

Cannabis, Identity and the Male Teenage Friendship Group

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Abstract

Cannabis continues to be the most widely used illicit drug, usually used recreationally without significant problems occurring. Concerns remain over long term health of users and the possibility of associations with mental illness. Surveys suggest regular use remains common amongst teenage males, taking place concurrently with the period when teenagers are engaged in identity development and making the transition to adult life. The thesis is based on qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation of two cohorts of male teenagers and interviews with a group in their late twenties reflecting on their teenage use. Methods and analysis draw pragmatically on ethnography and grounded theory, developing interpretations inductively before moving to relate the concepts generated to existing theory. Cannabis was smoked predominantly in the context of an extended social group. While the majority reported enjoying the effects of cannabis, smoking with this group was particularly valued for the social contexts it facilitated and maintained. Within these groups three orientations to use were observed differentiated by individuals level of commitment to cannabis, and their understanding of the functions of use. The teenagers saw cannabis use as a transitory phase which they expected to cease as adult roles were acquired, though this was considered a difficult and potentially protracted process. Adapting to an unchosen extended adolescence involved maintaining proxy roles, in which nascent aspects of identities could be expressed and developed. Social roles and relationships acted as containers for the display and reflection of aspects of identity. The group provided a non-contingent context allowing for identity exploration, play and development. The contingency of closer ongoing familial and social roles limited opportunities for such exploration. Previous identity research has stressed close contingent relationships, the analysis suggests several mechanisms relating cannabis use to the importance of non-contingent relationships in times of identity transition.

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1 : Introduction

Cannabis remains one of the most commonly used illicit drugs in the UK, while people of all ages use cannabis, regular and sometimes heavy cannabis use by male teenagers is routinely reported in surveys of drugs use (Hoare, 2009). This form of cannabis use takes place over a period when teenagers are engaged in identity development and concerned with making the transition to adult roles (Hammersley et al., 2001). This research rooted in qualitative interviews with young male cannabis users develops inductive, interpretative, theoretical insights which relate findings to existing theories of drugs use and of identity. It sheds light on the different roles that the teenage cannabis smoking group plays for the individuals who choose to use cannabis in this way. While the majority enjoyed the effects of cannabis, it appeared that the aspects of cannabis use they most valued lay in the social relationships and networks which their use initiated, facilitated and maintained. Analysis suggested that the teenagers understood many of their existing social roles, in the family and in school, as contingent and understandings of their behaviour in these roles were rooted in social conventions. By contrast the non-contingent nature of the relationships that grew up around their cannabis use provided a valuable context for exploring and developing identity and learning to socially negotiate and construct identity and meaning. Much work has focused on the role of social support and strong social bonds on identity and wellbeing (Thoits, 1995). This work points towards a new emphasis on the importance of understanding the roles that non-contingent relationships play in times of identity transition.

For many people today cannabis needs little introduction, its use has become widespread and commonplace. Cannabis use remains, however, only commonplace amongst certain groups and many know little about it, will only rarely come into contact with it in their daily lives, or be aware that they have done so. For the initiate cannabis has communities and cultures, rules and rituals, aesthetics and connoisseurship. For those outside these cultures their understandings may relate to nothing more than a fragrant herbal whiff at the bus stop and a vacant teenager giggling at his shoes. Most people will fall somewhere between the two extremes.

Cannabis will have featured in their lives for a time - probably playing not a particularly big part, or for a particularly long time - before fading again into the cultural background (Hammer and Vaglum, 1990).

Cannabis is a psychoactive drug derived from the flowering heads and leaves of the plant *Cannabis sativa*. Usually smoked or ingested it has multiple biologically active compounds (cannabinoids) present in different proportions depending on the particular strain of cannabis (Brown, 1998). The quantity of cannabis consumed, the differing, complementary or synergistic effect of these compounds, the environment in which it is consumed and the pre-existing subjective state of the user combine to produce the drug's subjective effects (Zinberg, 1984). Cannabis is thus both biochemically and psychosocially complex and the range of subjective effects attributed to cannabis are correspondingly diverse, it can: be relaxing; producing feelings of well-being; giddiness and euphoria, giggliness, creativity, sociability, increase sensory acuity and physical pleasure, or feelings of flow and connection with the natural world. Negative effects are also common including anxiety, paranoia and depressive feelings (Green et al., 2003). This diversity of potential effects, both subtle and substantive lends its use to a wide variety of situations and functions across cultures and societies.

The use of cannabis both as a psychoactive drug and as a source of fibre for textiles appears to have been common throughout human history. Across cultures and continents, evidence of its use is routinely recorded in historical documents and archeological artefacts. While historically cannabis and other psychoactive drugs use might not have been regarded with universal approval, there appears to have been relatively little concern over the social or individual impact of their use. On the contrary, many cultural traditions feature deep and enduring relationships with particular psychoactive drugs (Brown, 1998).

Contemporary concern around the use of psychoactive drugs relates to their potential to cause physical, social, or psychological harm to the individual over the short or long term and to wider impacts on society via the actions of the user, or the

criminal and financial structures connected to drugs supply. Although cannabis is considered to be less harmful than other psychoactive drugs, concerns over the health and social impact of cannabis are reflected in UK and international law and policy (Best et al., 2003; Home Office, 2008). As well as the many dimensions involved in framing drugs problems, drugs policymaking is confounded by an unusual moral and ethico-legal dimension. In brief, legal frameworks are predicated on the assumption that an individual has responsibility for their own action. Intoxication and the concept of addiction however are seen to result in a diminishing of personal agency and consequently legal responsibility.

Considering drugs use as a state of diminished responsibility provides the ethical basis for a concomitant diminution of individual rights. The drugs user is considered from a mental health perspective; no longer a rational agent, they can be coerced into treatment programmes, or their rights and freedoms questioned. The balance in these rights is then taken up by a paternalistic state apparatus. The moral dimension can be seen as an extension of this principle whereby drugs use is framed in terms of a failing in the individual's responsibility towards themselves, their family, community or society. Social attitudes and political responses to drugs use are further confounded by the legal sanctioning of some psychoactive drugs (alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, etc.) some of which arguably generate much greater relative harm, partly by virtue of their more widespread use. One view has been that a long tradition of the use of particular drugs in a society generates social norms, rules and boundaries mitigating their health and social impacts (Moore, 1990).

The rapid increase in harmful levels of alcohol consumption and associated health and social impacts over recent years appear to contradict this argument (Measham, 2008). It can however be reframed by dichotomising drugs using behaviours in pre and post-industrialised societies. This position concedes that psychoactive drugs use must be understood through the interaction of the drug, the user and the wider environment. The interaction of user and environment must accordingly include

structural factors such as the social, legal, economic, health and welfare, as well as the user's understanding of their place within these structures through culture and identity.

There has been substantial and continued research interest in the use of psychoactive drugs and particularly cannabis throughout the twentieth century, resulting in an extensive literature across many disciplines. The diversity of the drugs literature and the difficulties in synthesising different types of knowledge about drugs invites a proliferation of interpretive and conceptual frameworks. Social scientists have been central to much of the research effort, describing the scale and nature of drugs use and social attitudes both towards and within drug using subcultures. That a growth in interest in understanding drugs use, parallels the growth of the social sciences in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century should not be surprising. The growth and development of the social sciences was born of the need to both describe and understand the impact of increasing pace and impacts of change in the movement to industrial, and later post-industrial and globalised societies.

The construction of drugs use as a problem tracks these wider macro-social processes and must also be considered from the global market perspective. Illicit drugs are a peculiar commodity, in part due to their near uniform international illegality, in part because despite legal sanctions they are reasonably cheap and easy to produce while commanding relatively high prices for their weight. Unlike mineral wealth which is geographically situated, drugs can be produced over a wide range of environmental conditions. The illegality of trade in drugs means that traders and producers take an increased risk but benefit from a market free of tariffs, taxes, trade quotas and other means by which governments and trading blocks, control the movement of goods and wealth. Consequently, the trade in drugs can be seen as a threat to geopolitical stability. Moral and health constructions of the problems of drugs use should not be read in isolation but as part of this wider political praxis.

The growth of social science as a discipline is predicated on the needs of policy makers for reliable information to support the decision making process. The structures of funding for drugs research have therefore often focused research efforts on the ‘problems’ of drugs use. Despite a, by and large, disciplined and scientific research community the ongoing orientation toward the pragmatic and often short-term concerns of policy makers introduces an unfortunate institutionalised bias in the research literature as a whole. For instance, in investigating cannabis as a ‘gateway drug’ funding has focused research efforts on the hypothesis that cannabis use by the individual increases the likelihood of other illicit drug use by that person in the future. There has by contrast been little funding for the null hypotheses or for any alternative hypotheses although there appears to be both empirical and theoretical support for these positions. While the reporting of null hypothesis results is an important principle in scientific research, it is a principle that is not always strictly followed. Evidence with regard to the gateway hypotheses must therefore be read against not only the absence of evidence for the null hypotheses, but an absence of both enquiry and of reporting. This is further complicated by the continued interest of the mass media in drugs issues, often based on limited understanding and reporting findings from studies on the basis of press-releases of preliminary results which may then fail in replication or in the peer review process.

It has been argued that the very act of research and dissemination through official, academic structures can set up a dialectic such that understandings of the meanings and contexts of drugs use by users themselves can be influenced by the ongoing policy dialogue (Himmelstein, 1983). A particular example is that notions of ‘deviancy’ (Becker, 1963) in the sociological research appear to have been mythologised through popular culture by later generations of young people for whom the use of cannabis came to be symbolic of their identity in the ‘counter-culture’. This suggests that both policy and research can contribute to trends in drugs use in complex, unexpected and at times contradictory ways. Policy responses are further complicated by the multiple competing agendas at work at any one time whereby health, economic and criminal justice concerns can be at odds and compete for political primacy.

From the complex social and structural interactions described above it follows that variations in the patterns of drugs use must be understood at the individual, local, regional, national and increasingly at a global level. This inter-relation of factors implies that any understanding of drugs use must take into account both the obscurity of subjective experience and the patterning of informational nets in epidemiological and population data. Accordingly, there are an enormous variety of conceptual perspectives which can be used in understanding drugs use, some of which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter. These concepts, their inter-relationships and saliency are inevitably highly contested.

The exercise of theory-building in relation to a transient and complex social phenomena would appear to keep a greater diversity of concepts in play than in other areas of science. Knowledge about drugs use seems to be characterised more by gradual conceptual accretion and constant contention rather than by consensus and dominant paradigms. The importance of theoretical underpinnings in developing practical interventions has long been stressed as has the need to understand the impacts of wider health, welfare and criminal justice policy (Chaiklin, 2011). There are a number of reasons for interest in developing theories of drugs use and theories relating drugs use to wider social conditions.

During the 1990s the recreational use of psychoactive drugs and participation in cultures where drugs use was a common feature, gave rise to the argument that the use of certain drugs had been effectively 'normalised' in significant sectors of the population and that cannabis use could be considered to have been normalised across the general population (Parker et al., 1998). The concept of normalisation appears to stand in opposition to Becker's earlier notion of deviance (Becker, 1963), though in truth both terms were politic, chosen advisedly, though ultimately misconstrued in the non-expert population (Erickson and Hathaway, 2010; Measham and Shiner, 2009).

The normalisation hypotheses suggested that for many in the general population cannabis had become an acceptable part of a wider repertoire of polydrug use. This may be seen as including both illicit and licit substances (including alcohol and tobacco) visibly used in functional (or visibly unproblematic) ways across a wider range of social contexts than had previously been considered socially acceptable. It seemed likely that future drug trends would accommodate this acceptability of a greater range of substances and the social acceptability of intoxicated states. This reading is congruent with the increases in alcohol and cocaine consumption observed over the early twenty-first century. Increasingly it might seem the moral dimension of attitudes to drugs use has become confined to a dialogue between the media and the political classes. While the drugs of choice will still be subject to trends and to cultural and structural vicissitudes, the mechanisms described by normalisation appear to pave the way for a general increase in the use of psychoactive drugs across society.

Normalisation can both increase and decrease across subcultures and over cultures as a whole but it also implies a recursive aspect to the phenomenon. While social and structural factors have an effect, the process of normalisation, or deviancy, can gather a momentum of its own. Normalisation is itself contested on various fronts, however as a fairly open and grounded theory, and being the last major nodal point around which expert consensus briefly coalesced it offers a useful starting point. While the study of normalisation calls for ongoing monitoring efforts it also suggests that further analysis of historical antecedents could provide useful insights and that re-examination of wider conceptual work might further situate or operationalise the concept. Hammersley (2001; 2005a; 2005b) argued that normalisation suggested a new understanding of the relationship between drugs use and social identity was required.

Rates of cannabis use have been declining in the UK over the past ten years (Home Office, 2008), however cannabis remains the most commonly used illegal drug, it is by and large the first illegal drug tried and the drug that is most regularly used (Murphy and Roe, 2007). Historically there has been an assumption that

while some cannabis users go on to regular and long-term cannabis use, it would seem for the majority that they will use relatively modest quantities with varying regularity over their late teenage years before gradual cessation of use in their twenties and early thirties (Hammer and Vaglum, 1990). The initiation to cannabis use and the progression to regular use occur concurrently with major changes in the lives of teenagers. These changes are expressed and experienced as the construction of an adult social identity, or the progressive solidification of a set of identities (Hartnagel, 1996). Though many things take place in the transition to adulthood, the establishment of what have been termed 'stable adult identities', developing a way of understanding our place and relationship to the world beyond our immediate family, locality, culture and society is central to participating fully in the adult world.

The concept of identity and the related concept of the self has played an important role in the social sciences in its relation to debates over the relationship and importance of structure and agency in determining social action. While much theory relating to identity takes place in psychology and social psychology there is also a large literature in sociology. In reviewing sociologically derived theory on the construction of identity, Cerulo (1997) notes a move from the micro-sociological perspective toward a wider macro-sociological approach over the twentieth century. Later social theoretical approaches, such as Giddens' (1984) structuration, attempt to bridge this micro macro gap by re-situating aspects of agency and structure in the social sciences.

Identity has been put forward as a synthesising concept uniquely situated to linking macro and micro phenomena, or individual behaviour to wider social structures (Anderson, 1994). At first sight, identity holds great promise for drugs research and as a central feature of sociological, psychological and philosophical theory is often alluded to in some form in the drugs literature. However, this conceptual breadth and its fundamentally elusive nature as an abstraction of intersubjective meanings brings its utility into question (Becker, 1998). Becker's argument is that the study of drugs use is unlikely to offer any insights on the theory of identity and that

the grounding of conceptual development in empirical data means that identity is essential grafted on to an ethnographic analysis; or perhaps acts as a filter reducing the available analytic content and ultimately skewing the analysis toward concepts that can be represented within the available frameworks. The strengths of Becker's arguments notwithstanding - and in the course of this work it has given me much pause for thought - there are perhaps ways in which higher-level theory can be accommodated within a fundamentally grounded approach.

Identity is a term used in many different ways. Philosophy presents a fundamental distinction between personal identity (the understandings a person holds about themselves) and social identity (the understandings about a person co-constructed between that person and others in social interactions). While there is a pragmatic appeal in treating each of these aspects in isolation, there is also much to be gained in the more problematic approach of considering them together. This leads to a conception of identity which is wider and more inclusive than that used in much current literature. While I will continue to use the distinction between personal and social identity, they are to be understood as interrelated and inseparable.

Identity is often pointed up as a feature or underlying cause of problem behaviours in more wide-ranging discourses. Despite this popularity, there appears to be little consensus on the bounds of identity as a concept, its operation or how it might be operationalised in for instance: policy, treatment, prevention or harm reduction. The bulk of the literature on identity acknowledges what might best be termed the ineffable nature of the concept. The complexity of identity ultimately defies anything as simple as a dictionary definition, or at least any simple definition is of limited use. Rather the scope of identity suggests it should be seen as a wide-ranging conceptual toolbox. The use of identity as a concept, set, or organising principle for other concepts can be considered from the standpoint of its conceptual utility rather than as a description of an underlying or objective reality.

Identity has been explicitly or implicitly a central concept in psychological and social sciences throughout most of the short history of the disciplines. Prior to the emergence of sociology and psychology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, identity was an enduringly problematic issue in philosophy. Many of the features of what we understand as identity today grew out of philosophy but were subsequently reframed in the light of wider concerns. While psychology has principally focused on personal identity and its relationship to the concept of self, sociology has primarily been concerned with social identity and its relationship to role theory, resources and the politics of everyday life. Both approaches have to rely, to some degree, on the existence of the other and approaches and concepts are borrowed in each direction. As academic specialism's have proliferated over the course of the twentieth century, the range of disciplines which can inform some aspect of the concept of identity has multiplied. The primary perspectives on identity arguably remain sociology, psychology and their subdivisions. Both have a distinctive approach to the study of identity which is informed and augmented by philosophy, neurology, consciousness studies, and so on.

Ideas about what constitutes adulthood change over time and culture, however many common themes can be observed. They might relate to, responsibility for one's self, one's actions, one's dependants, to society; or to the achievement of social markers, a job, a house, a car, a family. In the late twentieth century, the UK has seen a dissolution and marginalisation of social roles. Against a cultural background built on ideals of equality, classlessness, the rejection of ideology and the resulting relativism implicit in the neutrality of the value-free society, the free-floating identity exists in a field of ever-moving goalposts, our status and accomplishments forever subject to re-interpretation. Against this backdrop, identity is at once banal and profound. Like the two sides of a coin, we can only see one side or the other but both must be described if an adequate understanding is to be arrived at. An understanding of cannabis use and identity will therefore involve personal identity and developing social roles at the individual level, the processes of projecting these identities in social interactions, the negotiation of identity in

groups and understandings of wider cultural identities. Finally, it will require an understanding of how the nature and operation of these identities are changing in the face of wider social and structural changes.

For myself the link between teenage cannabis use and identity began only with a hunch based on the initial analysis of the first cohort presented in this study. This thesis is the result of following up on and adapting that hunch over a number of years. This original data came from a field study, carried out by the author, involving 7 open semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations of a wider group of 15 to 17 year-old, male cannabis users, conducted by the author in the summer of 1998. It was carried out in a naturalistic setting, observing and collecting interviews over two months on the fields and parks where the group met to smoke cannabis. This first cohort are referred to as the home group. In understanding, following up on and extending the concepts in this initial cohort, two further rounds of data collection were completed (Table 1: Data Collection Chronology p 12, sampling details p 62).

The data in the first cohort (*home group*, 1998) was collected with the broad aim of exploring the place of cannabis in the lives of young cannabis users who used cannabis without significant problems. The need for such research into ‘normal’, or ‘non-problematic’ use was rooted in the debates following the 1990s ‘normalisation hypothesis’ contemporary with its collection (Parker et al., 1998). Analysis of this data set provided useful contextual data in light of other work (Wibberley and Price, 2000a) being carried out by the author and colleagues at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). The interviews and ethnography were rich and ongoing exploration and analysis of themes emerging from this data pointed towards exploring the concept of identity in understanding the individuals cannabis use.

Cohort (rationale)	Data Collection
HG - Home Group (1998) Normalisation suggested a need to understand the place of cannabis in the lives of normal users.	7 hour long semi-structured interviews (schedule Appendix I, p 356) opportunistic sample snowballed from small social group in fields and parks where the group met to smoke cannabis. Around 2 months ethnographic observation.
SG - School Group (2003) The emerging concept of identity suggested further data collection with an eye to identity narratives.	6 hour long semi-structured interviews, (same schedule) self-selected sample taken from self-identified cannabis users in a school setting, observation of school setting (parallel focus groups - not included herein)
LTR - Late Twenties Reflectors (2004) Identity narratives not present in SG interviews - explored via adult reflectors.	5 semi-structured interviews of an hour or more, (same schedule framed retrospectively) sampled from a group previously known to the author who had used cannabis together as teenagers, reflecting on their use

Table 1: Data Collection Chronology

Starting with this initial data set, the *home group*, themes were refined using a number of strategies common to ethnographic analysis and drawing on grounded theory. This involved a processes of constant case comparison (Glaser, 1965), building extended case studies of each individual interview, and attempting to build composite case studies which authentically represented common ‘types’ of user. The composite case studies manifestly failed to capture the complex networks and layers of meaning each individual attached to their cannabis use. While there were many commonalities and similarities, what was taken out - the distinct individual - was the only source which could bring meaning to these dimensions.

