society being replaced by situational or control theories of crime is far more understandable when a structural alternative has no allure. Despite the Eastern block's long decline, it is only since the collapse of the wall that the alternative has widely been accepted as a failure. Politically this has had a profound impact but theoretically this has also been the case. It is unsurprising that politicians and criminologists talk more about making society more of a meritocracy and more inclusive rather than aiming their ire at structural inequalities in the system when there is no structurally different society which compares favourably (even in an idealised form).

Subsequently, when analysing both of my groups in my empirical sections the kind of class analysis beloved of the Birmingham school seems even more of an anachronism. Not just because as Hobbs pointed out, it is far removed from the actual thoughts of the actors but also because even if their actions were somehow expressions of a class consciousness, any social arrangement where this would not exist looks completely out of the question. Yet there are still good arguments to argue against the abandonment of class as a central variable,

³² Unemployment has gone down from three and a half million to less than one million while support for the far right has decreased despite massive increase in ethnic communities.

especially as it has direct impact on peoples' freedom to enjoy all kinds of illegal leisure activities.

This depressing conjecture also forms part of the spurious comparisons with America. This is unhelpful both on a macro and micro level. Though both countries have experienced roughly coinciding rising crime rates and more recently roughly coinciding big increases in prison population as Garland himself points out in his Preface (2001, vii), before embarking, none the less on a comparative study even in this area there are big differences: "It cannot be denied that the distinctive combination of racial division, economic inequality, and lethal violence that mark contemporary America have given its penal response a scale and intensity that often seems wholly exceptional". If we temporarily ignore the differences in intensity between penal response and instead dwell on the differences in racial division, economic inequality, lethal violence, and then add the differences in ethnic composition, spatial segregation, and religious belief and political rhetoric we have some huge structural differences.

These differences are relevant to my work on two levels. Firstly, empirically they mean that my study would not be repeatable in America. In a ghetto area of a big American city I would not want to do the same research with, the presence of more firearms, more police intrusiveness, more racial hostility, spatial segregation and social exclusion. The kind of occupational culture found on the door would not be found there. Secondly, this means that on a theoretical level the outcome can be much less gloomy. Neither group yet faces the same kind of punitive sanction as those on the receiving end of the war on drugs. Also more importantly their lives are not so separate, both groups can interact in the same social spaces or in the same parts of town without the feelings of danger that a suburban white kid would feel in Watts or a Hispanic might in the Hampton's.

To conclude from my empirical work that crime has been normalised would also to be guilty of precisely the mistake Parker warns us against. As he argues,

normalisation in the context of recreation drug use cannot be reduced to the intuitive phrase "it is 'normal' for young people to take drugs: that is both to oversimplify and overstate the case". The same should be added as a proviso to the normalisation of crime thesis. Though both groups were immersed in criminal subcultures, both had very clear hierarchies in which they graded the criminal. This meant that they did not see crime as normal they hated for example, paedophiles, muggers, rapists as the most frightening crimes and criminals and they despised heroin users and would take exception at a friend or colleagues use of the drug. Bland pronouncements like the normalisation of crime detract us away from the large distinctions criminal make about crime and are only likely to encourage the kind of demonisation that the left wants to avoid. The argument that crime is normal or is experienced as normal also goes against the logic of the therapeutic community that some crimes are far more traumatic than others. The experience of rape or other kind of extreme violence has not become normalised in the way that vandalism of car might have been. This again is clear in my empirical work with the security looking fearfully at the crack scene outside and the clubbers very reluctant to indulge in a drinking leisure culture, which might lead to violence.

Paradoxically if other kinds of crime seem more prevalent compared to the sixties or before, this may be a positive thing. Rather than signalling some kind of paradigm shift this is a product of the extension of enlightenment principles of equality and rationality still co-existing uncomfortably with the power of money. On the one hand, this accounts for the increase in racial, homophobic, domestic and sexual offences. As the enlightenment means uncovering, an illumination to the dictates of reason, they are no longer hidden from view. These offences may be increasing or the opposite may be occurring as their actual commission is decreasing but they are now all the time more visible and more accountable to the enlightenment standards of reason and equality and thus more liable to be prosecuted. We are in the middle of a positive development, part of a society which is far less tolerant of these kinds of offences than it was fifty years ago.

Again this is reflected in my ethnography, where any of the violent offences listed above would not receive any support even among the door team and that most significantly includes domestic violence. However these new invasive powers are still unlikely to penetrate the private spaces of the wealthy who are still protected by good lawyers and good connections.

Returning to the ubiquity of the commercial, my final point is that sometimes its importance is exaggerated. Though it is essential to draw attention to the rising importance of consumption, this should not distract us from the continued importance of old inequalities of income be they domestic or international. It may be that "Consumption is now the basic mode for all activity in our society, not reading, not using, not appreciating, not participating, not producing but consuming" (Davidson. 1992, 203), but it is also the case that producing is also a basic mode of activity and that some things such as having children, following a faith, belonging to an ethnic group, cannot be reduced to consumption without doing a disservice to the meaning of the term.

My argument is born out in my empirical work. Though the importance of consumption is clear in the way that both sets of people dress, compete, use their leisure time and see themselves in relation to others, these activities are also structured, as Bourdieu³³ argues, by their productive role or class. I have also been arguing that their class position and their ethnicity have considerable

³³ A good example of the contrast I am trying to set up is between Bourdieu's position and Campbell's. Campbell argues "that taste, regarded as the typical pattern of people's preferences, is largely a function of day-dreaming....for if one person has a 'taste' for detective stories and another a 'taste' for Westerns, it can be seen that this is simply another way of saying that the character of their fantasy pleasure differs. It may be much less obvious, however in what way a person's preference for, say jazz as opposed to classical music, orconnects with his day-dreams, and it is necessary to recognise that factors such as personality and biographical experience may be influential" (1989, 93). Therefore, despite the caveat that personality and biographical experience are influential, he still thinks there is a general connection between those activities which give an individual most pleasure and the self he enjoys imagining himself to be in his mind's eye. While taste for Bourdieu is constructed by economic and cultural capital. All the people in my empirical work were very aware of their social standing and how their consumption reflected that. To give a more practical example the clothes people wore were crucial indicators for the security team as to what kind of threat they presented.

significance on how their leisure activities are regulated or controlled³⁴. Thus class and ethnicity combine with biographic details, such as marriage, birth of children and relationships to parents to still provide the defining moments in peoples' lives and underpin their desire and form, of their consumption habits³⁵.

A similar cautionary point can be made over the argument about globalisation. A detailed discussion about the argument over the levelling of consumer habits³⁶ throughout the world and the existence of a global culture is beyond the thesis. However, I would argue that global ecstasy use is typical of the wider spread of western commodities. There is in fact no global surge of ecstasy use. The areas where it is popular outside the West are areas where young westerners holiday. The countries, which do not conform to this rule, such as Australia and America have experienced similar youth cultures and increases in drug use to Europe. (Increased use in Eastern Europe and Russia is hard to quantify as it is unclear who is using the drug and what effect it is having on the wider culture). Therefore Ecstasy use conforms to the old model of trade, a transfer from core to periphery. Though it is only one aspect of a broader youth culture, it is only being exported to affluent parts the globe as it is only in these countries where groups of youth have the time, the money and the freedom to pursue these kinds of leisure activities.

³⁴ Contrast the policing of my middle class respondents with the policing of the working class doorman and the underclass dealers outside the club.

³⁵ For example, the difference between the security team and my interviewees were big in terms of life expectation, criminal behaviour, geographical mobility but their consumption habits were very similar.

³⁶ There is a lively debate on whether global culture is truly 'global'. A. Giddens asserts that unlike in modernity, globalisation today is becoming increasingly de-centred, on the other hand for example, a typically iconoclastic take on this debate is Huntington, S. (1998) *The Clash of Civilisations And The Remaking of The World Order*, London: Touchstone Books, see Chapter Three, "The idea is advanced that the spread of western consumption patterns and popular culture around the world is creating a universal civilisation. This argument is neither profound nor relevant". He extends this critique, to the idea that the media is bringing about a cultural revolution. He makes three strong points, "little or no evidence exists however to support the assumption that the emergence of pervasive global communication is producing significant convergence in attitudes or beliefs" and secondly, "entertainment does not equate to cultural conversion". "Thirdly, people interpret communications in terms of their own pre-existing values and perspectives" (p.58).