The concept of identity thus emerged initially as a way of framing the richness and colour of the data, a way of exploring the meanings the teenagers attached to cannabis and the way it fitted into the lives of the individuals in the teenage cannabis using group. As the analysis progressed identity began to be conceived

as something more important than a framing device but as an important operational concept. This initiated a second inductive process of comparing the emerging dimensions revealed in the data to existing frameworks and models relating drugs to identity and broader understandings of identity drawn from across the social science literature.

Despite the large number of existing conceptual frameworks and models related to identity, no one framework or tradition appeared to sufficiently represent the data. It was clearly more than just social identities, it also involved more complex relationships to personal identities. While the identity literature revealed it as a complex and problematic concept there appeared to me, as to others in the research community (Anderson, 1994; Hammersley et al., 2001), tangible benefits in understanding the place of cannabis use through this discourse. The possibility remained that the data collection, which as an ethnographic study had not explicitly focused on these theoretical understandings, had not picked up on, or followed up on these existing identity related dimensions. Exploring the methodological literature on identity suggested eliciting identity narratives, stories which revealed the individuals placing of themselves in a context. There remained however a concern not to 'force' an existing theoretical perspective on the data. The initial semi-structured interview schedule had been effective and exploration with other forms of question appeared to bring few benefits.

In January 2003 while carrying out follow up focus groups with year 11 (15 to 16 years old), for the MMU schools substance use survey (Roy et al., 2005), a number of participants identified themselves as regular cannabis users and suggested they would be willing to take part in individual interviews. This group were interviewed (by the author) in school during March 2003, using the same open semi-structured interview schedule which had proven effective in the first cohort. Within this broad schedule, the interviewer looked out for any narratives or biographical content emerging and allow the interviewee to fully develop these aspects. Again, however, narratives situating the self in a story were not a significant feature of the interviews.

The stories which were told more often focused on describing the behaviour of others, locating the self only through othering, not as an active participant in the story. This in itself proved interesting, the teenagers expression and understanding of identity appeared to focus not on the construction of identity over time, but rather the construction of identity in contemporary social interactions and relationships. The data suggested that what was most important to understanding the relationship between identity and cannabis use was the dynamic production of personal and social meaning in the interactions of the teenage cannabis using group. The teenagers did not appear to actively configure their cannabis use in the context of a self-narrative. In reflecting on this it became evident that the elements of self-narrative which were present in the data focused on imaginings of an uncertain future. Until they knew what that future held they would not be able to place their teenage cannabis use in a coherent narrative.

Against the wider understandings of the meaning of drugs use, to individuals and society more widely, it seemed profitable to further explore the potential for interplay between a biographical self-narrative type of identity construction and the dynamic social production of identity that seemed to predominate in the teenagers understandings and presentations. To this end the author arranged a series of interviews with a group in their late twenties who had used cannabis together as teenagers (in the early 1990s) reflecting on their experiences. These interviews conducted in 2004 however again revealed only one individual who described a distinct role for cannabis in his personal biography, he related his use and cessation of cannabis to a significant turning point in his life (Rusty, p 130). For the rest of the cohort their teenage cannabis use was better understood as a more diffuse nostalgic and valued activity of their youth. Their understandings and the place of teenage cannabis use in their self-understandings is explored further in the authors MSc dissertation (Lamb, 2004) which includes in-depth case studies of all the adult-reflectors. The MSc work focused particularly on cannabis and personal identity, the place that cannabis, and the phase of the male teenage cannabis using group, had played in the extended biography of these users and the distinctive way they constructed the meanings of their own and others use of cannabis and other drugs. One of the main things this data bought to the current thesis was the

breadth and diversity of meanings and understandings which different individuals attached to their own drug use, that of others and of drug use in society. This was a process through which their wider understandings of use changed, while biographical understandings of their own teenage cannabis use were perhaps more rooted, by the times, places and contexts in which they had used.

In relation to this PhD study one further round of data collection was initiated in 2005 but ultimately aborted. This abortive strand had aimed to expand the study, exploring identity in the context of drugs use by groups in their early twenties and relating this to the emerging concepts of the male adolescent friendship groups discussed here. The author accessed a group in their early twenties through an existing contact, a mixed group their polydrug use was dominated by alcohol and cocaine use and activities focused on sexual and status displays in bar and club settings. They were a very difficult group to work with and following several months of piecemeal and difficult observation little concrete data had been collected. Much of the activity of the group involved gaming of status with extended groups and a certain suspension of the 'realities' of their lives. This data had clarified that the use of the male teenage friendship group was a distinctive and different phase of substance use bound by different sets of aims and boundary conditions. The concepts and theories emerging from the earlier work with male cannabis users would not be extended and completed by work with the group in their early twenties. This would be a different study and an ethnography that I as an individual would not perhaps be best suited to. This had been useful, however, in understanding the bounds and scope of the current thesis which is an exploratory study of the interaction between cannabis and personal and social construction of identity inside and beyond male teenage cannabis using groups.

The inductive analysis was built on an initial thematic analysis generated from the first cohort (HG,1998, p 63) then refined through an ongoing inductive process akin to constant case comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), with reference to existing theory and literature, over the three cohorts. An important structuring mechanism for the theory and conceptual development was a typology of commit-

ment to cannabis use. The typology is used to locate the different orientations to the operation of cannabis use and identity evident in different members of the group. Developing the typology involved a process of progressively refining the meanings of ‘commitment’ as a concept in relation to the data. The roots of much drugs theory and identity theory in behaviourism and symbolic interactionism (Hammersley, 2010) can suggest a very particular meaning of ‘commitment’, and the concept of commitment in relation to current social psychological theory can be used in quite specific ways. In the current project however it is conceived in the more general sense as an acknowledgement of investment of physical, temporal, or material resources over time. It was not in this project generally constitutive of a commitment to an identity, or role of ‘being a cannabis user’. It is possible this identity may be more evident, or indicative of problematic use (Anderson, 1994).

The focus on commitment stresses an ongoing relationship with both the drug and a linked sense of commitment to activities and groups in which cannabis was used. Further it points to the concept of investment, in skills, developing connoisseurship, maintaining social networks of supply and use. This notion of investment highlights the importance of limited resources, of the teenagers time ‘invested’ in cannabis and the cannabis smoking group as time ‘stolen’ from school and family commitments. A key feature of the data was that the teenagers did not configure commitment to cannabis in the same way as commitment to family life, school and career. While these were ongoing life projects, commitment to cannabis, to the group and other individuals in it, was contingent and time limited. This revealed that the value placed on cannabis use was dependent on the liminal and transitory nature of the group. The value they placed on cannabis thus being intimately connected to the value for each individual of the group as a ‘play space’ (Measham, 2004a) and an arena for ‘identity play’.

Furthermore, as Becker (1953) noted cannabis involves a learning process which unfolds over time and regular use leads to accommodation and learning to enjoy the effects and control any ill-effects. Cessation of cannabis use, or using in an uncontrolled manner as a novice leads to ceasing to be able to enjoy the effects. The

conditionality for regular use over time involves a commitment to either continue, or to cease use. The typology of commitment is underpinned by the different value placed on cannabis use by different types of users. This relates to the role it plays in their lives, relationships and activities, their understandings of themselves and the role contents of identities which they transact in social relationships. Differential commitment had been identified in the first cohort but the typology could only be fully developed by understanding the place of particular individuals within the cannabis smoking group.

The *home group* as a single extended cannabis group gave a rich and focused account of the interactions in one group, however the second cohort (SG, 2003, p 63) provided descriptions of many different cannabis smoking groups that different individuals participated in. Understanding the differences and similarities between the descriptions of interactions, roles and activities in these different groups was key in further developing the typology. The typology was confirmed and its basis refined in the final cohort of adult reflectors (LTR, 2004, p 63). The adult reflectors data was most useful in beginning to understand the changes, from the construction of meaning of drugs use in the teenage friendship, to wider and more refined understandings. It made clear the extent to which the understandings of the teenage group were overwhelming situated and constructed within the group and only through later reflection did these initial understandings come to be contextualised with reference to wider culture and society. The understandings and interpretations of the adult reflectors diverged with age becoming highly individualised as the breadth of interpretive frameworks available to them increased. There remained however a nostalgic kernel of common understandings of what it had meant to be part of the group as teenagers. Having been part of this group appeared to remain a valued part of their teenage experience.

Reflecting on the nature of identity in relation to the whole data set thus revealed that the personal meaning the teenagers attached to their cannabis use was rooted in the dynamic production of social meanings of use within the group. Furthermore this particular social context facilitated and maintained through the cannabis using

group provided a set of characteristics that were particularly suited to an exploratory and experimental expression of identity. All three types of users explained their use as social and understanding the social activities of the cannabis smoking group was central to understanding their motivation to use, how and when they used, what they got out of their use and how they understood their use.

All three data sets were important in developing the thesis, however the first cohort, being carried out in a naturalistic setting with one extended social group provides the most complete picture for communicating the findings of the thesis. The data is presented as three in-depth case studies (p 87) representing the three archetypes in the typology. All participants data were worked up into similar full case studies and case summaries. Case summaries for participants from all three data sets provide an overview of the relationship between case studies and case summaries (p 121). All case studies presented are drawn from interviews conducted by the author.

As the above makes clear, this project was emergent and exploratory. Studying a population using an illegal drug who are not known to statutory agents necessitates a degree of pragmatism in the choice and application of methods. The methods drew pragmatically on ethnography, grounded theory and naturalistic inquiry. The need for a pragmatic orientation to methods has become common in applied social science (Thorne et al., 1997). One view of science is instrumentalist, this holds that the truth of science is dependent on the rigorous application of scientific method. If method is followed truth inevitably follows. Another version holds that method is dependent on the nature of the questions being asked. Here truth is dependent on using the best tools available. Different methods in the social sciences vary in their instrumentalism, positivist research rests most firmly on instrumental procedures, by contrast ethnography is a set of tools developed over time, which can be brought to bear on emergent non-categorical data.

Following the instrumental view suggests that inquiry is guided by paradigms since truth follows method, and method is intrinsically bound to worldview. The second view suggests that paradigms are established ex post facto they represent merely an interpretation of the relationship between methods and theory which has gone before. It is this second view that this project takes, the orientation of the project to wider existing paradigms can only be understood at the end of the project and is the result of the concepts and worldview which emerge from the data. The question that must be asked of the methods is then, not whether they are appropriate to the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher but whether they are those best suited to answering the questions raised. This position admits to a degree of relativism, different methods may yield different types of knowledge that provide more or less surety and can be put to different ends.

Over the course of this project the initial research question ‘How does cannabis fit into the lives of young people?’ was refined and expanded in relation to the data obtained in the first cohort. It framed a tentative hypothesis and outlined the scope of this hypothesis. This scope was defined by the group characteristics observed in the first cohort, an almost exclusively male group aged 15 to 17 who met to smoke cannabis outdoors. The emergent hypothesis was that their cannabis use related in some way to identity development. The kind of questions that we could ask of the data were then bounded by the methods, the sample and the context the data was collected in. The questions that emerged from this interpretation then suggested the need for further data collection which would be relevant to the contexts of use observed in the original sample.

The purpose of research is to provide the best possible knowledge for people to base their decisions and actions on. Different methods provide different bases to support a particular course of action. For instance population level survey research is the best tool available to provide estimates of the scale of cannabis use. High use of cannabis across a population makes an argument for dedicating resources to research into the effect that use may be having. It can tell us something about self perceived problems of use. Routinely collected clinical data, clinical trials, meta-

analysis of treatment outcomes all produce valid and important data. However, in isolation they can tell us little about the context in which cannabis is routinely used.

The vast majority of published research about drugs use can be characterised as positivist, or postpositivist, relying primarily on quantitative methods. Nevertheless, the use of mixed-methods and qualitative methods have been influential in the development of many commonly used concepts in the literature and research into drugs use has been influential in the ongoing development of qualitative methods (Hammersley, 2010). The place of qualitative research in the substance use field is valued amongst many researchers though there remains a substantial reliance on quantitative methods (Rhodes et al., 2010). In common with research in other applied research fields, there remains a tendency to view qualitative research as only having value as an adjunct to positivist approaches, qualitative researchers have themselves been complicit in popularising this view (Power, 1989; 2001). While qualitative researchers continue to contextualise their work only within its value for positivist approaches a bias toward only asking the questions which positivist approaches can engage with is unlikely to change.

I argue that positivist work is rightly valued in the drugs field and that under existing structures it is key in demanding and mobilising the necessary resources to address the substantive issues faced by society and by those with drugs problems. I will also argue that to make real progress on these substantive issues, both in developing interventions, and in developing wider theory to inform action and policy making, we need greater recognition of the unique contribution of in-depth interpretive approaches to qualitative research. One of the issues which the current project wrestled with, in common with much other research in the applied social disciplines, was the appropriate way in which to frame and orient its methods and the interpretive and theoretical perspectives developed. In engaging with the concepts of identity it intrinsically engages with social theory at the philosophical level. Simultaneously it drew implicitly on the action research tradition in its use of inductive problem solving cycles. As will be explored further, this was in part

rooted in my own biography, working primarily in applied research, as a practitioner of research with an interest in philosophy and cultural theory, rather than toward an overarching sociological vision. I began with more knowledge of ‘what worked’, than of who originated a particular technique. This thesis is in many ways a story also of filling these gaps, making, and re-making these missing connections in the increasingly vast canons of social sciences research.

The relationship between action, agency and structure is in many ways the linchpin in different traditions of social theory. Classical social theory makes a distinction between macro and micro approaches to understanding society. The approach taken in this thesis and that of much recent social theory, notably Bourdieu’s habitus and Giddens’ structuration, dictate a closer relationship, a ‘duality’ of structure and agency (Elliot, 2009). Bourdieu’s habitus is a wide-ranging and in places problematic concept - the focus in this study has been informed more by Giddens (1976; 1984) and his work with Beck (1994; 1996). For those who prefer to think in terms of habitus many of these ideas could be translated to an extent into Bourdieusian terms. For Giddens, structure and agency are more intimately inter-related, the study of actors and agency is thus implicitly the study of structure and vice versa. Structures are created and reproduced through action and in turn guide action and agency.

In the discussion I will suggest that, following Beck (1996), along with bringing structure and agency together, we need to consider a third component, ‘nature’ in its wider sense as the material stuff of life. A principle objection to structuration theory is its failure to account for solidity and permanence in structures (Elliot, 2009). The data and interpretation herein suggest we cannot sufficiently account for the nature of structures without theories of communication and diffusion, or without reference to the material world. As becomes evident in the analysis of the cannabis using group we need all three systems to adequately account for, cannabis, the group, the individuals who choose to come together to use cannabis in the group and the places where they use. Just as we cannot abstract agency from structure neither can we detach it completely from the shared material world.

The progressive action of individuals and groups who both use existing structures to mobilise agency and in turn who's action and intent is interpreted through these structures rests on reflexivity. Reflexivity here suggests that the actor must be able to adequately capture (in an aware, or subconscious/ background capacity) the forms of structures available to him to act with the intent and understanding necessary to have some hope of producing a desired effect. There are thus intentional actions, and less intentional actions involving greater or lesser agency, involvement and investment of resources in different domains. Giddens (1976:5) in his revised introduction to the 'New Rules' addresses the implications of structuration theory for research:

Most sociologists, including even many working within frameworks of interpretive sociology, have failed to recognize that social theory, no matter how 'macro' its concerns, demands a sophisticated understanding of agency and the agent just as much as it does an account of the complexities of society.

Secondly, the emphasis that action is guided by reflexivity dictates that for Giddens (1976:5) structuration involves that 'all actors are social theorists, they must be so to be social agents at all' . In this Giddens draws on phenomenology and ethnomethodology to suggest that even the most ingrained habits are nevertheless reflexive. That we are to some extent all social theorists of varying sophistication, and we are often the best theorists of our own lives, even if these theories may be difficult to communicate, has been borne out on many levels in the current project. So too has the almost uncanny manner in which in doing so we as individuals recreate what has gone before but change it somewhat in the action of doing so.

The orientation of this project was not initially informed by Giddens' work on identity, or the wider features of structuration. Rather through an inductive process, grounded in empirical data the theories developed converged on this perspective, inadvertently replicating particular aspects, before critically engaging with this work. Similarly the methodological approach, based on previous experience, drew unknowingly on many aspects of Lewin's (1946) action research perspective.

Such is the impact of many of the core perspectives in social research that their diffusion colours the ways in which we work, even if we are largely unaware of their particular origins. Similarly, the circumstances from which they grew may be similar to those in which we find ourselves and we may without any knowledge or reference to the progenitor, reproduce their findings independently. The reflexive process in our lay social theorising in everyday life relies on incomplete data and vague imaginings. So too do the social theories we develop in the human sciences, however while the lay social theories we develop relate primarily to our own experiences, the theories we develop in academic research relate principally to the experiences of other people. Empirical data is thus central to research and the research in this project relies on Weber's *Verstehen* principle, that the empirical data we will construct our theory on will be the related experiences and interpretations of the research subjects.

As discussed, quantitative approaches are highly appropriate to many problems in drugs research, however, many other issues remain which cannot be approached through quantitative work alone (Glaser and Strauss, 1965). While grounded theory has become an accepted approach to developing theory in the social sciences, in the context of this programme of research some aspects of the approach made it unsuitable. As will be discussed further, grounded theory grew out of wider existing good research practice, likewise this project, like much other work, draws on grounded theory without being grounded theory as such (Jennings and Junek, 2007; Mills et al., 2008).

Action Research has been put forward as an appropriate method for social research when the aim is to interrogate the basic assumptions used to frame a given problem and arrive at a better understanding of the nature of the problem (O'Brian, 2011). Built on very general inductive problem solving principles, the openness of Lewin's action research invites proliferation and the breadth of the field, disciplines, and issues it has been applied to is extraordinary. Lewin's basic inductive problem solving and force field analysis has been influential in systems orientations to research. Secondly, Lewin's emphasis on the need to empower minorities in order

to give them an equal footing on which to take part in problem solving provides a link through critical theory, to emancipatory and participatory action research. The stance taken in the current project is more akin to the systems approach since the role of drugs researchers in order to impact existing systems must be as a value-neutral observer rather than an advocate.

Most approaches to action research appear to share a pragmatic, inductive, problem-solving process, involving various degrees of formality. This process is frequently visualised as flow charts, cycles, spirals, and so on, many of which also include Lewin's notion of 'fields' or force-field analysis. Lewin himself conceived the topology of the process as a spiral with cycles embedded within it (Lewin, 1946). In its simplest incarnations the basic problem solving orientation is evident in commonly used policy cycles (Figure 1, p 25). We can see from the cycle that each step in developing coherent and effective policy has associated research needs.

With respect to drugs research it has become increasingly clear that a priori problem definition may be a key barrier to improving responses to the manifest drugs problems encountered on a daily basis by specialist and generic health practitioners (Nutt, 2009; Stimson, 2000). Both in the drugs field and in other areas, scientific knowledge and expertise is questioned, ignored and refuted, often uncritically, by policy makers, the media and the public, with a tacit refusal to acknowledge the results of research which do not accord with a predefined conceptualisation of the problem. This is the established role of action research, to examine the problem as a whole and take into account the views, interests and actions of all actors and stakeholders. Effective action, however, would involve an accommodation by the actors to the different values and perspectives of the others, which at this time appears to remain difficult. As such this project aimed at improving problem definition by improving understanding of the minority position (Lewin, 1946). This involved understanding the way they frame their own interpretations. before moving to accommodating these interpretations in wider academic and social frames.