This is not to say that globalisation should be ignored, as my empirical work would support the usefulness of two global terms, which are in effect references to the real and the imagined. These are the locale, a reference to person's immediate locality but a place within which global forces still stretch. This is useful term in reference to my ethnography where daily life was intensely grounded in the club and the immediately surrounding area. Work and leisure were all conducted in the bars and club in the locality and the capacity for the security team to do their job well was contingent on their reputation in their area and their knowledge of the local illicit economy. On the other hand there were strong connections to the illicit global economy as they were frequently trading and depending on substances produced in Europe or in South America. The participants were also very much a product of the growth in travel. People for example fleeing unemployment or political violence who arrived in the area and brought with them their own mores and ways of doing business. The other is the imaginary connection or what Benjamin calls the phantasmagoric, the equivalent space in the mind. In my work, this applies to people involved in their own subculture of drug taking in their close network of friends yet at the same time are thinking of and are connected with a much larger subculture around them in the west. My respondents were both mentally engaged with their close friends and very aware of changes in the wider music scene, changes in clothes coming in or out of style or of information regarding the safety of ecstasy which all filtered through into their intimate thoughts.

In arguing against the idea of a hegemony of control and commercialism I am not making the argument that there are not attempts to impose both but instead that these are bound to fail as there is a dialectical process at work. As I have already argued the market in spaces like clubs, saunas or bath houses is putting pressure on the state to change laws as it is showing that it is capable of generating a profit from illicit activity without public order offences. So far the state has responded by imposing more severe laws (even if failing to enforce them) and by utilising the latest technologies. Unfortunately for the powers that

be, they are unwittingly sparking further innovations in the field of crime. This was noted by Marx, at his least serious but also at his most prescient "...the criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life. In this way he keeps it from stagnation and gives rise to that uneasy tension and agility without which even the spur of competition would be blunted. Thus he gives a stimulus to the productive forces³⁷. The effects of the criminal on the development of productive power can be shown in detail. Would locks ever have reached their present degree of excellence had there been no thieves? Would the making of bank-notes have reached its present perfection had there been no forgers? Would the microscope have found its way into the sphere of ordinary commerce but for trading frauds? Doesn't practical chemistry owe just as much to the adulteration of commodities and the efforts to show it up as to the honest zeal for production? Crime, through its constantly new methods of attack on property, constantly calls into being new methods of defence³⁸" (Marx, 1969, 375 cited in Taylor, 1999,213-4).

There is as much dynamism in crime and crime control as there is in the rest of capitalist society. As new kinds of productive power develop so do new kinds of crime, which in turn creates a desire for new methods of defence to solve them. The same forces that are uncovering crime and creating new technology for its

³⁷ Ballard, J. (1996) *Cocaine Nights*. London: Flamingo. Incidentally this is Ballard's' vision for society in his book written in 1996.

"But how do you energise people, give them some sense of community? A world lying on its back is vulnerable to any cunning predator. Politics are a pastime for a professional caste and fail to excite the rest of us. Religious belief demands a vast effort of imaginative and emotional commitment, difficult to muster if you're still groggy from last night's sleeping pill. Only one thing is left which can rouse people, threaten them directly and force them to act together.

Crime?

Crime, and transgressive behaviour- by which I mean all activities that aren't necessarily illegal, but provoke us and tap our need for strong emotion, quicken the nervous system and jump the synapses deadened by leisure and inaction" p.180.

³⁸ Thomas, D. (1999) *The Victorian Underworld*. London: John Murray. In fact there is some historical evidence for this. "Crime shared the benefits of industrial progress. In 1839, a Report of the Royal Commission on a Constabulary Force revealed that burglars and safe-breakers, in London were having tools made to the highest standards by the craftsmen of Birmingham, Sheffield and those other cities of the Midlands and the North that formed that 'The Workshop of England'". Already in support of my argument there is evidence that capitalism's success also brought with it crime as the railways allowed pick-pockets to "move from town to town with a speed that the police could scarcely match", p.2/3.

control and detection are unwittingly creating more crime as people misuse the technology and those excluded from legitimately acquiring goods use the same spirit of resourcefulness to acquire these new and seductive goods illegally. In this respect the criminal imitates the legitimate economy and adds its own aspect to Beck's risk society.

Mackenzie and Wajcman³⁹ argue technology will influence the type of political and social relationships it is compatible with. On the other, as Williams⁴⁰ counters, to site technology as a cause of change is problematic, as successful inventions are only likely exist with support of those with visions for and backing for a particular use. I am arguing that our fast paced capitalist economy allows for not only a constant support and encouragement for new technologies but that because the society is comparatively open, the young and the criminal are also able to utilise new technologies for their own end. This in turn creates a diverse society where there are constantly new technologies being invented and a constant struggle over their use.

As in the rest of capitalist society the desire for technical solutions to all our problems⁴¹ has had a profound impact on the development of both crime and youth culture with the growth of ecstasy use being no exception. To take youth culture first, the editor of a recent collaboration about youth cultures in America concluded "there is no doubt that technology has most recently been in the front line of the long term battle over the means of production and the rights of

³⁹ MacKenzie, D and Wajcman, J. (1985) *The Social Shaping of Technology*. Buckingham: Open University Press. They put forward two basic arguments; Firstly, the adoption of a technology actually requires the creation and maintenance of a particular set of social conditions. Secondly, a weaker version is that a particular type of technology is compatible with social and political relationships of a particular type, p.31.

⁴⁰ Williams, R. (1974), *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Fontana.

⁴¹ We have technological solutions for war, peace, poverty the environment and happiness, perhaps as Weber predicted (Weber, 1992, 24): "The Western form of capitalism has at first sight been strongly influenced by the development of technical possibilities. Its rationality is essentially dependent on the calculability of the most important technical factors."

possession of youth music and youth culture"⁴². Standard consumer products like the record player, the microphone and the electronic synthesises are all vitally important in the birth of both the origins of House music⁴³ and hip-hop have been re-appropriated and used to do things the manufacture had not anticipated. Even more benign changes like the advance in printing technology and the advent of cheap photocopying have been important, they have been used to produce the fanzine, which was crucial for the growth of both the punk and the early rave scene.

The same kind of processes can be seen to be at work in the drugs' field. The invention of new drugs has always been important as a panacea for staving off disease or for aid in military engagements and it is arguable that this remit has extended further, especially in the highly profitable American market where pharmaceutical companies seek to invent a drug for any human condition. Their goal is the amelioration of human suffering which without much subterfuge can be re-written, as to increase human happiness. Therefore there are more drugs beings invented and re-appropriated for different uses, such as ecstasy (initially invented for dieting and then used as a dance drug) and amphetamine (help soldiers fighting) something it has been used for, now misused to keep people up physically and mentally. Alternatively, other drugs which work well within a limited area are now used ubiquitously. Most recently this has been the case with Prozac, which now has undergone the process of misappropriation mentioned above. It is now not just being prescribed for depression but for panic disorders, pre-menstrual tension, premature ejaculation and chronic back pain⁴⁴ as well.

⁴² Rose, T and Ross, A. (eds.) (1994), *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*. London: Routledge, who outline right across America, the increasing appropriation of technology for the creation of autonomous expression, such as the use of the sampler or the microphone. Also for an example in the 19th century, the invention of the telegraph helped legitimise off course betting.

⁴³ Russell, K. (1993) 'Lysergia Suburbia', this trend is seen as increasing. "This dehumanising of traditional musical 'icons', the performance, the songs, the instrumentation, are all signs of a progressive acceptance of the powers of computerised technology that has been increasingly adapted into our societies..." in Redhead, S. (ed.) *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Youth Culture*. London: Avebury, (p.163).

⁴⁴ *The Economist*, (1996) 6th April, "Better than Well", p.87-88.

To reiterate the central point, there is a constant dialectic and this process has, like everything else increased in speed. The expansion of the electronic media means that products are very mobile, and therefore looking to the future I would agree with Jenkins (1999, 197) that attempts to try and curb this process is becoming more and more forlorn: "The battle to suppress ecstasy in all its forms has always been an unequal one, but now the balance of forces had shifted dramatically to the side of experimentation, which can only be suppressed by increasingly rigid laws and ever more intrusive police supported by a wilfully obscurantist media. As neurochemistry and chemical technologies advance, the stage is set for persistent confrontations between an entrenched anti-drug bureaucracy and the demonised phantom chemists, the evil scientific masterminds. The outcome in short will be recurrent synthetic panics".