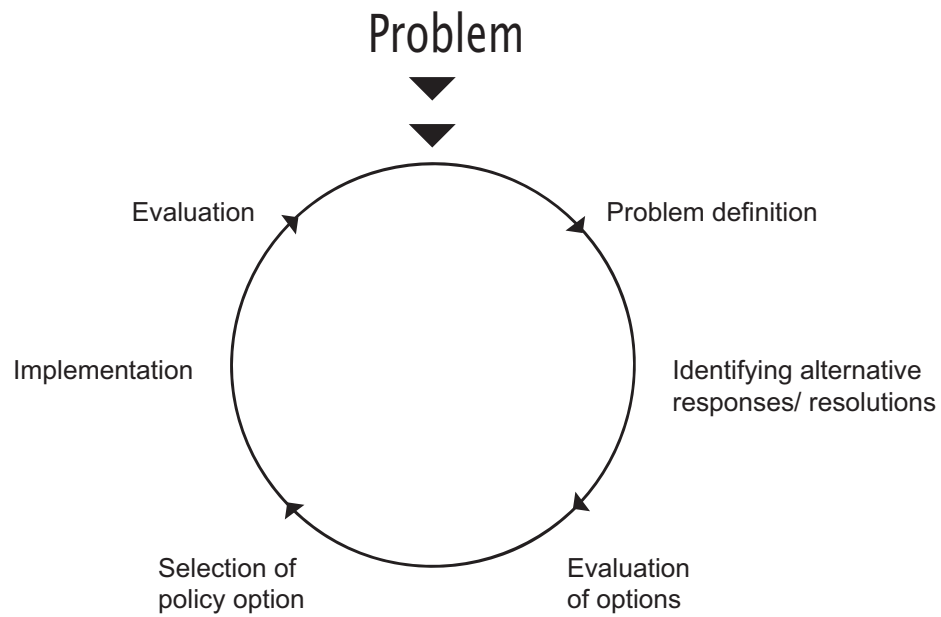


Figure 1: Policy Cycle

The present study is an inductive, interpretive design, which I have argued should be recognised for its own intrinsic value in the production of knowledge. However, much of the potential value of inductive work for others working in the drugs field lies in the more limited role it may play in informing, developing, or interpreting positivist approaches. Carpiano and Daley (2006) outline a process for building postpositivist theory in health with an eye to applied interdisciplinary research. This approach makes firm distinctions rooted in the processes of the hypothetico-deductive paradigm between conceptual frameworks, theories, and models. Here frameworks outline the range of variables and their potential operation in relation to the phenomena being studied but do not offer firm directional causal hypotheses for testing. Theories are here the range of directional hypotheses that can be drawn from the framework, and models further describe the operation and scope of these hypotheses in relation to a particular phenomenon. The current study from the postpositivist standpoint can then be considered as an exploration, the main potential of which is to inform the first stage of developing frameworks which can then inform hypothesis generation. From the interpretivist standpoint of structuration it

is in itself a description and interpretation of the theories the teenagers use to understand the place of cannabis in their own lives, and the theories which others, both lay and professional bring to their understandings of the cannabis use of teenagers. In doing so it points tentatively to the range of theories necessary in understanding the phenomenon as a whole and the nature of the ‘problem’ of teenage cannabis use (Lewin, 1946).

Of the many inductive approaches to social research most share a common root in Weber’s *Verstehen* principle which drawing on anthropology of the time, stressed understanding a phenomenon from the individual perspectives of those involved (Gold, 1997). The current project can be conceived within the action research context of problem definition, however, the methods were informed by wider research traditions including ethnography, grounded theory and social theoretical perspectives. While it has a focus on the understandings the teenage cannabis users bring to their use, it has an equal focus on interpreting these understandings through existing theory. In addition to action research, the perspective of ‘social action’ in Parsons’ (1951) sense is also relevant, in describing the ‘action context’ of the teenage cannabis using group. The project involved an understanding of action, the structures created and re-created through that action, the reflexive principles brought to that context by the actors, the reflexive principles others use in interpreting what they know of that context, and the wider social structures and reflexive practices which inform, constrain and enable the actions and structures created by the teenagers.

The research accordingly draws on a diverse set of theoretical perspectives in order to accurately capture and communicate the interpretations arising from the data (Ritzer, 1975). I will argue that that the incommensurability of paradigms (which though it may have been overstated certainly appears to hold in some circumstances) does not in all circumstances directly indicate incommensurability of methods. Methods of data collection and presentation in particular, can be viewed as tools and strategies which though inspired by a particular ontological or epistemological stance can be usefully adopted or adapted by those operating within

other paradigms. This must not however be done in an uncritical manner but with a firm understanding of their origins and place in the original paradigm and of how their framing relates to the paradigm they are translated into (Paterson et al., 2001).

The core strategies for data collection and analysis in the current project drew principally on ethnography and grounded theory. Hypothetico-inductive approaches to social research begin with hypotheses related to existing theory which are used to inform sampling, data collection and analysis - in doing so they test and extend existing theory in the hope of adding to the canon of disciplinary knowledge. By contrast this project sought to explore the range of existing theory which most authentically captured and communicated the data and offered the most potent explanations for interpreting the data. Retrospective reflection on the processes as a whole suggests it can also be usefully understood through Lewin's (1946) problem solving orientation. The iteration of 'trying on' different concepts and different strategies in the underlying methods and analysis is highly consistent with Lewin's problem solving models - though the topography differs somewhat. Early action research approaches have been discussed as particularly appropriate to basic research, involved in understanding a phenomena rather than directed toward an a priori 'problem' (Barton et al., 2007). In pragmatically and systematically working through the problems of understanding empirical data and fitting it in a grounded manner to existing concepts, it is perhaps unsurprising that it arrived at the same basic principles.

The data themselves reveal a wide range of processes impacting on how the teenagers use cannabis and the way they understand their use. The way that they use cannabis and what they get out of using cannabis involves status play, an arena for the construction of meaning and identity exploration rooted in small group practices at the micro level. Their wider lives and their cannabis use are also impacted by meso level effects such as the local physical and social landscape and their interaction with other people. In turn these often related to wider macro-social and cultural issues, the risk and uncertainty of globalisation and social adaptation. The

degree of awareness of the teenagers of different issues and processes at different levels varied. They could however, only construct and communicate meanings from within their own, sometimes limited frame of reference. Reflection and interpretation were therefore key elements in moving to relate their reported practices and perceptions to existing theory and literature and to wider understandings.

While there is little extant theory of identity specific to teenage cannabis use, there is a wealth of theory relating to identity across these three levels. Additionally there are some well configured and supported models for understanding drug problems at the micro, meso and macro levels. Some of these involve an explicit identity component, others are framed in wider behavioural understandings. A central problem in developing this thesis therefore involved making systematic and rational choices about where to draw the boundaries in the use of existing theory. Debates about the relationship of theory, concepts and the possibility of making inferences that can be applied beyond the context in which the data were collected have in the past provided a demarcation between the situatedness characteristic of early anthropology and the attempt to integrate the particular with the general which is central to the project of sociology (Denzin, 1982). For some this distinction has blurred, the twin approaches share many of the same field methods and situatedness has come to be regarded as ideological purism in some schools of anthropology. Likewise, the limits of theory and the uses to which it is put are ongoing concerns in sociological discourse and a central problem in the claims of the discipline as science.

For ethnographers theory is the abstraction from the particular which makes cross-case, or inter-contextual data comparable (Gold, 1997). It is theory then, abstractions from the particular, that begins to make up disciplinary knowledge; at various points in the development of the social sciences, this has become problematic. The theories central to a discipline can become a lens through which observation is habitually framed, potentially distorting the phenomena under study. Grounded theory aimed to move beyond this by demonstrably grounding theory in primary data (Glaser and Strauss, 1965). Grounded theory continues to acknowledge the

division between data and interpretation, the movement from raw primary data to research report involves subjective steps. The theory is not in the raw data, it emerges from the data through the interpretive process.

Understandings of cannabis use have developed and changed throughout the history of its use. Recently they have most often centred on the problematization of cannabis use. Questions about the meaning of cannabis use have often involved psychological dimensions; the motivation to use cannabis, risk factors for cannabis use and cannabis use as a risk factor in the development of other problems. These approaches aim to predict initiation, patterns and scales of use, the subgroup of cannabis users who will go on to develop other problems. Normalisation, regardless of whether it is happening or not, points toward an alternative way of thinking about cannabis. It suggests that cannabis use cannot be understood just in terms of aberrance but must increasingly be understood through normalcy. It is a view which invites a re-evaluation of theories of cannabis use (Hammersley et al., 2001). Although there is some work relating identity to drugs use, it has mostly focused on aetiology, treatment and recovery in addictions and those with serious drug problems (Bailey, 2005; Baker, 2000; Etherington, 2006; Gibson et al., 2004; Koski-Jännes, 2002; McIntosh and McKeganey, 2000; Weisz, 1996). Cannabis use and identity in young males presents an interesting opportunity for developing an understanding of drug use and identity from a 'normal' perspective.

Research projects are conventionally reported in terms of a definite start and end point, a research process which leads from question to answer. The project is given epistemological credence by regarding it as a discrete unit. In practice, this is not entirely the case, the research process and the project only have meaning with reference to a wider context. That context includes review of existing literature and discussion of findings with reference to the literature. The range of literature reported however often bears little relationship to the breadth of reading necessary in a project's development. It also says little of the biography or the skills, abilities and prior knowledge of the researcher; the insights gained through their professional relationships and the impact this might have on the development

of the work. The approaches taken here were informed by, and grew out, of the author's own wider experiences of research and that of colleagues. Additionally, the research is informed and contextualised with reference to both direct and more oblique sources in the literature. The concept of concatenated research (Stebbins, 2006) provides an interesting perspective in light of the continuous aggregation of drugs literature and the career nature of much research. Concatenation can be seen here as a conscious extension of the conventional notions of reflexivity in interpretive research (Foley, 2002). However, the concept of concatenation in itself may not sufficiently capture the inductive process of progressive rounds of sharp focus on a particular problem, set of problems, and the connections between them.

The introduction has provided an overview of the research, its aims, origins, the choice of methods, samples and their relationship to theoretical development in the project. These are further developed in the chapters that follow. The next chapter reviews some of the concepts that have been used in understanding cannabis use and introduces some of the key ideas in identity which informed the development of the project. The methods chapter (p 59) reviews precedents for research of this kind and examines the philosophical, methodological and practical issues in carrying out the project. The case studies chapter (p 97) presents ethnographic case studies of selected group members and case summaries of members of each cohort. The concepts and themes generated from the case studies are then explored in the next chapter, findings and interpretation (p 132). The discussion chapter (p 170) interrogates the possible relationships between the concepts generated through reference to the wider literature. This is followed by reflections on the research process, the nature, scope and limitations of this approach and some thoughts on the prospects and potentials for developing further work in this area. The wider implications of the research and the work that may follow it are further considered in the conclusions (p 307).

2: Understandings of Cannabis Use

There has been relatively little specific focus on identity in the literature on cannabis use. Where it has been addressed directly, it has been predominantly a theoretical exercise with little empirical work, in part due to the nature of the concept. There is a growing body of literature related to identity, biography and life narratives in the study of addiction and recovery. There has also been some more in depth work on identity in common mental health problems and well-being which offer a perspective on life transitions. Also of interest is a wider literature relating to adolescent development and life transition and concepts of health and well-being. The background provides a review of key themes and concepts in the literature relating to cannabis, identity and adolescence. As a contested concept, there are too many conceptual perspectives on identity to review in detail here. Instead, the review is confined to understandings of identity extant in the drugs literature or which were identified as directly relevant to the analysis.

The use of cannabis received ongoing research attention over the twentieth century. The concepts used in understanding cannabis users and the place of cannabis in society and culture have undergone significant revision, however the key themes have changed little and much earlier literature is still highly relevant today. Indeed a historical perspective is of key importance in understanding contemporary debate. Perhaps the greatest change in our understanding of cannabis use is related to social attitudes to use and a movement from the concept of deviance, developed in the 1950s and 60s (Becker, 1963), to that of normalisation developed in the 1990s (Aldridge et al., 1998; Parker et al., 1998).

Becker's work of the 1950s is a good starting point in reviewing academic concepts related to cannabis use and adolescence since it coincides with the delineation of a form of youth culture characterised by consumption, the branding of youth, youth as a market driven by a sense of what it means to be a teenager. In a reading of cannabis use which pivots on the twin categories of deviancy and normalisation it will become clear that developing an understanding of teenage cannabis use is not a

linear process of scientific discovery but is a process whereby meanings are negotiated in a complex mediated discourse woven between competing public, political and scientific perspectives.

The inherited assumptions of a moral dimension in drugs use have left us with a debate and a literature hidebound by a multiplicity of competing and largely unstated value systems: historical, religious, philosophical, scientific, modern and postmodern. The drugs researcher is then left walking a political tightrope within these frameworks where merely by questioning orthodox assumptions he positions himself as a drugs advocate, alternative, moral degenerate, or an irresponsible bourgeois failing to appreciate the struggle and suffering of the drugs user. To challenge the orthodoxy of drugs use as suffering is to challenge the meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1979).

The range of concepts used in understanding teenage cannabis use reveals an ongoing tension in communication between lay and professional conceptions. Much of the lay conceptualisation of use has been routinely and uncritically adopted in various sectors of the research community, particularly in the quantitative field where top down theorising and the use of limited instruments built on a priori assumptions can place a significant distance between researcher and subject. First, we will look at the traditional stereotypes typified in accepted public opinion before looking at the markers that suggest a move towards a normalised view of drugs use, and the mechanisms underlying the processes of constructing normalisation and deviance.

2.1 - Lay Conceptions of Cannabis Use

Lay conceptions are socially constructed meanings that provide a shorthand for the public, the mass media, the jobbing politician, to understand an area in which they may have little first hand experience and little knowledge. These concepts nevertheless make up a 'common-sense' knowledge, created through a dialectic of public opinion and media consumption. Often congruence with these opinions is regu-

lated through their association with wider value systems. Their adoption becomes for the general public a low cost way of socially presenting their own moral worthiness. The main concepts and arguments that have been used include: peer pressure, getting in with the wrong crowd, the drugs pusher, the slippery slope, experimenting, getting hooked, addiction and madness.

What each concept has in common, is an implicit value statement about the activity, 'it's morally wrong', and a narrative for situating the user, usually as unwitting victim, to absolve and forgive them for this moral transgression and situate the person using the narrative as compassionate, responsible and forgiving. This reveals an important dimension in the social construction of understandings of drug use, which is unlike other problem behaviours that are commonly viewed through the lens of addiction: gambling, drinking, over-eating, and so on. These activities are generally taken to be morally neutral, or 'naughty but nice' activities, unless or until they take on a pathological character. The traditional view of drugs use holds that any use of drugs is wrong, that drugs cannot be used in a non-pathological way - all use is abuse (Booth-Davies, 1992). Partly this view is contrived by eliding what are quite different substances, with different effects and potential harms, into the catchall of 'drugs'.

The 'slippery slope' argument has been a key public narrative for understanding this construction by providing a perceived relationship between relatively low risk substances, with those that have relatively higher risks. The argument suggests that there is an inevitable progression from 'soft drugs' to 'harder drugs'. That the majority of cannabis users do not go on to use other drugs would tend to contradict this. A professional variant of this argument, 'the gateway hypothesis' suggests that the use of 'soft drugs' increases the risk of using 'harder drugs' at some time in the future (Bretteville-Jensen et al., 2008; Hall and Lynskey, 2005). In studies of these hypotheses however authors are usually keen to point out that it is not possible to control for the full range of variables which may impact on drug trying and the

development of drugs problems. This kind of study often focuses on probabilities, or risk factors, for going on to use other substances, rather than examining the reasons for use, harms, or problems.

These assumptions and the possible mechanisms underlying this process have received a great deal of research attention, across many disciplines, over many years, however conclusive empirical support from any direction remains elusive. There are three interconnected problems which relate to these confounding factors. Firstly, there is a hypothesised genetic or environmental predisposition to either use drugs, or to develop drugs problems. Secondly, there is, almost by definition, a preponderance of wider social, personal and mental health problems in groups with drugs problems which make it difficult to untangle cause and effect. In other words was the drugs use an explicit causal factor, or is it a preferred coping mechanism based on the individual's genetics or environment. The third and principal problem with the 'gateway hypotheses' is that even if a set of valid empirically testable pathways demonstrating causal relationships could be found, it is still only an explanation for the drugs use of a tiny minority. It provides little in the way of explanation for how drugs are used by the non-problematic majority, or what characterises a drugs problem. A more fine-grained approach involves studying 'transitions' (Strang et al., 1992), which focuses on problems, harms, and patterns of use. This approach however lacks the assumptions of progressive decline characterised by the slippery slope type argument.

If little support or relevance has been found in the slippery slope type argument, the 'drugs pusher' provides an alternate or supporting mechanism. The 'folk' pusher would sell cannabis, before trying to get customers 'hooked' on harder drugs (Cohen, 1972). The pusher has long been revealed as fallacy, particularly in relation to drugs like cannabis; instead the risk versus profit profiles of dealing in different illicit substances dictate a separation of markets. Somebody dealing cocaine at higher profit and higher risk will not generally run the risk of also dealing in cannabis since if they come to police attention through dealing cannabis their cocaine dealing would likely come to light. Secondly, in a relatively open and

well-served market place, users will tend to use dealers with whom they feel safe and who can supply a positive and enjoyable buying experience. A new conception of a dealer was a feature in Parker's normalisation hypothesis, the dealer 'sorting' the buyer as 'trusted friend' and assumed to be making little profit (Parker et al., 2002). This idea can however be reasonably located within the peer pressure argument.

The peer pressure, 'getting in with the wrong crowd' argument in some ways provides a more plausible, or useful type of explanation for drugs use. However, it offers little explanation of the social dynamics through which peer pressure is exerted - specifically whether there is an active agent in this pressure, or it is the result of the interaction of other more general social mechanisms (Pilkington, 2007). It is mainly problematic in that while pointing toward a social aetiology, which seems plausible, it focuses on two components which do not bear closer scrutiny.

Since users do not routinely report feeling any pressure to use, acknowledge any explicit social pressure to use from their peers, or report putting any pressure on their peers to use, if pressure exists it is in a form which neither agent is cognisant of. The pressure must then be indirect, such as an aspect of pressure to conform to the definitions of a group for instance. This is not however a useful or parsimonious explanation, it replaces a direct observable and sufficiently subtle set of abstract concepts, 'social group dynamics', with a unitary negatively experienced proxy. Secondly, it is not axiomatic that motivation to use comes from the peer group. While it may be the peer group who the individual actually engages in drugs use with, there might equally be any number of individual, social or structural factors which lead an individual to identify with a peer group who happen to use drugs. The peer group argument is politic in that it places responsibility for use on fellow drug users (who are by definition morally tainted by virtue of that use) rather than on parents, educators, or other aspects of social structures.

Experimentation in some ways offers a useful 'get out' clause, acknowledging that the majority of users will not experience wider problems and will not use particularly heavily, or for a particularly long time. It is a mechanism by which we can hold on to the concept of drugs use as moral degeneracy without labelling otherwise functional members of society as degenerate. Experimentation is thus a period of allowable youthful transgression where some degree of drugs use will be tolerated for a short period based on curiosity. The politics of the term then turns on the limits of what substances and what degree of use can be tolerated as experimental (and how youthful one must be). A key idea is that the drug must be tried, perhaps regularly used for a period but that the individual must then decide not to use any more because he no longer enjoys it, it's no longer interesting, or it leads to some unpleasant experience (Petraitis et al., 1995).

A more difficult use of the term experimental refers to an attitude where a potentially large range of different drugs are tried, primarily out of curiosity with little ill effect. Such use is more likely to also include a wider range of natural and synthetic psychostimulants, often with alternative lifestyles, meditation and other transcendent practices. It presupposes an orientation that is something more than hedonism, whether it be scientific curiosity (Shulgin and Shulgin, 1995), aesthetic, or quasi-spiritual concerns (Leary et al., 1964). This last view of experimentation suggests that drugs use is allowable only by some moral calculus; that the freedom to experiment with drugs comes with the responsibility conferred by education, class, wealth, or other privilege - drug abuse by contrast is defined by hedonism, escapism and is confined to drug use by the underprivileged. Experimentation does however move towards normalisation in that it acknowledges that there are some circumstances under which drugs use can be (more or less) acceptable.

The capacity of a substance to produce an addiction remains the key marker outside of physical, psychological or social harm that differentiates different classes of drugs. True addiction relies on the idea of a substance overcoming the will of an individual so that they are compelled to continue to use it, or to consume it in ever-greater quantities. Originally conceived in relation to opiate use, true addic-

tion requires a neurological basis with psychological and social correlates and a period of physical withdrawal and psychosocial readjustment following cessation. Cannabis does not appear to follow this profile, however populist notions of addiction usually refer only to the concept of an individual being somehow incapable of stopping a particular behaviour when they want to. In this sense, popular addiction is more about an individual's perception of a lack of control, or personal agency in relation to a given activity. Addiction then turns responsibility for drugs use and drugs problems into a malevolent biological mechanism in the face of which the addict and society are powerless (Bailey, 2005; Booth-Davies, 1992; Hammersley and Reis, 2002).

The relationship between cannabis use and mental health in the literature has a long tradition and many problems in the conceptualisation of drugs use, cannabis use and mental health problems share common origins (Macleod et al., 2004a; Negrete, 1973; Palen and Coatsworth, 2007). Szasz (1974) contentiously argues that all three problems are social and political constructions which legitimise the persecution of difference, social rule breaking and re-enforce hegemonic value systems which serve a ruling elite. While Szasz's position represents an extreme of this viewpoint and in some respects he perhaps overstates the case his arguments do highlight important dimensions in understanding both drugs use, mental illness and some of the relationships between them.

What Szasz points out is that both formal and informal rules govern the use of substances and what one can consider to be normal behaviour, secondly that there is an interaction between formal and informal rules and thirdly the key to understanding this relationship is power. This perspective is clearly related to the ideas of Foucault (1961) which focus on the establishment of a new class of outsiders with the emergence of western industrialised nations. Indeed both Szasz and Foucault have been considered as key thinkers in an 'anti-psychiatry' movement. The recorded increase in mental health diagnoses across the twentieth century does parallel the increase in recorded substance use. However, the relationship between them and the nature of any causal direction or interaction remains obscure. The

fact that both occur over a similar period to the huge social changes and increasing uncertainties experienced as a side effect of industrialisation, advanced capitalism and globalisation may be coincidental. Attempts to provide empirical evidence of a causal link, in either direction, between cannabis use and common or severe mental conditions are nevertheless called into question by the confounding nature of social problems which cannot be adequately controlled for in the analysis.

To these traditional lay concepts we must add perhaps a new one, drugs use in cultures in which it is normalised may come to be seen as rite of passage much as alcohol has been (Beccaria and Sande, 2003). An extension in many ways of the experimental model of use it suggests that if drugs use is normalised, experimentation becomes a perfunctory or even obligatory phase in normal development - a rite of passage. This perhaps presents the greatest risk, that those who do not want to use drugs are coerced into doing so in order to fit a definition of what it means to have an authentic youth experience. This would not be an entirely unexpected turn in the commodification of youth, as a set of experiences, symbols and rites which are bought. An authentic youth which then hinges on having the resources with which to buy it, whether it be an annual snowboarding trip, a gap year trekking, or a fortnight taking ecstasy and cocaine in a holiday resort (Measham, 2004b; Parker et al., 1998, 2008; Parker, 2005).

2.2 - Sociological Concepts in Cannabis Use

Becker's (1953) 'Becoming a Marijuana User', is regarded as a classic text in sociology for both its method and its development of theory. It marks a first movement from an understanding of cannabis use through psychological trait theory to a sociological understanding of cannabis as part of a repertoire of social behaviour rooted in Mead's social interactionist perspective. Becker (1953:235) argued that:

...the presence of a given kind of behaviour is the result of a sequence of social experiences during which the person acquires a conception of the meaning of the behaviour, and the perception and judgements of objects and situations, all of which make the activity possible or desirable. Thus, the motivation or disposition to engage in the activity is built up in the course of learning to engage in it and does not antedate this learning process.

In understanding this perspective it is useful to consider the wider perspective to which it relates. There is a clear relationship to the postulates of Mead's social interactionist perspective, summarised here from Meltzer (1975):

- The individual and society are inseparable units
- In order to understand the individual we have to understand the society of which they are a part and one cannot understand society without understanding the individuals which form it.
- Human beings are self-reflective, they are organisms with selves.
- Behaviour in society is a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the internal and external stimuli that are present.
- Many of these external stimuli (i.e. environmental influences) are experienced in the form of social meanings which are learnt
- Behaviour is therefore (socially) constructed

Becker was a member of the Chicago school which leant heavily on the ideas of Mead (Lutters and Ackerman, 1996). An understanding of the Chicago school is important in understanding the development of these ideas and of the approaches which underlie them. The Chicago school was important in that they were arguably the first group of distinctively urban academic ethnographers. They grounded their theory in naturalistic observation and had a concern with capturing and documenting lived experience in fast changing social contexts. Both their methods and theory continue to shape and influence social enquiry to this day. The perspective on identity outlined in this project and the methods used in conducting it owe much

to the work of three prominent members of the school; Howard Becker, Erving Goffman and Anselm Strauss. Whether it is the strength and the influence of this work, or the relative lack of more contemporary in depth qualitative research in cannabis use, Beckers' continued influence is beyond question.

An important idea furthered by Becker (1953:235) is an interest in 'the use of marijuana for pleasure', in 'non-compulsive', 'recreational use', distinguishing it from drugs of addiction such as heroin. Becker's background is interesting in this respect, he reportedly played the clarinet and was a reasonably well-established jazz musician before turning to sociology. This background undoubtedly had an influence on his ideas and approach to researching drugs use and perhaps his access to drug using circles at a time when cannabis use was not considered a mainstream activity (Feldman and Aldrich, 1990).

The concept of 'normal' drug use remains an important if problematic concept, as Hammersley (2005b:201) recently stated:

The existence of normal patterns of drug use that do not verge upon or develop into the pathological remains questionable, even offensive, to many people.

It is evident that the germ of later conceptions of normalisation are inherent in Becker's perspective. A key insight in developing this perspective is an observation which still holds today, that some drugs are commonly used without problems and that they are used primarily for enjoyment. The enjoyment of drugs, in particular cannabis must however be learnt, as Becker (1953:236) states:

The novice does not ordinarily get high the first time he attempts to smoke marijuana, and several attempts are usually necessary to induce this state.

The first step in learning to use relates to the technique of smoking cannabis and keeping the smoke in the lungs long enough for it to have an effect. This technique is unknown to the initiate and they learn by direct teaching, through observation and imitation of more proficient users. The second step is learning to recognise the effects, 'It is not enough for the effects to be present; they alone do not provide the experience of being high' (Becker, 1953:238). These effects are often pointed out in discussion with more experienced users who are pivotal in the initiate acquiring the concepts which allow him to experience being high. The third step is learning to derive enjoyment from the effects (Becker, 1953:239, 241):

...the taste for such experience is a socially acquired one... Enjoyment is introduced by the favourable definition of the experience that one acquires from others.

Becker sees this as a process of redefining effects, which can be experienced as unpleasant, as pleasurable. This is again taught, or learnt, through observation of others. More experienced users can help the initiate to let go of unpleasant sensations and draw their experience to more enjoyable aspects. They also provide advice, or a model for regulating the amount that is smoked in order to avoid unpleasant experiences. In another finding, Becker (1953:236) in a borrowing from Strauss, brings into play another influential concept or metaphor for understanding drugs use, the drugs career:

The same person will at one stage be unable to use the drug for pleasure, at a later stage be able and willing to do so, and, still later, again be unable to use it in this way.

Becker relates cessation to adverse reactions which call into question the validity of the previous set of shared understandings resulting in a re-appraisal of wanting to continue to use, or in the setting of further limits on use. The likelihood of this redefinition occurring depends on the degree of participation with other users, they may talk him out of the redefinition or he may stop participating. Becker holds that

these conditions pertain for all people regardless of genetic, psychological or social predisposition to use. In summing up, he compares this to contemporary findings by Strauss (1952 cited in Becker, 1953:242)

If a stable form of new behaviour is to emerge, a transformation of meanings must occur, in which the person develops a new conception of the nature of the object.

It is worth noting that Becker is here stressing that the construction of meaning, a sociological perspective, to an extent precedes and is intimately bound up with behaviour, a psychological perspective. Becker's work along with much of this earlier work does not conform to the disciplinary boundaries which would become common in the later twentieth century. In later work Becker and his colleagues posed the wider question of '...how do people "decide" how much of a given substance they will take and when' (Maloff et al., 1978:5). Becker had originally suggested that the very social groups and structures which support the continued use and enjoyment of cannabis must regulate use in order for it to continue being enjoyable. In studying these informal social controls, they found support for the idea that, 'social groups develop cultural recipes, formulae describing what substances can be used in what amounts to achieve desired results' (Maloff et al., 1978:7). This perspective was built upon by Zinberg (1980:online), in a now classic framework for understanding the relationship between the substance, the substance user and the environment - 'drug, set and setting':

...in order to understand what impels someone to use an illicit drug and how that drug affects the user, three determinants must be considered: drug (the pharmacologic action of the substance itself), set (the attitude of the person at the time of use, including his personality structure), and setting (the influence of the physical and social setting within which the use occurs)

The use of any drug involves both values and rules of conduct (which I have called social sanctions) and patterns of behaviour (which I have called social rituals); these two together are known as informal social controls.

Social sanctions define whether and how a particular drug should be used. They may be informal and shared by a group... or they may be formal, as in the various laws and policies aimed at regulating drug use.

Social rituals are the stylised, prescribed behaviour patterns surrounding the use of a drug. They have to do with the methods of procuring and administering the drug, the selection of the physical and social setting for use, the activities undertaken after the drug has been administered, and the ways of preventing untoward drug effects.

Rituals thus serve to buttress, reinforce, and symbolise the sanctions.

In using the concepts of ritual and symbolic functions, Zinberg locates the debate in the tradition of the symbolic interactionists and harks back to anthropological understandings of cultural and social groups, and traditional societies. The ritual dimension suggests that these rules and knowledge are sufficiently embedded in a culture to be handed down. Ritual suggests that it is socially learnt more than rationally deduced. It is worth noting that it is the behaviour that is symbolic and not the substance or drug. Zinberg introduces the dimensions of the personality and psychological attributes of the user, which Becker avoids. This is not in relation to the process of learning to use, but in relation to learning, accepting or rejecting the informal and formal sanctions that govern use. This has implications for the idea of the 'normal' or 'recreational' user and what constitutes normal recreational use. Becker limits his hypothesis to a process which he finds common to all cannabis users - learning to use - regardless of personal disposition or social characteristics. The need to learn how to use and experience cannabis is common by virtue of the pharmacological characteristics. It is only the social rules around use, which require an understanding of the psychological disposition of the individual user.

This raises a key issue in theories of drug use and in the development of sociological theory. As discussed previously, the Chicago school, with its roots in symbolic interactionism, was instrumental in developing the methods of social research used in understanding drugs use. These perspectives both build on Weber's *Verstehen* principle, which emphasised understanding cultures from the perspective of those who participate in them (Gold, 1997). Mead's symbolic interactionism developed this perspective further, resulting in the postulates (p 39). These postulates are not, however, exclusively sociological, they integrate psychological and sociological understandings. Mead's postulates suggest that to understand social processes involves a combination of social, psychological, or social-psychological explanations. This could be extended to include, pharmacological, neurological and perhaps biopsychosocial explanations. It seems likely that any substantive theory of psychoactive drugs use would involve arguments incorporating all these dimensions. This is reflected in the idea that any explanation of drugs use must be multi-factorial. This complex multifactorial model would involve synthesising understandings between and across disciplines. However, the questions that different disciplines ask and their underlying assumptions are often not coherent making interdisciplinary dialogue difficult and synthesis unlikely.

There are a number of dimensions which influence the direction that theory takes. Much theory is dictated by the types of tools and methods used in the originating discipline. Some of the direction is based on the underlying assumptions and theoretical zeitgeist in the discipline. The questions asked of the theory of drugs use can be a way of funding research which is actually directed toward disciplinary development - in terms of tools, methods or theory. Equally as discussed previously, the funding structures and the priorities of funders can influence the assumptions, the questions asked, the direction taken and the conclusions derived. These structures can be further re-enforced through the assumptions of the academic journals or conventions of reporting styles required by funders.

Much work in developing theories of drugs use derives from psychology, social psychology and quantitative approaches to sociology. The focus on the quantitative can make the development of theory a slow and halting process which has problems in reacting to fast changing social movements (Glaser and Strauss, 1965). Thoits (1994:2133) argues that in social psychology the direction of influence tends to run from psychology to sociology:

...sociologists generally devote their efforts to identifying which social phenomena have effects on individuals while psychologists generally specialise in identifying the mechanisms or processes through which social phenomena have their effects on individuals.

Thoits (1994:2136) considers that work in this area is often characterised by a tacit division of labour but also identifies three key areas in which influence is more mutual; 'stress, emotion, and self-identity'.

2.3 - Psychological Approaches to Teenage Substance Use

Psychological approaches to understanding adolescent substance use most often appear to focus on initiation and the subsequent progression to regular use or cessation. This is seen through the notion of 'experimental substance use' (ESU) and attempting to understand why adolescents do or don't 'experiment' with drugs (Petraitis et al., 1995). Seen from this perspective understanding adolescent substance use is a matter of finding an organising principle which makes sense of known correlates of substance use. Petraitis et al. (1995) reviewed the main psychological and social psychological theories which have been used to make sense of adolescent drugs use. Many of these theories share similar dimensions to more sociological perspectives, they often also relate to wider currents in psychological theory. They distinguished between five classes of theory summarised below with key concepts (Petraitis et al., 1995:68-79):

- Cognitive-affective theories, which describe how decision-making processes contribute to ESU (cost-benefit, theory of reasoned action, theory of planned behaviour, attitudes, normative beliefs, self-efficacy, refusal self-efficacy)
- Social learning theories, which emphasise effects of substance using role models (small group psychology, delinquency, social re-enforcement, social cognitive learning theory, role models)
- Conventional commitment and social attachment theories, which detail how various factors promote withdrawal from conventional society, detachment from parents and attachment to substance using peers (social control theory, social development model, social bonds, strain, stress, social re-enforcement)
- Theories that search for the roots of ESU in the personality traits and affective states of adolescents (social ecology model, self-derogation theory, self-esteem, ego-defence, alienation, rebellion, symbolic action, multi-stage learning model, stress, coping skills, family interaction theory)
- Theories that attempt to integrate cognitive-affective, social learning, commitment and attachment, and intra-personal constructs (problem behaviour theory, rites of passage, symbolic transition to adulthood, parental defiance, personal belief structures, alienation, locus of control, personal control structure, peer cluster theory, socialisation, Sher's vulnerability model, pathways, domain model)

This range of concepts makes clear the complex interplay between sociological and psychological approaches and hence the widespread acceptance that any theory must be complex and multivariate. Many of these concepts and explanations lean on biomedical notions of aetiology and disease models, it is not always clear to what extent this is a metaphor and to what extent disease models are taken literally. A key concern in developing psychological models of substance use is the development of testable hypotheses that can delineate the relative effects of different dimensions within the theory.

Usually the theory should make predictions that can be tested against empirical data using standardised instruments. The development and continuing veracity of standardised instruments remains a significant problem for these theories. They point towards an important if obvious observation, that any comprehensive theory of teenage drugs use will have a large degree of conceptual redundancy when applied to any particular group or individual. In attempting to describe all possible features a theory must also contain some explanation of which concepts should be most salient in a given situation and why. This is often a shortcoming or limitation inherent in the scientific, experimental basis of psychological approaches to problems which take place against a background of emergent social dimensions in constant flux (Glaser and Strauss, 1965).

At some level, this calls into question the utility of any theory which aims to be comprehensive. One way to address some of these problems is through multimodal theories. A multimodal theory would address drug use as one dimension in a more integrated theory of behaviour - drugs use, in other words, should not be the central defining characteristic of the theory. For many reasons, some pragmatic, some axiomatic, some more conjectural and problematic, identity or the ideas around identity would appear to provide a suitable conceptual container for such a multimodal theory. Not least because it suggests a possible path, or direction of travel, in understanding a problem which clearly requires theory to combine perspectives from multiple conventional disciplinary domains.

2.4 - Young People Cannabis and Identity

If there is a recognition that the greatest potential for identity is as an integrative device, there is also a widespread perception amongst sociologically leaning theorists that many areas of psychology are epistemologically problematic, if not slightly, or entirely suspect. There is good reason for this which is explored further below, however it also underlies a tendency to find reason to stick to one's own disciplinary turf. Equally, in order to adequately relate their work to the canons of psychology, psychologists can find their work confined to assumptions of devi-

ancy. The area of 'normal' drug use and identity has opened up as a potential land grab where sociological approaches may be more appropriate than psychological, perhaps redressing the conventional direction of travel (Thoits, 1994).

In a position piece based on literature review and the previous experience and expertise of the authors, Hammersley et al. (2001) outlined some key arguments for a theory of cannabis use and social identity. This piece was written in a wave of publication in response to the normalisation argument put forward by Parker et al. (1998). The article emphasised in particular the need for primary qualitative work in this area, which informal literature review suggests is at the time of writing still scant (Hammersley et al., 2001). Their argument with respect to normalisation is similar to the original argument in Becker (1953) - that if we reject addiction, deviance and risk-taking then cannabis use must be understood as re-enforcing, or enjoyable in some sense. They then argue that psychological approaches to these problems are limited and problematic and a sociological approach must be taken. They consider that learning theory (in its formal sense as opposed to the more general way it is treated in Becker) is limited in its capacity to explain cannabis use which has become mundane and commonplace. Essentially, that learning theory relies on the knowledge learnt being concealed in some sense rather than freely available, widely known and accepted.

Hammersley's dismissal of psychological approaches could be read as shortsighted. It is not clear for instance exactly which variant of learning theory the argument relates to. This points to a significant problem in delineating sociological and psychological approaches to both drugs use and to identity. Each discipline has borrowed terms from the other at various points after which conceptual development has again diverged. They have related lexicons and related understandings rather than shared understandings. These problems notwithstanding Hammersley does introduce an interesting argument with respect to social identity. If cannabis use is normalised then everybody should have some understandings about what cannabis use signifies - no longer simply positive or negative, their understandings will be the result of more complex social experience and positioning. Normalisation

therefore suggests that the symbolic capacity of cannabis has increased. Cannabis use can now signify a wider and more subtle range of identities than the deviant and rebellious. Equally, cannabis use can now perform a wider range of social functions.

If traditionally cannabis use could be seen as a social symbol of deviance, being an outsider and a risk-taker, and it is not altogether clear that it could, what other social functions could it support if this symbolic function was now less potent? Parker et al. (1998) pointed out the function of cannabis use and supply, in creating and maintaining friendship networks. The use of cannabis, continuation or cessation would then have to be understood through more subtle effects in ‘the micro-politics of social-networks’ (Hammersley et al., 2001:146). Hammersley developed his theme further in an editorial (Hammersley, 2005a) focusing on theorising what we might mean by normal drug use. In an extended version of this editorial his review of the literature (Hammersley, 2005b:2) on normal drug use suggests a theory of normal drug use should have the following characteristics:

- Integrated into users lives
- Seen as normal, acceptable or sadly unavoidable by users
- Involving patterns of activity that are not exclusively problematic
- Can be explained by normal psychological and social process
- Drug use is not always the defining feature of drug users’ lives
- Cannot be understood or tackled except as situated in wider understandings of people and society

Hammersley here seems to be agreeing with Becker (1953) that sociological construction of meaning must antedate the expression of meaning through behaviour, ‘Drug use and effects have meanings and those meanings influence use’ (Hammersley, 2005b:6). Hammersley provides a persuasive argument about the place of normal drug use in the wider socio-political dialectics of problematic drugs use in the UK. While normal or non-problematic use is the norm for most people in society, the political focus on problematic use and the development of the drugs

research and treatment industry is dominant in defining the political meaning of use and in driving policy. These meanings are situated in wider concepts of the medicalisation of 'suffering' and of problem behaviours. In this context, the social construct of 'addict' is elided with that of 'drug user' and becomes defined through the 'sick role'. Parson's (1951) sick role concept and subsequent developments of it have come to explain how chronic illness legitimates an individual's inability to perform, or the poor performance of, key social roles. As such the sick role socially legitimates behaviours which otherwise would be unacceptable.

The sick role is generally avoided because in adopting this role, an individual loses control over their self and social definition. However there can be significant social and economic pressures to enter this role. We can see aspects of the sick role at work in relation to adolescent cannabis use and problem behaviour. Teenagers who come into contact with the police and criminal justice system can be compelled to attend treatment for cannabis dependence, addiction to cannabis use, or a dual-diagnosis of cannabis use and underlying mental health problems, as an alternative to custodial sentences. This points up a favourite argument amongst lay commentators - that drugs use should be moved from being a crime issue, to being a health issue. The reasons for medicalisation are complex, in part moving problems into the medical/ health realm legitimates public spending on a 'compassionate' basis rather than locating it in other less attractive areas of welfare or criminal justice. There is a political recognition that the criminal role can be used by society and the political class to move responsibility for structurally located social problems onto the individual. The sick role presents an alternative, whereby a semblance of social responsibility is maintained.