In conclusion, there are no signs of technological progress abating, or a cynicism towards technical solutions. In this sense ecstasy is intimately connected to the growth of a consumer society and indeed a risk society to use Beck's terms⁴⁵. The themes he develops to describe non-criminal society all have wider resonance. Ecstasy can be seen as a creation of science and scientists and now scientists are responsible for finding out what exactly is the damage it causes to its users. However as Beck and indeed Garland point out scientists or experts no longer agree and this observation is an accurate description of the way different experts have been producing conflicting reports about the relative dangers or risks of taking ecstasy. Meanwhile, the state is using science to attempt to control drug use by devising new means of drug testing or better surveillance techniques to stop drug dealers and distributors. However, they no longer hold a monopoly over this kind of knowledge. Instead others are using the same tools to construct ecstasy testing kits or new ways of making the drug more potent. Thus my prediction is that there will be many more designer drugs, be they deliberate

⁴⁵ Beck, U. (1992), *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. "Science is no longer concerned with liberation from pre-existing dependencies, but with the definition and distribution of errors and risks which are produced by itself", (p.158), and "a momentous demonopolization of scientific knowledge claims comes about", London: Sage Publications (p.156).

inventions or new drugs re-appropriated for novel purposes. Over the next millennium, this could be avoided by a huge ideological shift away from pharmaceutical solutions to psychological problems or a massive centralisation of the resources and knowledge to create them. However this is unlikely, Neurology is rapidly expanding as new machinery allows a more accurate understanding of the chemical structure of the brain and knowledge is being disseminated globally at an ever increasing rate. The future existence of new designer drugs is not a catastrophe, but it must be acknowledged that scientist's goals are not the same as politicians. It maybe that we find the pharmaceutical interference with the brain is in the long term, entirely self-destructive. It would then be the duty of legislators to try to prevent people from investing in short term gain to their long-term detriment, something all governments find very hard to implement. Yet it would be the other alternative, which might provoke a real paradigm shift. The discovery of a designer drug, which adds to our happiness, without causing any tangible side effects.

8. Conclusion

“It raises all the main questions of the problem of recreation under conditions of modern city life, namely the insistent human demand for stimulation, the growth of commercialised recreation, the growing tendency to promiscuity in the relations of the sexes and the failure of our ordinary devices of social control to function in a culturally heterogeneous and anonymous society”¹.

This quotation taken from Paul Cressy’s enjoyable ethnography from 1932, on ‘The Taxi Dance Halls’ the ‘Super Clubs’ of the time is indicative of the kinds of continuities I am trying to draw attention to. To sum up, I am arguing that ecstasy culture exists in mass private spaces away from the public space and policed by private security. It is a culture whose success derives from its protean origins and though policed by the working class and offering financial opportunity for them, exists in spaces that are more mixed in ethnic and class composition than most other areas of modern life. These kinds of spaces and arrangements both have a long history in popular culture and they are one reason why British youth culture is so diverse, original and attractive to outsiders.

This culture resonates with extreme and spectacular fads and images which are often seized upon as being indicative of either a general moral decline or an example of the dominance of consumerism. It is my argument that though these do exist giving them academic attention distracts us away from other more important points. Firstly that resistance does still exist but it is to be found in the more traditional sites of the occupational culture harboured in the spaces especially of those who now police them. Secondly that it is not the actual particular manifestations of youth culture that should be examined but the

¹ Cressy, P. (1932) *The Taxi Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialised Recreation and the City*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. This quotation is from the introduction written by Ernest Burgess (p.xiii).

broader process that are as Cressy states a product of “the insistent demand for stimulation and the growth of commercialised recreation”.