We can also see in this concept of the sick role how such meanings are transitory and situational - certain social roles can require individuals to act from particular understandings. The understandings about cannabis use that a teenager uses with their parents are likely to differ from those they use with their peer group, with school teachers, with the police, or with drugs researchers. It also suggests that the meanings that their own adolescent cannabis use has for an individual will

change over the life course. In a Canadian study, Hartnagel (1996) pointed to the significance of structural change in relation to cannabis and role changes in the transition to young adulthood and the possible impact this may have on traditional notions of informal social controls. He argues that the lack of established social roles, and lower social role expectations - due to an extended period of adolescence forced by conditions in the labour and housing market - may reduce the influence of informal social controls on cannabis use. Hartnagel (1996:243) suggests that this developmental role-transition phase in modern societies has become protracted and diffuse, characterised by 'ambiguous roles, segregation from productive activities, and consequent anxiety about self-worth'. In the extreme Hartnagel (1996:243) suggests that individuals can become 'engrossed in the alternative adolescent network', the assumptions of the adolescent period become codified as 'alternative lifestyles' and widespread failure to assume normative adult roles with their inherent responsibilities.

In work in the US, Anderson (1994;1998) has produced perhaps the most involved exploration of drugs use and identity with a concern for integrating micro, meso and macro understandings of use. Anderson's cultural identity theory is specifically targeted towards an aetiological understanding of 'drug abuse' rather than 'normal' use, and despite the title, it tends towards psychological explanations rather than sociological, it does however offer some interesting perspectives on the role that an identity theory might play. Anderson (1998:236) points towards the potential of identity as a synthesising concept and highlights the need for an 'integrative environmental and individual explanation that guards against a micro or macro-level bias.' Anderson's thesis centres on 'crisis points' related to drug abuse which she considers inapplicable to normal use. It requires the self-identification of users with subcultures which define themselves through drugs use, 'potheads, dopers', as opposed to the peer-group identification characteristic of normal use (Forsyth et al., 1997).

The route to self-identification as a drugs user and with a drug using culture then involves the acquisition of drug-related identities and drugs related identity change. Anderson (1994) speculates that in self-identification as a 'deviant' or 'drug-user'; the contingency, dependence, presence, or centrality of the fact of being a drug user in other social roles may mark the boundary between drugs use and drugs abuse. This dichotomisation of drug use and drug abuse reflects disciplinary traditions and assumptions and to some extent the US origins of the work. The focus on problematic use legitimises the research within the highly political academic environment of the US, where the political, moral and religious leanings of large corporate and individual benefactors limit the viewpoints that can be expressed by the academic community. There is a hint in much of the US work that the authors are not entirely committed to the assumption of all use as deviant. Regardless of whether this is the case, many of the concepts explored have potential utility in a 'normalised' model of drugs use which views normal use and problematic use as part of a related continuum.

Part of what is at issue here, is control over the definition of what constitutes a drugs problem. Should having a drugs problem be self-defined by the user, defined by close family and friends, through testing on standardised psychiatric measures, by medical, legal, or social welfare professionals, by politicians, culturally, or through the media? Is drugs use the underlying problem in an individual's wider social problems, is it a cause, or a consequence? Is it a special case of problem behaviour? What impact does the differential definition of drugs problems have on use and users at the macro, meso and micro levels? What impact do different forms of communication have on the adoption of understandings and meanings about drugs use?

If there is little work on identity in 'normal', or 'non-problematic' use there has been more focus on identity processes in treatment and recovery from addiction (Koski-Jännes, 2002; McIntosh and McKeganey, 2000). Much of this work relates to therapeutic concepts of identity as narrative, life-story, and changing biographical perspectives on the meaning of life events. This might be a guided therapeutic

process or constructed from users and user-groups experiences. It can involve a reshaping of biographical identity which changes the meaning of life-events, or it can focus on the process by which new non-drug contingent identities are built, during and following treatment or recovery. McIntosh and McKeganey (2000) characterise the process as the opposite of Becker's (1953) theory of learning to use. Instead of learning to discern and focus on the positive aspects of drugs use, the user re-interprets their use with reference to its negative impacts. An important aspect of this identity change process was a recognition, or rediscovery of an 'authentic', core self that had always existed independently of drugs use. In this context continuing to use drugs meant that the personal identity, the core, authentic self became trapped in the social identities of being a drugs user. This loss of control over self-definition, the way that others saw the user was a potent motivation for change. For those interviewed by McIntosh (2000) the recovery narrative focused on a crisis-event that acted as a turning-point. Koski-Jännes' (2002) perspective focused on the long-term, ongoing, incremental nature of the 'identity project', requiring planning, direction and work towards identified or imagined aims and outcomes.

The narrative approach to identity is rooted in the philosophical traditions of identity which emphasise the importance of continuity in the sense and experience of self. McIntosh and McKeganey (2000:1503) cite Giddens' view that:

A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going.

They contrast this with the less problematic concept of the self-narrative as an explicit social construction. Self-narrative as social construction is important however Giddens (1994) points towards a much more important and difficult concept - how do we exert control over social self-definition in order that other people, by and large, see us in the way that we see ourselves. That is how do we come to have a sense of self, which we experience as authentic, accepted by others and reflected in their behaviour towards us?

The concept of self-narrative is ambiguous, contested and as such often poorly understood. The philosophical idea of the continuity of self posits a sense of self, and given the temporal dimension required for continuity, a personal biography that is available to the self. Such a biography and an individual's interpretation of the events that constitute it, will necessarily change over time and context. Secondary to this posited internal personal biography is the set of stories one tells about one's self to others. These social self-narratives will be dependent on perceptions and expectations of audience and designed to articulate self-attributes which are congruent with the situation (Goffman, 1959). The social narratives will be contingent on the assumptions about the prior knowledge of the audience. An important question in relation to this self-narrative concept is the relationship of the 'internal' personal biography to the narratives involved in social self-presentation. Firstly, does the internal biography actually exist in any meaningful way? Or is it only in relation to others that we meaningfully exist, or through which our narratives can be given meaning? Are the stories one tells to one's self about one's self important? Secondly to what extent and under what circumstances do we internalise others positive and negative evaluations of us? In other words, what is the relationship between the internal self-narrative (if it exists, can be expressed, or articulated) and the narratives we construct in dialogue with real or imagined others?

If the narrative view of identity can be characterised as arising from philosophical and religious concerns about continuity of self and identity, contemporary understandings cannot be understood outside of the emergence of psychology and sociology as distinct disciplines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The religious concern over continuity of self, emphasises that conceptions of identity will on some level always be subject to idealism particularly amongst lay audiences. Equally amongst academics both idealism and long-term investment in particular perspectives produces resistance to new conceptions regardless of empirical grounding. The thought of Mead and William James stands at the intersection where philosophy gives way to sociology and psychology. Mead's view of the social self, suggests that the self and the tools for understanding self come into being through interaction with the social world.

Mead's view is contested by later understandings of language and cognition whereby the tools through which identity develops involve innate mechanisms, in some respects pre-existing social interaction (Bergesen, 2004). While these mechanisms may be pre-existing, that they are altered by their application to an individual's social environment is usually fully accepted. The fact of reflexivity and that both human experience and heuristic development are social, suggests that while bounded by the operation of innate mechanisms, meaning making and thus identity, remains rooted in social interaction and in culture. If it is difficult to disentangle philosophical, psychological and sociological perspectives at the conceptual level, distinctions can nevertheless be made by disciplinary alignments to particular methodologies. Existing attempts to synthesise work, or to carve up the project of identity along disciplinary lines however, have tended to rest, following William James, on positivist assumptions, for example Leary and Tangney (2003). The hypothetical constructs characterising much of this work do capture some important dimensions around identity but many problems remain (Gergen, 1971). Areas where reductionist approaches are limited include those involved in articulating aspects of identity and self which rest in some respect on the way they are experienced (Glover, 1988).

Identity is recognised as a complex, nebulous and difficult concept, ranging and developing across different disciplines, themselves interacting and changing in complex ways. A thorough explication of identity and the ways in which it might operate in relation to the current project is beyond the scope of this chapter and would, if attempted, require many volumes to present the ideas of only the key thinkers. Much of this would prove irrelevant to the problem at hand. Equally, a potted history of identity would prove of little value. Accordingly, the approach I have taken is to assume that the reader brings with them some notion of what identity means and that the arguments presented above, have in turn provided some flavour of what I understand by the term. The concept of identity as it relates to the understanding of male teenage cannabis use will be developed in the analysis, and the relationship of these understandings as they relate to the broader literature will be explored in the discussion. The next chapter, methods, describes the approach taken to the research and how this informed my own view of the meaning and

operation of identity. In closing this chapter it seems useful to review and summarise the understandings of identity arising from the literature discussed, which should provide a useful point of reference for the arguments that develop.

What I do not mean by identity is simple identification with particular social groups, labels, or their associated norms. While this usage is common in the vernacular and has become common in the usage of social scientists (Castells, 1997) this tradition accommodates only a few of the dimensions required in understanding the experience of drugs use and its relation to identity. Self-identification by region, nationality, religious faith, race, occupation, or role is assumed to confer an alignment with stereotypical behaviours and attitudes. In truth, these alignments tell us little about the experience of the individual in their everyday lives or social interactions. This perspective appears potent because it seems to operate at a level which provides an impetus for political or economic action. In practice, it often overlooks the important aspects of social and individual being, existence and experience and reduces the study of identity to an exercise in stereotypes and self and other labelling. Alignment with social groups becomes a much more potent way of understanding identity when it is considered as part of a broader dynamic which can account for how such groupings, alignments and the understandings which underpin them come into being.

Understandings, theories and concepts around identity have developed across many thinkers so it is often difficult to give one definitive attribution. The summary below outlines the range of thinking on identity which came to inform the project through an inductive process whereby concepts were tested against the empirical data, resulting in interpretations which were refined and built upon in an ongoing iterative process. Most are widely known ideas which were adopted for both their interpretative and communicative capacity. The summary is necessarily a limited interpretation of these wide-ranging concepts and their operation, developed across the project and generated with reference to a wider literature, in relation to analysis of the primary data. These concepts have been informed by a wide range of contributors, often including much earlier philosophy. The references below, and

in the thesis as a whole, are frequently only indicative, representing widely accepted primary thinkers, or modern originators in the appropriate area. In many instances, where there is no one clear originator, I have referenced the particular work where they were encountered and which came to inform the development of the project.

2.5 - Summary of Identity and Related Concepts

Sociological, psychological and philosophical understandings of identity all distinguish in some form between personal identity, the understandings a person holds about themselves, and social identity, the understandings about themselves the individual negotiates in communication with others. Personal and social identities exist in constant flux, as they are negotiated between individuals and groups. A sense of continuity of both personal and social identity is established in ongoing social relationships and the responsibilities of each actor are codified in social roles (Goffman, 1959).

The establishment and maintenance of roles requires both material and immaterial resources. As people go through life, roles, role expectations and environments change, resulting in role transitions. Different values are placed on different roles in an individual's life, leading to ideas of role salience and role hierarchies (McCall and Simmons, 1966). Roles may be chosen, or imposed, the degree of control over self-definition and the conditions in which it can be exercised can be expressed as a locus of control (Rotter et al., 1972). Locus of control expands and contracts over the life course. Locus of control can be related to the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1972). Lack of control over self-definition is experienced through stigma, stereotyping and labelling (Goffman, 1959). Personal attributes (personality traits), and competencies are expressed and reflected in social roles. The relationship between self-understandings and control over social identities is experienced as authenticity.

Common roles such as familial roles and work roles are understood through cultural archetypes. The set of social interactions between people which gives rise to roles exist in social networks, which include both strong and weak bonds.

Strong bonds require on ongoing investment of material or immaterial resources and a shared understanding of the meaning of these investments which takes the form of a formal or informal value system. Value systems situate both material and immaterial resources through culture. Identity can be solidified and expressed through role symbols. Differential values allocated to individuals give rise to status, which can be leveraged as a social resource.

Identification with recognisable social groups involves an acceptance and expression of their assumed value systems. Within groups, membership and maintenance of relationships involves symbols and rituals which encode shared understandings. Traditional cultures tend towards highly codified roles where adequate performance of social roles is defined through role expectations. This surety of investment provides a sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1991). Modern cultures have moved towards more fluid roles, masking the transactional nature of many social interactions and concealing power and status in the interaction. Increasing material resources and increases in the size of social networks, through greater mobility and communications technology, lead to the idea that identities can become dependent on technological or social prosthesis.

As individuals live in more diverse societies, assumptions about value systems no longer hold, leading to ontological insecurity (Giddens, 1991), identity threat or crisis (Erikson, 1968). As the ability to secure basic needs (Maslow, 1943) relies to a greater extent on the ability to act at a distance where assumptions of common value systems are less sure there has been a greater emphasis on the use of role symbols which are codified in globalised materialist culture and changes codified through trends and fashion. The meanings people place on events and relationships in their own lives can be understood and explained through self-narratives (Mitchell et al., 2001). The need for communication and acceptance of self-narratives by others, leads to a reliance on culturally situated narratives, or through reference to meta-narratives (Lyotard, 1979).

3: Methods

The project is the result of an extended period of interrogation, analysis and reflection on a set of exploratory interviews carried out in the summer of 1998. The initial data was collected by the author as a neophyte fieldworker, new to both drugs research and social research as a whole. Initial insights were built on through two further sets of interviews carried out over 2003 and 2004. This chapter therefore begins with a reflection on the project, on developing a methodological orientation and the practicalities of ‘real world’ research before moving to the specifics of sampling, research process, analysis and ethics.

The initial research had been conceived on an opportunistic basis. A young contact attached to a cannabis using peer group had suggested his friends would be happy to talk about their cannabis use and that he would provide an introduction. Having previously worked as a privileged access interviewer in a survey of psychostimulant use (Wibberley and Price, 2000b) and in research administration roles, the research team hoped I would be able to connect with the group. I would interview the teenagers on the fields and parks where they met to smoke cannabis and observe them in a naturalistic setting.

A brief, open, semi-structured interview schedule was constructed around ‘the place of cannabis in the lives of young people’ (see appendix one p 356). This was used primarily for prompts and occasional direction. In practice, it was rarely necessary and the research took on an emergent and ethnographic character. Whether through serendipity, or the virtues of naivety, the data collected were rich and wide-ranging, the interviews, observations and reflections providing a colourful insight into the lives, understandings and experience of this group of young cannabis smokers. Presenting and analysing the data in an authentic fashion which fulfilled its potential was not however entirely straightforward. The project informed my development as a researcher and my development as a researcher informed the project.

3.1 - Data Collection

Three sets of data were used in relation to this project; *home group* (HG), *school group* (SG) and *late twenties reflectors* (LTR). Analysis of all three groups contributed to the analysis, however the reporting focuses on the first cohort (HG) collected in 1998. The three phases of data collection each employed a slightly different approach. The primary differences were the context of collection and the sample. All three phases were based around similar individual in-depth interviews (usually of 1 hour duration) using the same semi-structured interview schedule, all interviews were audio-recorded. The schedule provided prompts and a checklist of areas to be covered, however the interviewees were encouraged to speak freely about anything relating to their drug use and the way it fitted with their daily lives. The construction of the interview schedule was informed by insights gained in previous research and the Longitudinal Schools Survey at the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) (Roy et al., 2005) and wider informal literature review.

The impetus for this first round of data collection came from prior research by the drugs research team in the Health Care Studies department at MMU. The second round of data collection was then directed toward extending the scope of the emerging analysis of this first group, though its initiation was in some respects opportunistic. During focus groups conducted as a follow up to the schools survey, reference was made to the HG work to clarify a point the students had raised. A number of self-identified cannabis users then expressed an interest in taking part in a more depth interview about their cannabis use. The additional data would provide more depth and context to the original cohort and would also help to link the research to the situation of more current teenage cannabis users. The focus groups provided the primary context for observing interactions in the school setting. While the first group had belonged to the same extended group, the individual school based interviews provided an opportunity to examine the different types of cannabis using groups to which individuals belonged.

The ongoing analysis of the first cohort led to a hunch that identity may offer interesting understandings about the use of cannabis in teenage friendship groups. Identity appeared to provide a way of thinking about the way that cannabis fitted with users' everyday lives and experience, how it fitted with their ideas about who they were and who they wanted to be. It was apparent that identity was a complex, problematic and contested concept, the first steps in exploring its further use were developing an understanding of the concept and previous methods used in developing this type of understanding.

In exploring the literature on identity, the concept of the self-narrative report was highly regarded as a research tool (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998; Mcadams et al., 2006; Mitchell et al., 2001; Taieb et al., 2008; Thomson et al., 2002). However, the data collected to date lacked any sense that cannabis formed a part of, or was understood by such narratives. In interviewing the school cohort there was then a background interest in eliciting narratives and stories related to individuals' understandings of cannabis and other drugs. This proved largely unproductive, cannabis did not seem to have found a place in the life stories of the interviewees and it was not entirely clear that 'self-narratives' were a useful approach. It did point to some interesting problems in narrative research. Firstly, to what extent was the self-narrative pre-existing, or was it constructed in dialogue with the interviewer? Secondly, if this was about self-presentation how do the stories one tells in an unusual encounter with a social researcher differ from the stories one tells to one's self, one's peers, parents, or teachers. Thirdly, the concept of narrative implies some sort of common structure which was not evident, what characteristics does a dialogue have to have to become narrative?

Perhaps narratives were particularly inappropriate to the teenagers since much of what concerned them was present and future. It seemed possible that the reflections of an older group might provide this narrative context and another perspective on the existing data; this data was collected as part of my subsequent MSc work (Lamb, 2004). For this group cannabis did play a part in the life-narrative, this was most obvious for Rusty (p 130) who saw ceasing to use, as an important part of a

turning-point in his life. For others it appeared to play a less central role in narrative, rather it functioned as a symbol of the freedom of youth prior to taking on adult responsibilities. Cannabis could be returned to, providing a brief break from these responsibilities - a reminder of youth. This perspective relates to the idea of the meta-narrative as struggle and overcoming (see discussion chapter on Lyotard p 202); for Rusty cannabis had become part of his struggle, for the others cannabis was an occasional release from struggle. The narrative perspective was therefore useful as one analytic perspective but not as a way of bounding the collection or analysis of primary data.

3.1.1 - Sampling

The explicit focus of the research was on the way cannabis fitted in with the lives of young, non-problematic, 'normal' cannabis users. The inclusion criteria for the first and second cohorts (HG, SG) included:

- to be a current (used in the past month), regular cannabis user (weekly or above use),
- who had not been in contact with drugs or health services in relation to their cannabis use, or their use of other drugs.

The first cohort were required to be aged 15 to 18 at the time of interview, the second cohort comprising one school year group, were aged 15 to 16 at the time of interview. The inclusion criteria for the late-twenties-reflectors was that they had been members of the same group of cannabis using friends as teenagers and that their cannabis use had at that time been consistent with the above criteria. While there had been no initial intention to focus exclusively on males when interviewing the *home group*, it became apparent that this teenage cannabis smoking group was almost exclusively male. A number of females did occasionally spend time with the group but they were not central figures and showed little interest in cannabis, or in taking part. This situation was confirmed in the subsequent focus groups and in the second and third cohorts.

3.1.2 - The Home Group (1998)

This series of interviews was carried out in the summer of 1998. Interviews were snowballed from two initial contacts and took place in the parks and green spaces where the users met to smoke cannabis. In return for their time, the respondents were each given a £10 music voucher. Carrying out the interviews in the areas where the groups met to smoke cannabis allowed for primary observation of their contexts of use. All respondents were males. All of the group were white British lower-middle and working class (Case summaries, p 121).

3.1.3 - The School Group (2003)

The second cohort were identified during focus groups carried out in one Manchester school as a part of the follow up phase of the 5-year longitudinal study of drug use in schools in and around Greater Manchester (Wibberley and Price, 2000a). The interviews took place in private offices in the school, during school hours. The respondents were not in this instance recompensed for their time. While the first cohort was made up of an extended group of acquaintances who used a particular location the second group were more geographically disparate coming from a radius of up to six miles from the school and from wider socio-economic circumstances (this was an impression gathered from the data - specific demographic information to support this view was not collected). Data collection in this context (and in carrying out the previous focus groups) allowed for primary observation of the school context which, along with the cannabis using group, is the primary peer group context for most of the sample. (Case summaries, p 125)

3.1.4 - Late Twenties Reflectors (2004 - aged around 16 in 1992)

The group chosen were all members of an extended social group which had socialised and used cannabis together in their teens. Snowballed from the researcher's existing social network they were interviewed at the home of the author. Still in contact, the group had nevertheless gone in quite different directions in the coming

years. Some were still using cannabis and other drugs on a regular, or occasional basis, while others used much less frequently, or had stopped completely (Case summaries, p 128).

3.2 - Transcription

Verbatim transcripts of interviews were produced by the author and used to work up themes and findings, however the original audio was also used extensively, and in the case of the second cohort, a database of audio fragments. Transcripts included both interviewer, interviewee and any third parties who became involved in the conversation. Disparities in the material of each case (with some respondents talking at length and others giving only short responses) necessitated different approaches. All of the teenagers interviewed habitually used conjunctions to join sentences; ‘y’know’, ‘I mean’, ‘s’like’, ‘n’tthen’ and so on. These were often personally distinctive artefacts which changed subtly, demarcating friendship pairs and subgroups, they also gave clues as to the background and social status of the respondent. They appeared to be used instead of finishing sentences when the respondent had more to say and conversely to fill time while they thought of an answer. For these reasons I have left these conjunctions and other personal artefacts in the transcript and the case studies where they contribute something to the meaning but have removed many in order to make the pieces more readable. That this use of conjunctions was much more frequent in the younger and less socially confident respondents suggested that they were not used to being listened to. Since the analysis would not involve the detail required in narrative analysis, or other involved approaches, no particular formal conventions were used (Sandelowski, 1994). Both ‘in text’ and extended references are used in reporting findings along with sections of dialogue where required. Pseudonyms were used across transcriptions so that ‘Dave’ would appear as ‘Dave’ in another interviewee’s transcript. Other proper names and place names were anonymised as appropriate (Clark, 2008). The use of verbatim quotes dictates that case studies are generally reported in the tense adopted by the respondent rather than following conventions of using past tense in research reporting.

3.3 - Approach to Analysis

The approach taken to analysis initially differed slightly with regard to different cohorts. After some 'experimentation', they were however ultimately subjected to a standardised approach. The interviews for the *home group* were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer, notes and reflections were taken during this process. Emergent themes were generated from the print-outs of full text documents, notes and reflections. Themes were then compared across cases. This process involved highlighting sections of text, annotating highlights and building layers of interpretation (Sandelowski, 1995).

The audio collected for the *school group* was initially exported from mini-disc to computer. The individual interviews were cut into slices which were then tagged with: the interview number, the themes identified from the first cohort, new themes and other notes and reflections. These tagged audio fragments were organised using iTunes® where by searching for appropriate tags whole themes could be brought up in sequence from across the group. The intention of this approach was to preserve the original phrasing, tone of voice and so on of the respondent. A number of flaws in this approach were revealed as analysis progressed which nevertheless also pointed up important characteristics of the data.

While themes could be quickly compared across cases, the context within the case and the interview was lost. As interviews unfolded respondents opened up and became more relaxed with the themes and the interviewer, often past topics would be revisited in more depth, or further context would be given. In the audio-fragment approach to analysis much of this was lost. Each piece of audio had then to be re-assembled to form a picture of the complete case. Furthermore, analysis of the new cases necessarily entailed further conceptual development, the use of a priori themes had stifled this process. Rather than facilitating construction of an 'impressionistic' collage (Van Maanen, 1988) of the cases and the group, the data became a set of fragments from which the analyst could construct a mosaic that may not have born any clear relation to the original data.

Analysis hereafter reverted to the traditional approach of verbatim transcription, followed by highlighting and annotation. This physical approach to data was continued through the analysis. Codes and themes emerging from each of the cohorts were written on post-it notes and organised across a wall and possible organising principles were worked up on white-board and photographed. This approach allowed dimensions, concepts, their bounds and inter-relations to be interrogated and the emergence of concepts recorded.

The experiments with alternative methods of analysis had pointed up the importance of the case and the importance of maintaining the interview's context. It had also emphasised the importance of approaching each case as if it were the first, initially bracketing the previous analysis (Brent and Slusarz, 2003). These observations, experiments and the conditions under which prior work had been conducted led to an approach to interpretation and analysis which can be summarised as:

- Making jottings, field-notes and later reflections
- Noting emergent themes during transcription of interviews
- Ongoing formal and informal discussion with mentors and colleagues
- Iteration of themes and insights into further data collection and literature review
- Producing detailed case studies across all three cohorts, as both check and development of themes
- An informal consideration of saturation, that no new insights were developing, in both data collection and analysis
- An iterative organisation of themes around different dimensions until an organisation which best accounted for and represented the phenomena emerged
- Further review of literature to situate or extend themes and findings
- Concatenation - allowing for and reflecting on how other elements of my work and life informed or interrogated themes and concepts

3.4 - Emergent methodologies, pragmatism and hybridity

A first problem in the analysis was that with the deliberately open focus and the breadth of data collected, it had become unclear what precise question the research was answering and how it related to contemporary understandings of teenage cannabis use. The depth of the data and the way it had been collected were characteristically ethnographic - it described the distinctive perspectives and life worlds of an interconnected group. There remains a distinct lack of primary qualitative fieldwork on cannabis use (Hammersley et al., 2001) and it would have value in this capacity.

The nature of the data collected and the themes emerging suggested a potential for theoretical development which posed some methodological questions. Were the data appropriate to a grounded theory approach? Was this the best available approach to theoretical and conceptual development in this area? The research design and its implementation in the initial phase had been somewhat ad hoc; conceived primarily from less formal ethnographic principles, it had nevertheless strayed toward grounded theory. In transcription, it was clear that as a naive ethnographer I had insufficiently bracketed my emerging hypotheses and inadvertently fed these ideas back through future lines of questioning. This is not however anathema to ethnography - informing questions with facts about social life gleaned from other interviews is a tried and trusted method for showing informants that you are attempting to understand their world from their perspective. Some of the observations and resulting questions, I found, built on my previous experiences as an architecture student, observing people's interactions with the built environment. Some had a phenomenological flavour, particularly those aimed at illuminating the embodied and subjective experiences of getting high.

What became clear from reflecting over time on the data collection process was that this methodological hybridism had increasingly become the norm in applied, real world research. The canons of qualitative research are in many ways exemplars and ideals of the normal processes of human enquiry, they differ primarily in their

systematic approach to recording and representation. In discussion, I found that others, reflecting on setting out in qualitative research, had similar experiences. As beginning researchers, we may work with a wide range of academics with varying methodological orientations and allegiances. We first pick up the rules of disciplined inquiry as though by osmosis in working with the standards and practices of those around us. We learn to make emergent hypotheses through team debriefings and refine concepts in analysis with teams who have similarly varying styles. In part, this reflects the current funding bias towards collaborative projects, in part it is directed by the range of expertise which must be brought to bear on complex problems.

As emerging researchers, we have a concern to delineate our positions with regard to the canons and paradigms. Do we decide upon a paradigm, or do we find ourselves naturally located by our beliefs? Both appear to me to contradict the fundamental scepticism and relativism at the heart of scientific principles. They require us to take a stance based on conjecture and empirical unknowns which few working on the ground have the philosophical training to adequately address. Incommensurability notwithstanding, methodological relativism is the norm both structurally and individually. In the human sciences, the possibility for degrees of certainty around phenomena, hypotheses, theories and results interact with ephemeral structural, cultural and social conditions (Glaser and Strauss, 1965).

We find that theories, theoretical stances and social phenomena have a cyclical aspect. As such, I might for example find myself more aligned with theorists of the 1960s than those of the 1980s. Schools of thought that developed in far flung places may have more resonance than those closer to home. This conceptual dislocation: temporal, spatial, disciplinary and methodological, some might regard as characteristically postmodern rooted in the late twentieth century. However, we find it in the dislocation of character and context in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* first published in 1615. It is central to the Italian renaissance of the Middle Ages, founded on the discovery and integration of knowledge and culture from older and distant cultures. The same might be said of Roman appropriation of Greek culture. The

possibility for dislocation is inherent in all modes of communication from orally transmitted cultures through the repetition of stories, to the trade in distinctive cultural artefacts, pots, beads, blades and so on. The prevalence of cultural dislocation is rooted in the experience of unexpected identification with a radical other. This identification with a radical other, reveals the space between our own and our contemporaries' subjective worlds and environments. In communicating research this is evident in the poetics of description (Atkinson, 1989) and the centrality of metaphor in qualitative description.

As we mature as researchers and gather 'real world' experience, we are better able to make those on the fly judgements, moment by moment adjusting and monitoring the balance of validity, authenticity, boundaries and freedoms in the process and progress of our work. A key pedagogic principle in the teaching of jazz improvisation occurs to me, 'You got to know the rules before you can break them' (attribution unknown). A second though less often practiced principle says that what differentiates an artist from a competent technician is understanding why you're breaking the rules.

3.5 - Paradigms, validity, claims to knowledge and 'real world' methods

Throughout the 1990s methodological arguments in social research focused on the notion of paradigms (Guba, 1990). Following Kuhn's (1962) insights on science as a process of accretion and revolution, there was widespread adoption of the paradigm perspective as a pedagogical tool. This seems to have led to a misconception that the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary research practice can be clearly classified by examining their apparent underlying ontological and epistemological principles. In practice few scholars associated themselves with the paradigms to which they were ascribed, exponents of particular paradigms jostled for ownership of key thinkers and it gradually became clear that the relationship between philosophy and practice in research is dynamic and often pluralist. As the dust settles on the paradigm wars, we learn the limits of this kind of approach and find

that we had missed what the canon builders had said all along, that their methods are not intended to be prescriptive (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The difficulty comes in that established methods are routinely used as a shorthand to claim veracity, validity and knowledge (hence canons rather than paradigms), when their execution has diverged substantially from that claimed (Glaser and Holton, 2004). One route, is to attempt to establish a new canon which better fits the practical context of a particular field of research (Thorne et al., 1997). The boundaries of the canons are of necessity contested, adapted and bent to purpose, they converge, diverge, split, form offshoots and cut them adrift. Ultimately perhaps the relationship to the canon, the paradigm, is established *ex post facto*, good theory follows good practice. This perspective can perhaps be better accommodated in wider applied traditions such as those informed by Lewin's action research (Chaiklin, 2011).

The present project was part ethnography, nearly grounded theory, but fitted neither completely. In its open and pragmatic development, it had avoided overt epistemological allegiances and there were no glaring problems in this regard. It did meet the basic requirements for theoretical development in terms of validity (Sandelowski, 1986) and for utility (Sandelowski, 1997). Moreover, the content and the ideas that it had fostered still seemed inherently interesting. The lack of a clear methodological orientation however presented a further problem - how best to analyse and represent the data. What was the data saying? How should it best be interpreted? How did the mundane experiences, the situated understandings relate to the bigger picture? What did the work bring to academic understandings of drugs use? Was it an ethnography masquerading as theoretical development, or a quasi-ethnographic, quasi-grounded theory? Was it just naturalistic inquiry? How should it be coded and analysed? Were there distinct categories, categorical hierarchies, an overarching theme?

Over time (in the lulls between funded research) the data from the first cohort was transcribed, themes were extracted, case studies were constructed and an initial conceptual schema of 'commitment to cannabis' emerged. It seemed relevant, it had a pragmatic and utilitarian appeal, but the driver for this commitment and for

the other reports and behaviours seemed external to this. Commitment was the result of a larger process, something was missing, what was driving differential commitment? The teenagers were not by and large particularly committed, they liked cannabis, some of them really liked cannabis, but there remained in all the interviews a degree of detachment, an ambivalence about the place cannabis played in their lives. An idea began to emerge that cannabis itself was just a part of their lives. The opportunity, the choice to use cannabis, to continue to use cannabis, or to stop using, had to be understood through their personal circumstances, biography, self-presentation and self-understandings. These in turn had to be interpreted through the wider social ecology. There was something about the way their lives were configured which gave cannabis an important role beyond their enjoyment of its direct effects.

The first clue, in an oblique way, came from a study examining musical genre preferences as an indicator for substance misuse in secondary school children (Forsyth et al., 1997). It was clear from the initial interviews (HG), that the musical preferences and cultural understandings of the teenagers were naive and incomplete, they knew only odd fragments which they stitched together into a loose collage. They were not the sophisticated, culturally and brand aware, advertising savvy and worldly wise aspirant consumers which the mass media and pop cultural theorists might lead us to expect. They led lives limited by access to resources, information and networks. Living in a large and arguably cosmopolitan city they were nevertheless in many ways culturally, geographically and socially isolated. Too young to be granted admittance to the adult world, too old to be 'kids', they were in a time of transition. For the time being they inhabited a temporary limbo, a holding room, and cannabis played a particular kind of role in this place. This I decided is what it was about - it was something to do with identity and developing identity. Cannabis was doing something useful in this time of transition and perhaps it was serving some function in the movement from child, to adolescent, to adult identities. But what and how?

The project then grew in an organic fashion, iterating these first tentative ideas into subsequent analysis and feeding these insights into further data-collection (2003 to 2004) and more involved theoretical exploration. The themes, categories and concepts generated new ways to think about the data and how it related to the wider literature. As identity emerged as a key concept - a pivotal organisational strategy in representing the diversity of the data - new questions emerged. The focus on identity, a concept at the heart of ontology itself, demanded a more thorough exploration of the relationship between data and theory; representation, grounding, interpretation and the place of the a priori. The key questions became - what is identity and how might it be operationalised in this context? In other words what conceptual boundaries must be put into operation in order for identity to be useful? And if identity could say something useful about teenage cannabis use, could teenage cannabis use say something useful about identity?

The project was not originally envisioned as such a long-term or involved endeavour; however its scope, aims, methods and timescale are not unusual in qualitative research (Moustakas, 1994). In operating over a longer timescale the concept of concatenated research had to be considered, that the research project is not an isolated, pure and discrete unit, but exists in the wider contexts of the situatedness of enquiry including the biography of the researcher, their academic environment and the progression of associated research. The timescale involved does ask questions of utility and timeliness. For research based on primary data, that can no longer be considered to describe current or contemporary conditions, it must to be in some other way 'of use', it must have the potential to go beyond the descriptive, to offer insights beyond the context in which the data was collected (Sandelowski, 1997).

The research offers no definitive answer to the epistemological problems of generalizability instead it takes a pragmatic orientation. We begin with two possibilities, we can generalise from the particular, or we cannot. The second instance (which we can't discount as a possibility) suggests that effective description is all that can be achieved. This option suggests a dichotomy. The first option is not so clearly

dichotomous if we ask the question that follows - under what conditions can we generalise from the particular. There are then: some situations that can offer insights into other contexts; some which cannot; a set of conditions under which the movement from between contexts is valid; and a judgement of the degree of confidence in that validity. Confidence can only ever be partial but it can also be influenced by the proxy of utility. If the interpretations put forward are of use in describing or interpreting a different set of data, even under quite specific conditions, the proxy of utility can be seen to be met (Sandelowski, 1997). The proxy of utility if met then asks, but does not necessarily answer, what other candidate mechanisms can account for the phenomena in question and which is the best supported theory under a given set of conditions.

Ethnography provides one perspective on the necessary conditions. We can say that ethnography has two primary functions - description and interpretation (Gold, 1997). Description is particular, however interpretation is an abstraction which orientates the particular to the general. While descriptions are contextual and cannot be compared without an act of interpretation, the interpretations brought to different contexts can be validly compared. Grounded theory brings a further set of conditions relating to the validity of interpretations. This work goes beyond the conditions required of ethnographic interpretation but does not meet all the criteria of grounded theory. It is nevertheless informed by grounded theory and shares many of its assumptions and procedures. As with much qualitative work, the research asks more questions than it answers, and it is one interpretation amongst many. The choice of tools brought to bear on the problem were dictated by the material, as such it is an emergent method. The answers to the questions which emerged lay in iterating 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches to theory. The data informed the reading of the theoretical literature and the literature informed subsequent readings of the data. Over many iterations of this process, these readings were refined.

This research is not alone in adopting elements of grounded theory and ethnography without wholesale adherence to the method and its principles. The foremost concern amongst those adapting grounded theory is the use of, and relationship to, existing disciplinary concepts and categories - grounded theory's relationship to the a priori. Second is the formality of the coding system (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The rationale for departing from the established tenets of grounded theory is shared by others, particularly in applied disciplines, for example Thorne et al. (1997) formalised a rationale for an adaptation they termed 'interpretive description' as a foundation for building theoretical knowledge in nursing.

The stress in grounded theory on problematizing the a priori and the suspicion of grand narratives represents in part a reaction to prevailing attitudes (contemporary with its original publication) and in part, the ongoing concern about the relationship between primary data and abstract or theoretical knowledge. However, this emphasis on the a priori has been a little overplayed as a characterisation of grounded theory - in part perhaps due to the name. Rather than countenancing naivety, grounded theory indicates a deep knowledge of the field from the outset and the theory generated must also be explicitly discussed in relation to prevailing macro social conditions (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). In fact, the accommodation of an exhaustive range of contextual material is both permitted and encouraged in developing grounded theories (Glaser and Holton, 2004).

The formality of the system and the rules of coding are the source of a schism between the progenitors of the theory, and presents perhaps the greatest problem for those who may want to expand upon or adapt the method. The differences between Glaser's 'grounded theory' and Strauss's 'grounded formal theory' primarily concern the use of more formalised coding procedures. This gives an important clue as to the problem many applied practitioners have with grounded theory. Grounded theory was conceived as a systematic way of generating theory. On one level, the formalisation of procedures provides a shorthand for validity. It is consciously about producing a particular kind of validated knowledge based on the understanding that its systems have been followed. Glaser's assertion that, 'What is

important is to use the complete package of GT procedures as an integrated methodological whole.’ (Glaser and Holton, 2004), on this level is justified. There are, however, two further issues to consider at this point: does the system generate a distinctive and particular kind of knowledge; is this the only way to generate this kind of knowledge?

Grounded theory begins as a solution to a problem perceived by Glaser and Strauss (1965). They argued that qualitative work could and routinely was being used in the development of substantive theory in the human sciences but that the potentials and conditions for this use of qualitative work had not been sufficiently explored or defined. They defined substantive theory as ‘The formulation of concepts and their interrelation into a set of hypotheses for a given substantive area’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1965:5). This ‘substantive area’ refers to primary research in a specific ethnographic or exemplar context such as ‘patient care, gang behaviour, or education’ as opposed to conceptual contexts such as ‘deviance, status congruency, reference groups, or hierarchy’ drawn from ‘formal theory’. The substantive theory generated from primary research can then inform a ‘grounded formal theory’ as opposed to formal theory based on logical speculation.

Grounded theory proper builds on the issues raised in this original paper and begins the process of elucidating grounded theory as a method through formal systems and procedures (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). There is much that is original and valuable in the procedures they set out, there is much also that is formalised common sense and routine human practice. Equally a great deal is borrowed or developed from earlier theory and the routines for good ethnographic practice originating in the Chicago school (Lutters and Ackerman, 1996). The procedures arrived at have differing predicates, they solve problems related to rigour, practicalities, timescales, minimising effort, maximising confidence in the results. While some aspects of these procedures may be essential conditions to grounding theory in primary data, it is not at all clear that the formal systems arrived at represent the only answer to the originating problem.

Much of the process used in the present study is congruent with grounded theory though it does not follow the formal model. Likewise, many of the underlying assumptions are shared with grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss have a right to be concerned with the legacy and integrity of grounded theory and the use to which the term is put. Others should though, be able draw on the work without being bound by these concerns. In his more recent work, Glaser has been at pains to distinguish between ‘grounded theory’ (GT) and ‘qualitative data analysis’ (QDA) and their respective outputs ‘the GT and QDA methods are sufficiently at odds with each other as to be incapable of integration’ (Glaser and Holton, 2004, online). He decries the movement of elements of grounded theory into the wider qualitative repertoire as a quality ‘burden’ imposed on non-grounded theorists, who unlike the devout initiates cannot contribute to this new grand project. Grounded theory grew out of the wider qualitative tradition, its progress was informed by broad trends in social research and for its part, it has had a significant influence on that wider tradition. I don’t believe that grounded theory can any longer be regarded as distinct or special, nor that its methods are sacred. It has many strengths and few failings, for the purposes of this project its main failing is in its approach to the a priori, its second is a diminution in the traditional focus in ethnography on coherent representation of cases through primary descriptive reporting.