These spaces reflect the change and drive characteristic of the rest of capitalist society. The young people involved, are constantly searching for greater stimulation and will utilise technology or pharmacology to this end. This desire is unspecific to class. It does not relate to objective circumstances such as having money or a job or a family. As my interviewees showed, none of things were seen to be significant in either the search for more excitement or a ballast against misery. Instead they, like those in the legitimate economy, shared the same desire to push themselves to maximise their enjoyment and were driven and resourceful in their activities

Furthermore, unwittingly, they are on the cutting edge of an increased consumerism as their activities encroach into new areas of time, use new spaces and create new styles which may trickle back up to the legitimate economy.

This constant creativity which is often criminal in its outcome is matched by the state's determination to use technology to provide new sources of control. This process is ongoing, but the states' inability to hold a monopoly over its innovations in a global and relatively unregulated market mean that the balance has tipped in favour of the seditious and the young. The state, as yet, has not recognised this and still attempts with its new gadgets and its new severe legislation to make an impact. As my work points out these universal intentions break down upon the rock of private space and private capital.

Instead, all the state and its agents the police can manage is, like those before them to move public law breaking away into these new kinds of private spaces. Once again a pattern has emerged where a contained commercial version of popular entertainment has been allowed to flourish at the same time as a severely regulated public space. Ecstasy has been pushed away from the street

or the warehouse into the club. However behind the façade in the back space or in the hidden transcript, very much the same culture carries on with very limited public interference. This comprises of working class enterprise and resistance, which has had a long and insalubrious history.

Those who have the contacts or the capital prosper there, leaving the public arena as in the era of the costermongers, to be subjected to draconian policing. Overall, there is a rise in severe policing and sentencing especially when combined with the concurrent trend which is a continuation of enlightenment rationality and illumination. This is another narrative, which demands that people should be treated equally in public space and demands that acts previously treated as either unacceptable or unenforceable to become neither. If these two narratives are combined with the rising growth of material goods and possessions integral for capitalism and thus rising opportunity for taking them, there will be great alarm at rising crime rates.

It is my argument that this is far less of a depressing picture than it first seems. The rise of the later two narratives are both expected and acceptable in a successful capitalist economy. It is the divergence between the license allowed in mass private space relative to public space that is most problematic and unexpected. It is problematic as it is clearly iniquitous for those who are caught and because it damages the claim for the law to be universal when it is unfairly and haphazardly enforced.

But it is also unexpected because by not fully legalising activities such as ecstasy, cannabis or prostitution, the state is missing out on what capitalism produces, a continual expanding spread of the market. Therefore it is not that ecstasy exists without a market but rather a market already exists complete with distributors, entrepreneurs, consumers and enforcers generating billions of pounds. This proceeds with the minimum of public disruption or harm but with as I have argued in my interview section with considerable harm to certain

vulnerable individuals. However with the state outside the market, it loses leverage with all groups; with consumers it is tainted by allegations of hypocrisy and irrelevance. With private security it is seen as corrupt and unjust and from the market it fails to draw revenue and cannot exercise any control over price or quality.

Appendix

Interview guide

This was the format for the interviews. In practice it proved to be quite unwieldy and I often improvised questions or left them out when I felt it to be appropriate. In fact, the first section normally set the tone for the interview, as the interviewee would proceed to describe their general experience with drugs and ecstasy in particular and the following questions were then used to clarify specific aspects of their first narrative.

General

1. Can you tell me when you first started to take illegal drugs; and in what order?
2. Can you tell me when you first started to take ecstasy?
3. Had you heard anything about the drug beforehand and from whom?
4. Has the amount of ecstasy you take remained constant? And how do you take it?
5. Are there any drugs you wouldn't take and why?

Location of use /set/setting

6. Do you only take ecstasy in clubs, and what other kinds of places?
7. What kind of clubs do you go to? (clubs, raves, illegal, legal/music)?
8. Why do you go to these clubs rather than any others?
9. How would you describe the kind of people who go to these clubs

Age/Class/race/dress

10. What kind of music do they play?
11. Would you ever go to these events without ecstasy (and if so why not)?
12. What is it that you enjoy about clubbing?
13. What is it that you dislike about clubbing?

Ecstasy and Social life

14. Do you take ecstasy by yourself or with other people?
15. If with people –how many people and what gender?
16. Is it always the same people or do the people change?
17. Do you do all the same amount?
18. Do you stay with this group while you are in the club?
19. Do you meet new people in the club?
20. What do you do after the club?
21. Do you stay with the same people?
22. Do you think that taking ecstasy influences the friendships among this group?
23. Does taking the drug effect your friendship outside this group?
24. Are there people that you just see to take ecstasy with?

Ecstasy and leisure

25. How much money would you spend on a night clubbing?
26. And on what?
27. What percentage is this of your income?
28. Do you think that taking ecstasy has influenced what you do in your leisure time?
29. What did you normally do in your leisure time before you took ecstasy?
30. If you no longer take ecstasy, what would you describe doing instead?
31. Some people say that going to a club is just like going to a pub, Would you agree?
32. What ways does it differ?

Ecstasy: actuality

33. Who do you normally buy your ecstasy from?
34. Has this changed over time?
35. How much do you pay?
36. Does this influence the amount you buy or take?
37. Have you ever been in possession of a large amount of ecstasy?
38. Do you ever find it difficult to get hold of ecstasy?
39. Do you take any notice of the brand of the pill?

40. Are there any ecstasy pills which you think are better than others?
41. Where do you get this information from?
42. How many do you take during an average night?
43. At what point do you take them?
44. What are your minimum and maximum amounts?
45. When you take ecstasy do you take any other drugs with it, or after it and why?
46. What is the most amount of drugs you have taken in a night ?
47. Some people say that taking drugs is just about breaking the law is that true for you?
48. What would you describe as the positive effects of the ecstasy experience?
49. What is the best experience you have ever had on ecstasy?
50. What would you describe as the negative effects of the ecstasy experience?
51. What is the worst ecstasy experience you have ever had?

Ecstasy and dependence

52. Do you feel the positive effects of ecstasy have changed over time for you?
53. Do you think that you have become more tolerant to ecstasy? (i.e. need to take more in order to get the same effect that you used to, when you first took it ?)
54. Does taking ecstasy interrupt your routine in any way, (physically, mentally)?
55. Do you ever think that your ecstasy use is out of control?
56. Does the prospect of not taking ecstasy ever make you very anxious or worried?
57. How difficult would you find it to stop or go without ecstasy?
58. What would make you stop taking ecstasy?
59. Do you know about any of the negative effects of ecstasy?
60. Can you list any of the negative effects?
61. Where do you get your information from?

Ecstasy and information

- 62. Do you read any newspapers regularly?
- 63. What do you think of their coverage of ecstasy and its part in nightlife?
- 64. Do you read any clubbing magazines/ fanzines regularly?
- 65. What do you think about their attitude to the role of ecstasy in nightlife?
- 66. Have you ever been arrested or cautioned for drug offences?
- 67. Do you worry about the chance of arrest?
- 68. Do you take any precautions to avoid this?
- 69. Are you worried about the reaction of your friends?
- 70. Are you worried by the reaction of your parents?
- 71. Do you agree with the statement that taking drugs is a normal part of growing up?
- 72. Would you be surprised by the statement that under 8% of the nation's young have taken ecstasy (young, classified as between thirteen and twenty-five)?
- 73. What do you think about the governments' attitude to ecstasy use?
- 74. Do you think the possession or selling of ecstasy or any drugs should be legalised or decriminalised?
- 75. Is there anything I haven't asked that you think is important?

This table was given to all my respondents, and devised after a fruitful meeting with Dr Adam Winstock from the National Addiction Centre.

If you have ever used any of the following drugs please complete the following questions:

Drug	Age first used	Number of days used in the last month	Number of occasions ever used – (once) 2-10, 11-50, 51-200, >200>1000	Amount ever taken
Ecstasy				
Cocaine powder				
Crack cocaine				
Heroin				
Cannabis				
LSD/hallucinogens				
Benzodiazepines (valium, temazepam, midazolam)				
Herbal highs (please name)				
GHB				
2CB 9Nexus)				
Viagra				
Amphetamine (speed)				
Ketamine				

- Age at last birthday
- Gender

Please show which group best describes your ethnic origin or descent by ticking by one of the categories.

- White-UK
- White European
- White other
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Chinese
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Black British
- Mixed Race.

What is your occupation? _____

If you are a student or under the age of twenty three, what are your parents occupations? _____

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