3.6 - Developing Theories: interpretation, abstraction and creativity

As discussed in the preceding chapter there is a diverse and well established literature around drug use, conceptually though - particularly in relation to non-problematic use - it is relatively unsophisticated and underdeveloped in its understanding of the user perspective. The lack of published peer reviewed in-depth qualitative work in this area is an unremarkable consequence of structural factors. This lack of primary material, coupled with a voyeuristic fascination of youth culture and drug use in the media and entertainment industries and the effects of normalisation, results in the unwitting acceptance of stereotyped images. In short, we already think we know about young cannabis users; who they are, what they

do, and what they think about the world around them. It is only by engaging with primary descriptive material that we can step back from these preconceptions in order to develop theory based on data that can actually be observed and collected.

Ethnography also provides an important perspective on the observer role (Gold, 1997). The researcher's own perspectives and biography necessarily influence the questions that are asked, attitudes expressed and the interpretations brought to the data. Without adequate description of the observer and reflection on interpretation, the audience cannot make judgements as to the veracity of interpretation or how they may have interpreted things differently. Grounded theory suggests the use of 'in vivo' coding - a code or category that is a direct quote from the primary data. Ethnographic description traditionally goes further in its use of primary material which allows for an understanding of how this local colour fits into the picture as a whole (Van Maanen, 1988).

Much of the work of social scientists has focused on gaining acceptance as valid scientific endeavour. My view, while anathema to a particular positivist standpoint, is that for all the social sciences have learned from science, particularly with regard to representation and communicating our ideas, we have a great deal more to learn from the arts. Amongst scientists, as amongst the political classes, aligning oneself with the arts, or taking them seriously, has been seen as pretentious, cultural posturing, or social positioning. There is a habit of viewing the arts as frivolous, unserious, or in light of popular culture pompous and bourgeois. While some divisions between art and science exist, a strict division has become progressively less tenable. Few practitioners would disagree that art is a part of science, and science a part of art. There is much to gain from the anthropological viewpoint here - that all human artefacts can be read as a product of intent and communication.

Thinking about art can give an interesting perspective on the relationship between theory and description. A picture is also a theory, the choice of focus and subject says something about the way the painter is interpreting the world and about the ways we interpret and bring meaning to a painting. It is an interpretation but it

also provides a series of concepts bound by hypotheses (Tufte, 1997). This can be explored by the example of an interesting progression of three paintings, each of which in some way reference the previous one. The descriptions which follow are a combination of commonly accepted interpretations such as Moore (1989) and my own interpretations informed by Gombrich (1996), and Sanders (1989). Manet's *Olympia* (1863, Picture 3, p 80), is a portrait of Victorine Meurent, posing as a prostitute under the flat lighting associated with early photography. The painting references canonic works by Titian (1538, Picture 2, p 79) and Giorgione (1510, Picture 1, p 78), it explicitly subverts these prior forms and their symbols to make a statement about the relationship between male and female roles and relationships, the real and the ideal, art and life. *Olympia*, often considered the first work of modern art, was an attempt to go beyond what Manet considered the artistic conceits of truth and beauty.



Picture 1: 'Sleeping Venus' (c. 1510) by Giorgione

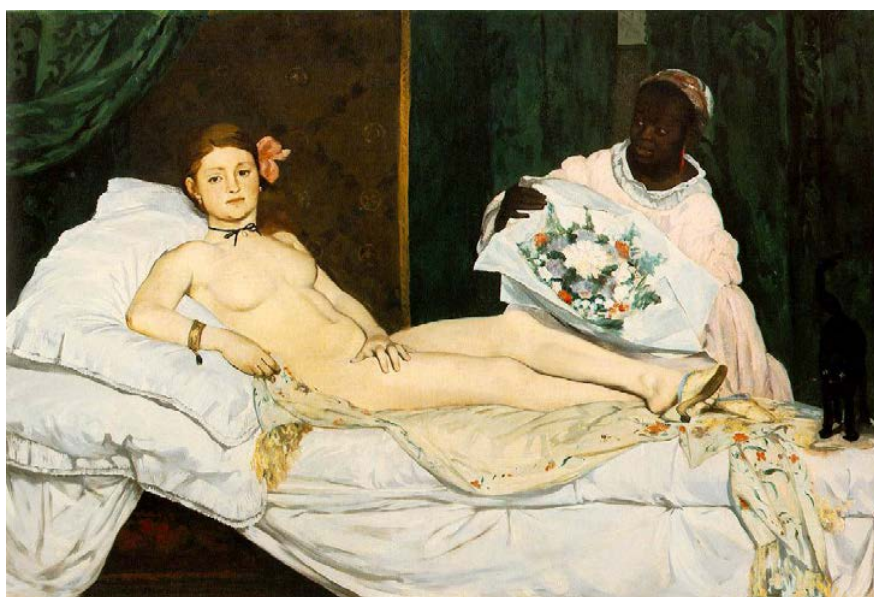
Each picture can be read as theory in its own right. Giorgione's 'Sleeping Venus' is a theory of an ideal of the pastoral, the picturesque, identity is secured in the meanings configured around the hilltop city state (a political institution on a very human scale). The female subject is depicted as a passive observed form, the mastery of the artist's male gaze, framing an ideal environment focused on his desire - the overall form frames an eye.

Titian's 'Venus of Urbino' presents an alternative theory, of urban and urbane opulence, wealth through trade and an active feminine principle. It makes explicit the power which was implicit, hidden by virtue of its location in the artist in Giorgione. Power and desire are now explicit, there is more implied movement, action, the model is responding to the gaze of the viewer. The symbolic content has moved from the environment to goods, possessions, the dog (a classical symbol of fidelity), the grapes. The painting no longer hides behind the conceit of the goddess, it is in comparison an honest nude. In place of the eye, a horizontal line breaks the picture, the dark and the light represent the public and the private spheres.



Picture 2: Venus of Urbino (1538) by Titian

Manet's work lays bare the accepted conceit of the painted nude, reframing it from the supposed reality that artists' models were generally prostitutes. Except that Victorine Meurent wasn't, she was the daughter of an artisan who became a celebrated painter in her own right. Instead of a prostitute depicting a sleeping goddess, symbolising the feminine abundance of the natural world; or a concubine manipulating masculine power from a diminished social position we are (with this additional context provided from beyond the frame) presented with a modern woman complicit in commenting on the representation of women in art.



Picture 3: Olympia (1863) by Manet

The public sphere, from Titian, now focuses on the politics of colonial exploitation through the black servant girl, the mystery, the unknown promise of the private sphere is exposed as illusory under the harsh, flat lighting. The left hand, casually draped in Giorgione, teasing in Titian, in Manet becomes a symbol of an incomplete transaction. All three pictures relate a theory of sex and power, roles and relationships. In Giorgione woman is a part of nature without will or purpose, the (conventionally male) viewer has dominion over nature and woman is a part of nature, the feminine principle. In Titian woman has will, volition, a degree of control and influence through her sexuality but bound by convention, conduct, the public and the private, position and status. In Manet the model is explicitly transacting sexuality, resulting in an explicit power relationship to the viewer.

This exposition could go on, the point is that description is not devoid of, or separated from theory, it is in and of itself a means of communicating theory. It relies on the literacy of the viewer, on their knowledge of conventions and their capacity for conceptual thinking. It often requires information and context from beyond the frame which could be assumed in the contemporary audience of each piece. Outside of that culture this background semiotic knowledge cannot be taken for

granted, hence the need for interpretation, analysis and explication. The analysis is however meaningless without adequate description. The painting is a constructed artefact which communicates and directs attention to a particular way of viewing the world. What is interesting about painting as a form is its immediacy, notwithstanding the movement of the viewer's gaze (Gombrich, 1977), a painting can be taken in at once, as a whole, the changing readings and interpretations of its meanings, are layered on this extant object.

Theory in the social and human sciences is by contrast communicated primarily through the written word. Unlike a painting which presents a whole scene and leaves us to wander through its meaning at our own speed, moving from element to element guided by our attention, the written word is (ignoring for a moment memory) distinctively linear. Our attention must therefore be guided by the author who having limited knowledge of the acuity of our innate skills, or prior knowledge, must direct our attention moment by moment on assumptions of the capacities, knowledge and interests of the reader.

The position of theoretical knowledge in the social sciences has taken on the mantle of something special, something extra-ordinary. In other spheres, theory has a more mundane place, it is the basic human orientation to any tool, it provides a way of applying knowledge of the general towards a particular problem or understanding, it provides the necessary background for effective action. That background, provides a rationale, a motivation for action and has inherent and explicit qualities and values across different contexts and dimensions. We might see these motivations as: practical, pragmatic, emotional, intellectual, rational, democratic, paternalistic, ethical, moral, and so on. At the social and political scale different motivations compete for primacy in the decision making process and alignment with a particular perspective, which may or may not be the primary motivation is a key tool in traditional political rhetoric and in the contemporary art of 'spin'.

What then can we say about the motivation for research? It is to establish and communicate a plausible, acceptable and comprehensive framework for action based on a thorough and demonstrable body of evidence. It should help us to move beyond the reactive, encompassing the wider implications of what at first sight can appear as obvious, unquestionable imperatives. Furthermore it should help decision makers better understand the perspectives and issues of stakeholders and help to illuminate the potentials for unforeseen impacts of policy. Qualitative research in particular plays an important role here. Quantitative work, which is compelling in its capacity for 'proof' and evidence provided by the hypothetico-deductive principle, relies on a pre-established framework to test. Where it is less strong is in the initial exploration of what the potential dimensions of this framework should be. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches ultimately rely on interpretation from 'beyond the frame'. Qualitative work holds the potential for greater clarity in this regard but it is not clear to what degree this potential is met.

Recently, political agendas for community inclusion, participation and representation in statutory bodies have resulted in an increasing role for qualitative work. Such work needs to tackle the problems of communicating adequately across non-professional audiences with differing levels of education and strong emotional and practical involvement in the issues under discussion. This has brought a need to rethink our strategies for dissemination and diffusion and bring a wider understanding of communication and communicative technologies into play. Thinking about these problems from the perspective of the visual arts can inform strategies for communicating research but it can also bring new insights to other aspects of the research process. The example from painting introduced above clearly has commonalities with some of the principle tenets of grounded theory, in particular constant comparative analysis. Here conceptual development proceeds through case by case analysis, feeding insights from one case back into another, it generates theories that could not be gained from the examination of one case in isolation. It involves an extension, an abstraction beyond the descriptive contents of the cases themselves. It relies on an understanding and appreciation of socio-economic, political and cultural background conditions (Glaser and Strauss, 1965).

Comparing the function and operation of theory in different disciplines can highlight the strengths and deficiencies of each. Extant theory exists as a container for the ideas generated, and cross-fertilisation of theory between disciplines is bringing important insights in many fields. We can take the principle of constant comparative analysis beyond the case and view it from the perspective of concatenation in research (Stebbins, 2006). Taken further, we can take the study itself as a unit of analysis with primary data and extant interpretation, as in meta-ethnography (Noblit and Hare, 1988). This model of synthesis might, with sufficient data, provide an interesting approach to the study of drugs and identity.

Finally, thinking about the arts can help to inform important epistemological questions. The question ‘what is art?’ for example, has resonances with the kind of questions we must ask of research. What kind of knowledge is for instance being generated through this kind of exploratory, emergent research? Unlike grounded theory which aims to generate a body of theory which can stand on the merits of the process, exploratory qualitative research often aims to better understand the actors, issues, and scope of a given problem. From a positivist perspective this may be used in hypothesis generation, and interpreting and locating quantitative results (Rhodes, 2010). Its aim here is to generate and refine hypotheses rather than to prove or disprove a hypothesis. It asks the questions that must be answered before, perhaps, more directed and rigorous work is used in addressing a complex set of problems. It may then have further use in communicating these understandings.

These insights highlight an important dimension in the way the present study is reported. As Becker (1998) emphasises, it is not possible to make a direct connection between identity as a disciplinary concept and primary data. Identity in this sense is an abstract analytic concept, or set of concepts and frameworks for generating a particular kind of meaning and understanding. Identity as a concept in this sense must be understood as the result of a progression of hundreds of years of academic dialogue and tradition. Framed by contemporary work it is nevertheless defined and owned by the pedagogic community and is in turn bound by their need for finite definition. If such concepts are used to interpret primary data, Becker

suggests, this produces the appearance of a framework grafted onto the grounded empirical work. However, identity, as well as being a defined canonic concept, must if it is to avoid stagnation, also be a part of the living contemporary conceptual dialogue between active social researchers.

In accommodating to this problem, which affects all qualitative research to a degree, the project was informed firstly by the idea of concatenation (Stebbins, 2006) and later by the ideas of qualitative meta-synthesis (Noblit and Hare, 1988). In the context of the present study the task was to find a way to bridge the gap identified by Becker (1998) between disciplinary concepts and working concepts. A second problem was reporting this in a way that accommodates as far as possible the conventions of qualitative reporting, allowing for the evaluation of rigour (Miyata and Kai, 2009). The reporting of the study was informed by the requirements of Blaxter's (1996) criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research, as adopted by the British Sociological Association. Much of this is predicated on understandings of the status of concepts in qualitative research as inductive and interpretive. The reporting of the study accordingly follows Geertz's (1973) notion of 'thick description', this aims to give the reader a deep understanding of the research context. The level of background provided then allows the reader to make a judgement of the degree to which the concepts generated might be 'transferred' to other settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Unlike generalizability, transferability does not relate to transferring findings from one setting to another. Rather it acknowledges the unique nature of each subject and setting while recognising the potential for re-utilising the concepts that were developed to understand and communicate those particular findings, in some form, in other settings.

An important point is that high quality research is not necessarily more transferable, rather it is research that allows the reader to judge transferability of the concepts generated to a different setting, the conditions of which might again be quite particular. In developing theory across three cohorts it is inherent that there must be a degree of transferability of the concepts between settings. The extent to which this can be judged by the reader is unfortunately limited by the focus of

the reporting on the first cohort. This focus was necessitated by a routine problem in qualitative reporting, the sheer bulk of the data and the need to communicate data and findings in a way that can be followed by the reader. The benefit for the reader in focusing the case studies on the first cohort is in bringing a degree of linearity to the reporting, a progression where meanings and concepts appear to unfold directly from data in an organised and legible fashion. The inductive cycle of analysis, iterating and refining emerging themes across cases and cohorts which actually results in this framework is characteristically much more chaotic and unwieldy. While the researcher may spend months or years with the data the reader must be presented with it in a form which can be digested in hours, or at most days. It should not be surprising that the artifice required in this involves some trade-offs.

While the orientation to the analytic process in this study is framed in unconventional terms, the process of the analysis (as a derivative of the constant comparative method) and the reporting of the individual exemplar case studies is quite conventional. They allow the reader to judge the first order interpretations, the understandings the young cannabis users brought to their own use of cannabis. The introduction to the case studies may be less conventional but it allows the reader to understand the background of the researcher and their orientation to the research setting. The brief case summaries (p 121) then allow the reader to judge how these individual cases fit into the wider study.

The reporting in the findings and interpretation chapter is again slightly unconventional in that the use of primary quotes to illustrate points is necessarily more limited than that in routine descriptive reporting where there is a more direct mapping between primary quotes and findings. The analysis might best be thought of as a series of three separate conventional qualitative studies which have then been synthesised. However, it should also be borne in mind that the the concepts generated in the first study informed the direction of the subsequent studies. This would not be the case in a conventional synthesis and consequently the reporting needs are different. Since the development of the theories developed rests on the first 1998 cohort, the case studies focus on three of its members who have charac-

teristics representative of three particular types of user identified in the analysis. The results of the analysis are presented in chapter five, findings and interpretation, this chapter brings together the themes and concepts that developed. The concepts that it works towards are implied and rooted in both the data but also the synthesis of concepts across cases and contexts and thereby on the inductive process of iterating between the concepts built on the research and the wider conceptual work.

The concepts developed are therefore not necessarily always extant, or explicit in any in any one piece of data and often cannot be sufficiently articulated by the conventional 'juicy quote'. Neither do the findings quote disciplinary canons on the concepts developed. The concepts in the findings chapter, although they are informed by wider thinking, should be seen as second order interpretations. That is, it reports the working concepts that 'belong' to the data, rather than the disciplinary concepts to which they may ultimately relate. Instead the relationship between the concepts developed in the findings and interpretation chapter are related to wider disciplinary concepts only later in the discussion chapter. The authors quoted in the discussion are those who's usage of concepts speaks to those developed in the study. The direction of travel throughout the reporting of findings, analysis and discussion goes from the concepts generated in the data to the wider disciplinary concepts. In asking the reader to follow and evaluate the authors inferences and the interpretive process this study requires a more active interpretation on the part of the reader in, again, co-constructing the concepts along with the author. In the now traditional caveat it must be pointed out that the interpretations given are only one reading of the issues. Likewise, the choice of methods and the form of the reporting is only one approach amongst a number of possibilities, none of which are perfect. The result is an attempt to present and report the study in a way which facilitates the processes by which the reader can join in the journey of generating and exploring the data, theories and concepts which this particular author happened to develop at a particular point in time.

3.7 - Case Studies

The results of the study take the form of three exemplar case studies taken from the 1998 *home group*, constructed from verbatim transcripts these are interspersed with commentary drawn from descriptive passages in contemporaneous field notes and reflections on the data-collection process. The use of case studies has a long history in the social sciences (Sandelowski, 1996). The individual case study was identified as particularly appropriate to the study of identity in that it allows for exploration of the understandings of individuals outside of their presentation to the peer group. However, the group and longitudinal perspective offered by the separate cohorts further informs understanding of the wider contexts of use and hints at the possibilities for more general understandings of the phenomena around teenage cannabis use. As described above, the development of case studies was construed as a method for analysis as well as for description.

In approaching the case through the primary cannabis using group, the individual is the primary unit of analysis, the cohort a secondary unit and the teenage cannabis using social group an abstract tertiary construction of the analytic process. In comparing cases, both the *home group* and the adult reflectors allow for the comparison of different perspectives from within the same group. This was not possible for the *school group* who by and large belong to different cannabis using groups. The approach taken to the construction of case studies in this study has characteristics in common with several conventional approaches but eschews any formal analytical process (Meyer, 2001). While the analysis involved a fairly traditional process along the lines of the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) the construction of case studies took its cue from the notion of the research interview as ‘snapshot’ and the perspective of a ‘picture’ as theory outlined above. It was construed as a creative process more akin to sculpture which provided a metaphor for the process. The activity of the sculptor has been described through a reading (or misreading) of Lao Tzu’s (ca. 6 B.C., trans. Lau, 1963:43) description of the ‘uncarved block’:

When the uncarved block shatters it becomes vessels...
Hence the greatest cutting does not sever.

Sculptors describe the process where by working with the inherent fissures in natural materials (wood, stone, etc.) the craftsman bends a material to the purpose. The vessel is seen as a pre-existing potential of the material, rather than a product of the craftsman's will imposed on the material. The uncarved block contains several vessels of different natures. The sculptors' art is to see the potentials in the material, to see through the waste and into the structure, in this way by working with its inherent underlying structures the material maintains its strength.

The environment in which the rock is quarried, or the tree grown, influences its constituents and structural character. In the case of research interviews, they are a product of the field, the time they are taken, the environment, and the sampling procedure. They are inevitably also a product of the way that they are hewn. The skill of the interviewer is then in directing the boundaries of the interview while allowing the respondent the freedom to express their own concerns and issues, the salience of a particular point, or to run at tangents which will ultimately run back into the topic. The transcripts, recordings, notes and reflections can be seen as a natural material which can be cleaved in different ways. There is waste material that must be cleared, then there are themes like the veins of stone or grain of wood, there are knots and weak points, open and closed textures. The use of hand tools in sculpture retains the haptic imprint of human activity. These patterns of making can be removed and polished clean, however beginning with Rodin there has been a tradition of leaving them explicit on the surface (Pinet and Palmer, 1992). In this way, the inherent qualities of the material are revealed and the actions of the maker are left explicit. This adds to the richness of the piece and the layers of information available in it. If the structure of the material has been properly understood, it can be read in the surface of the final product.

Ethnography has been much concerned with the observer perspective; classical ethnography following anthropology stressed the observer as an alien bracketing their own perceptions and understandings in an attempt to limit the influence or

bias of the observer (Gold, 1997). More recent ethnography now often takes place in cultures, communities and locales that may be to a degree familiar to, or shared by the observer. While the observer still attempts to bracket their own experiences and perceptions in the collection of data, ethnography now admits limits on observer characteristics. The metaphor of sculpture reminds us that there are innate characteristics of the material, in this case the data, which a skilled craftsman will identify and work with allowing the material and the subject to speak for itself. However, it also highlights that the observers own biography, physical attributes and systems of meaning influence both the kind and scope of data that can be collected and the interpretations brought to that data in collecting, communicating, analysing and interpreting it.

Though I now have significantly more experience as a researcher, I remain sure that I would not now have as much success in gaining entry to the field, or in interviewing the teenagers that formed the 1998 *home group*. Interacting with scientific observers and taking part in research interviews is an unusual social context for many people and the way the interviewer frames and introduces the interview is key in collecting authentic data. Many social transactions involve differential power, expectation and uncertainty in how they should be performed and this was a key feature in the lives of the teenagers. The research interview itself is a particularly unbalanced social transaction, not only are there expectations, or unspoken understandings, of differences in power and status. The informant (particularly in the case of interviewing teenagers) while uncertain of the requirements of their role is, as in most human transactions, keen to perform in a way which reflects positively on them. The interviewer, in attempting to limit their influence on the interviewees responses, discloses little verbally to the interviewee and attempts to limit their self presentation while generally conducting themselves in an interested, open, encouraging and supportive manner.

There are recognised difficulties in interviewing teenagers: some have addressed practical difficulties, such as unease over recording technologies (Bassett et al., 2008); others have focused on mitigating social difference and unease, for instance

by interviewing in friendship pairs (Highet, 2003). Such approaches have however given little consideration to the research encounter in terms of understandings of social roles. Data collection methods using social role perspectives have tended to focus on participant observation, though its limits are acknowledged (Gold, 1958).

Differential status, power and expectation is a feature of many other social transactions, however relatively few (other examples include job interviews and medical encounters) involve the same lack of reciprocity in self-disclosure and self-presentation. Since the informant requires some concept of their audience to guide and interpret their own performance, limited disclosure on the part of the interviewer requires the interviewee to make assumptions on the basis of limited information. Making interviewees comfortable with self-disclosure in this context is often erroneously framed in terms of empathy, whereby the interviewer and interviewee come to a shared understanding that they understand one another. That it is not in fact empathy in the everyday sense was made clear to me in analysing transcripts of a heroin user discussing mugging people using different instruments: a stanley knife, a screwdriver, or a used hypodermic syringe. Much of the interview, involved him trying to persuade the interviewer to endorse a form of moral relativism in order to normalise his own use of a screwdriver as opposed to more aberrant others who used the threat of HIV. This highlights that empathy is not the prerequisite for interesting and valuable data.

Empathy requires not only understanding but holds the expectation of validation in its accommodation to others position - that one would if in the others shoes act in a similar way and through similar understandings. Some researchers appear to value the experience of empathising with others who are through no fault of their own in difficult circumstances. The danger is that empathy here is used transactionally in a way that is not appropriate to the research context. In practice I believe there should be something more basic happening, it rests on an evaluation on the part of the interviewee that the interviewer is a 'good' and reasonable person who will take the necessary time and care to understand them and to represent them accurately. Empathy is a more difficult prospect which in my view is rarely reached and rarely

should be in research interviews. It requires either a level of authentic intimacy which is inappropriate to the situation, or it represents an inauthentic pact on the part of interviewee or interviewer where their valued capacity for empathy is traded (often mutually) in the interview as a social transaction.

Rather than viewing it in terms of empathy, the research relationship should be read as a continuum which starts with an evaluation that the interviewer is attempting to understand and may progress to an evaluation that the interviewer is a person who is in fact not very unlike themselves and is therefore easy to communicate freely with. If an assumption of sufficient adequacy of communication is made by the interviewee, the interviewer can then come to act like a mirror in which the interviewee sees their responses reflected, adjusting their subsequent responses until the reflection they see in the verbal and non-verbal responses of the interviewer matches their expectations and the image reflected approximates their view of themselves. This mapping is of course only possible in the one-to-one interview, the social dynamics of identity projection in group settings producing a different kind of data.

This interview as mirror idea was evident, particularly in the first cohort, and it seems this rather than narrativity underlies the effectiveness of the approach. I do not want to make too much of the mirror analogy, it is often used across contexts and often over-extended. However, it suggests some of the benefits and potential pitfalls of allowing the interview encounter to become a space for identity projection. A tangible danger is the potential for inappropriate or damaging disclosure. Particularly with vulnerable groups, or patient groups, interviewees may frame, or attempt to use, the research encounter therapeutically, with the attendant risks that the interviewer is rarely trained, or skilled in this regard. This again highlights the need for researchers to manage appropriate levels of intimacy and disclosure in the research encounter in a way which may sometimes be at odds with their wish for rich data.

It is debatable which mix of interviewer and interviewee characteristics have the capacity to yield the best or most accurate ‘interview as mirror’ result, it involves chance and it will always be imperfect. What is apparent, is that in open ethnographic interviewing approaches observer characteristics are inherent in the production of the data; as is the contemporary cultural background of observer, observed and the expected audience for the research output. Just as in Manet’s Olympia, painter, subject and audience must all be recognised as complicit in the production of meaning. For this meaning to be produced however the work itself must focus on the meanings held by the subject (the case), provide the background, and signify the intended meanings in a way that can be interpreted by the audience.

3.8 - Ethics and Research Governance

The ethics of research, in particular the field-research and in depth qualitative work carried out in this project with young and potentially vulnerable participants requires careful scrutiny in relation to the potential harms and benefits that participation in the project may bring to participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The practice of research with potentially vulnerable groups, using open or emergent research designs, has been discussed in terms of the ethics-as-process approach, which accepts that the benefits of research may be difficult to judge in advance (Cutcliffe and Ramcharan, 2002). This approach involves the researcher in the active management of entry to the field, establishing consent within the group and with individual members and maintaining a check on these consents across individual interviews, through to a sensitive withdrawal from the field. It acknowledges the limits of informed consent where, despite the best efforts of the research design, participants may be not be fully aware of: the potential impact of what they divulge; may feel, or be, unwittingly coerced by adherence to the research process; or may follow a line of questioning that has become unintentionally intrusive. The researcher must therefore take an active responsibility for maintaining the interests of respondents, on their behalf, throughout the research process. Finally, this requires the researcher to maintain a balanced view as to the costs and benefits of

the research. These processes may be self monitored and recorded in field notes, monitored by formal or informal discussion with peers or mentors, or may if necessary require a return to ethics committee for consideration.

Ethical approval for this project was granted by the Department of Health Care Studies ethics committee of the Manchester Metropolitan University. Throughout the study, process, ethics and other issues were discussed on a regular basis with mentors and other colleagues on a formal or informal basis as required. This form of mentorship and self-scrutiny was common practice amongst the research team allowing for interrogation and reflection on practical, ethical, quality and other issues as they arose. Traditionally a guard against 'going-native', the role of reflective debriefing as fundamental to ethical qualitative research should be more widely recognised.

The past ten years has seen an increasing formalisation in ethics and research governance. Signed informed consent forms are now routinely used and a period of adequate reflection built in. The use of this form of consent in relation to ethnographic research has been questioned (Corrigan, 2003). It can serve to establish an informal power dynamic in the research; the use of formal, signed, informed consent forms and the assertion that ethical approval has been granted, may signal to the respondent that once entered into they must accept the line of questioning as reasonable, or it may lead them to respond unquestioningly. It may also lead interviewers to be less careful in their monitoring of the situation (Corrigan, 2003). Even when signed informed consent is appropriate, the considerations outlined in the ethics-as-process approach should be regarded as standard practice (Cutcliffe and Ramcharan, 2002).

In the context of drugs research with populations who are not currently identified as drugs users by services there is a further reason why signed informed consent might not be appropriate. In investigating non-problematic cannabis users who are

not in contact with services the usual cost-benefit calculations are compounded by the illegality of cannabis. The legal situation with regard to research into drug use was detailed by Coomber (2002:1):

Any research material and/or data carried out on those involved in criminal activities here in the UK is potentially subject to seizure and researchers to be summoned. So if you are researching drug users (from therapeutic cannabis use to ecstasy or heroin and crack cocaine use)... you and your data could be used to investigate and/or prosecute those participating in your research, despite your promises of anonymity and confidentiality. Moreover, your data, including contact information for those who take part in your research, is potentially liable for seizure not just by authorities here in the UK but also by third party states such as the US by merit of reciprocal international treaties that permit subpoena of individuals and their information across borders.

Coomber (2002:3) further emphasises that:

Those undertaking ethnographic research may be particularly vulnerable due to the level of contact involved with research subjects and the relatively in-depth knowledge they accrue about them and their activities.

Coomber acknowledges that while the legal power to use academic work to prosecute participants exists, its use was (and still is) at the time of writing largely unheard of. The police and other agencies of the state at the strategic level being generally helpful and understanding of the need for academic work in the drugs field and the importance of anonymity and confidentiality to this pursuit. Given this situation it was not considered appropriate to require subjects to provide signed informed consent since these records would serve to connect them to the study and through the inclusion criteria would identify them as cannabis users. In approaching these issues a statement of undertakings to research participants

was prepared (appendix two, p 359) to obtain verbal informed consent. In this way, consent is confirmed in the primary data without any further indication of the identity of the participant.

The changing nature of research governance and ethics now requires that signed informed consent is used in studies such as this. However, the legal situation described by Coomber (2002) remains, to my knowledge at the present time, unchanged. Corrigan (2003) in questioning the implications of de facto assumption of the use of informed consent by ethics committees, suggests that the blanket requirement for this form of consent inevitably leads to excluding particular forms of research and particular participants. This argument suggests that in pursuance of standardised research ethics procedures the research community may be excluding the very participants (and the methods for working with them) who are in most need. Ironically, the very frameworks set up to protect vulnerable research participants may have come to exclude them. The naturalistic work carried out in the first phase of this research would be very difficult to pursue under such conditions.

A more pertinent risk to participants is that while every effort is made to anonymise data those who know them well may recognise them through sequential disclosures. In expressing opinions which might otherwise remain private they can leave themselves open to social conflict, opprobrium and informal or formal sanctions (school exclusion for example). Much information is lost by anonymising names and places in research data, and however carefully it is completed anonymity is difficult to achieve and careful monitoring of confidentiality is essential at each stage in the research and reporting process (Clark, 2008).

Research work of this kind at first glance may seem to hold few direct benefits for participants. However, research participants often found the opportunity to reflect on the influence of drugs in their lives a very positive experience. While drug use may be discussed in everyday conversation, the research encounter provides a rather different context, allowing participants to evaluate and explore the issues raised

in a more critical manner. The encounter inherently provides the participant with the opportunity to ask questions of the interviewer, who can often find themselves supplying tailored harm minimisation advice/ education, debunking of myths, or if necessary appraising the participant of relevant services. In the wider context, we must weigh the rights of groups and individuals to have their views represented in the policy dialogue. *Verstehen* approaches while challenging for the conventions of contemporary ethics committees are uniquely suited to studying populations that are routinely stigmatised by being defined instrumentally through the terms of interest to policy makers. In allowing these populations to define themselves in such agendas, this kind of research has the potential to inform the often inherently stigmatising classifications routinely adopted in the health and social arena. In the more immediate interests of youth, it may eventually, through developing understanding, help to provide a buffer against the kind of moral panics which have blighted youth cultural movements in the past. It may also, if its insights can be adapted to a more accessible form, be of use to health professionals in helping young people to reflect critically on the meanings of their, or their peer's drug use.

4: Case Studies

The following section details three case studies, Alex (p 101), Gary (p 110) and Spud (p 116). Returning to the metaphor of reading a painting the chapter begins with an introduction which frames the observer perspective. The case studies then function as pictures focusing on representation of the individual cases with minimal analysis, which is instead presented in the following chapters. Snapshots of the other cases and cohorts are presented in the following section (p 121).

4.1 - Introduction

The first time I saw cannabis was on a park near where I lived, I was perhaps thirteen or fourteen at the time. It looked like a small rabbit turd or sheep dropping wrapped ostentatiously in tin foil. The two slightly older lads skinned up and then walked off around the block to smoke it, leaving the rest of us to our bottles of snakebite. I had for the first time that summer adopted a teenage identity, the off the rack metal-head, ripped jeans, black t-shirts and a combat-jacket, replaced by a biker's leather when my Granddad had a big win on the horses. It was cheap, easy, fitted in with my musical tastes and allowed me immediate identification with a group of similarly dressed teenagers who hung out on the local parks. My friendships on the parks didn't last through the winter, it was cold and no-one much came out, I'd occasionally bump into people from that time in pubs and clubs when I was older but we found we had little in common.

By this time however, a small group of school-friends had started to coalesce, living in different parts of the city we would stay at each others houses at weekends, drink and play rock music. I started playing the guitar, jamming in bands with other friends at night in industrial units or rehearsal rooms when we could afford them. At fifteen/ sixteen most of my friends could pass for young-looking university students and we would drink in the student areas and take advantage of the cheap booze at student nights in town.

In the course of three or four years the city had opened up to me, my social and geographical compass expanded quickly, intersecting with the adult world, a world where cannabis was a constant presence. There was speed at one time, LSD, magic mushrooms, and ecstasy was a large presence for some years, then the other more exotic and esoteric drugs; DMT, yage and ayahuasca, GHB and then the cocaine which is ubiquitous in the clubs, pubs and party's around Manchester at the time of writing. The drugs seemed to move with tastes and fashions differentiating one generation from the next, to be returned to, rediscovered, re-invented a few years down the line.

I put my easy familiarity with the world of drugs down to my place as a musician. I kept up playing the guitar, through university in Manchester, playing clubs with a funk band and later jobbing as guitarist on dance music tracks through the mid-nineties ecstasy scene. The musician has a sort of universal social passkey, a freedom to be different, to be an interloper. I'm no longer sure how the social signifiers work for this, its not the haircut or clothes, it's something to do with attitude, carriage, the way of speaking or acting. I can spot a fellow musician and both other musicians and non-musicians clock me as a musician. Equally, amongst strangers, I feel most at ease in the company of other musicians. The role is somehow encompassing, there is a fit to it. I don't think this is something that can be learnt, it grows from having been a thing for some time. There is an age appropriateness to it - if I were to act the same way as a thirty-year-old that I did as a twenty-five-year-old I would be revealed immediately as a fake. Equally, particularly amongst musicians you can be caught out for trying too hard. It must be an effortless performance and unlike actors, musicians are not generally natural performers.

In the summer of 1998, I was approached to carry out a series of field based interviews of a group of young cannabis users. I was 24 at the time and having dropped out of an undergraduate architecture course, I was busy failing to scratch out a living as a guitarist playing clubs and sessions around Manchester. Living off bar work and casual building labouring I was enjoying a new sort of freedom, a lightness. I had jettisoned the expectations that had, throughout school and into higher

education, been piled upon me. I felt that I was now devoid of status, levelled, and I liked that. It was perhaps this outlook that allowed me to connect with the group and theirs was the same sort of world that I had inhabited not so long ago.

So it was that I found myself cycling from my flat in Whalley Range, past the recently busted crack house and the prostitutes on their corners and heading out into the suburbs. The edginess of the city centre dropped away gradually and I found myself coursing through wide tree lined roads, the houses were well maintained, not boarded up, no abandoned cars. Fewer people were on the streets here, occasional dog walkers and groups of kids playing on the side streets, teenagers on street corners, waiting around the sides of off-licences for the oldest looking of them to try his luck. These kids were not well off, but they were comfortable and secure. Their immediate environment, the streets on which they'd grown up were more theirs than anybody else's, adults were largely confined to their cars and their houses.

As I approached the place where I had agreed to meet Chris and Simon the sun was starting to dip in the clear sky and the night was cooling pleasantly. Chris had met Simon through a survey of drugs use in local schools, Simon had offered to introduce a researcher to some of his friends. Chris briefly introduced me to Simon then left before we approached the research site. I asked Simon to tell me about himself. He was 16, finishing his last year at school and he spent most of his spare time working on music in his bedroom. He was dedicated, taking part time jobs to buy equipment, he played several instruments and was learning about music production. He didn't smoke that much weed himself he explained, but the group that he was about to introduce me to were out here smoking cannabis most nights. We walked down a passage between a row of small mid-seventies semi's and one of bungalows, this led into a narrow grassed area surrounded by trees, a path running through it parallel to the road. This was bounded by a long fence running along an area of scrubland. There were park benches at intervals along the path and a few

picnic tables scattered where the grass widened out. The planting and the grass were well kept, in the efficient manner that local councils take when faced by a vocal retired population with time on their hands.

A hacking cough emerged from the bushes behind the bungalows, followed by its owner, folded over, falling backwards through the bushes. The cough morphed into a laugh and there in a small clearing were a group of six teenage lads laughing uncontrollably at the clowning of their friend. One held his hand behind his back as thick resinous smoke billowed from behind his blue cagoule. 'S'alright 'e's safe.' said Simon and a bong fashioned from a small plastic coke bottle was pulled from behind his back. 'He's here to interview you - 'bout that. Remember I told you 'bout it the other week.' 'You mind if we finish this off first?' says the blue cagoule, grinning. 'Sure.' I reply.

Returning to their close circle in the bushes, the group introduced themselves to me in turn, shaking hands. They're of that age where while clearly teenagers a few could pass for older. Accents range from a flat Mancunian middle class to a pared down version of the nasal working class accent that characterises the Mancunian stereotype. As the bong gets passed around two of the lads are skinning up, one holding the papers in his cupped hands while the other assembles the tobacco and burns in some sweet-smelling, sticky, black, cannabis-resin. A can of lager follows the bong around the circle as more 'bong-mix' is prepared by Spud, who seems to be at the centre of the group. He burns more of the squidgy-black resin from an oversized block (somewhere between a quarter and half an ounce) while the lad next to him toasts a cigarette over a lighter through its paper. The group show a confident pride in the display of these well-practised rituals, established roles, the co-operation, the division of labour is directed toward one aim - to get stoned.

As the bong goes around again and the spliff is lit, the nervous childlike energy of the group dissipates and they turn to discussing me and the interviews. Who am I? What do I want from them? Why them? Can they have cash instead of a music voucher? It's OK some of them will buy the music vouchers off the others - at half

price. Who's going to go first? Some of them want to smoke some more, so it's Alex to go first. We wander down the track a short way and sit on the back of a bench looking out over the scrubland, the sun's low but still strong, oblique to us, and there's a hum of insects over the yellowing scrub. We can still hear the rest of the group in the bushes as I set the microphone between us and begin.

4.2 - Case Study One: Alex

Alex is tall, well built and looks a little older and more confident than some of the others. He doesn't look particularly stoned. He plays rugby, boxes and likes listening to music, he plays a bit of guitar and likes to draw. He grew up with an extended family in a less affluent part of the city and won a place at grammar school before moving to the area. He feels he doesn't fit in at school. He first smoked cannabis aged ten with his cousin but was twelve or thirteen before he started smoking cannabis more regularly. He drinks occasionally and more recently has used speed at rave nights on a couple of occasions. He thinks he'll probably carry on using cannabis when he's older but intends to cut down over the next year for his GCSEs. He has not been doing well at school recently and he's not too sure what he wants to do after his GCSEs, the outcome of which he views with a degree of fatalism. He works occasionally as an apprentice mechanic with his brother-in-law and he sees this as a fallback position if he does not achieve academically.

'So you just finished school this year then?' I ask, 'Going back in fifth year, so...'

He sees me looking a little surprised, I'd guessed him as older. 'I know I'm a big lad and that but...' It's the summer holidays now, when not engaged in casual work Alex is left to his own devices. He smokes a small amount of weed through the day, at home if his mum's out, or on here with other friends who are not working. 'We haven't got much [cannabis] so usually have to save it. In the day you end up smoking pure cigs, not much cannabis, it's just at night really, after tea, between 'bout six and about half ten.'

Alex suggested that he used cannabis in different ways at different times, often it was as much about process as result, getting stoned was as much part of the activity as being stoned. 'It's just something to do innit. When you've not done it you just sit there. And you chat a load of shit, but when you're stoned, you chat even more shit, but it's funny. And like, it's just something to do.'

He felt the effects of cannabis helped him to relax, to deal with stressful situations and allowed him to see humour in the mundane. 'I s'pose it makes you laugh at things which aren't funny but at the end of the day it's pretty good. It doesn't do anything to you, it doesn't make you angry or anything, it won't make you fucking loopy in the head or anything. It just sort of - it doesn't really sort your head out, but it just sort of relaxes you and everything. If you're in a stressful situation, if you have a spliff it just sort of takes that stress away from you for a bit so you're not really thinking about it, that's what I'd say anyway.'

He had tried different methods of smoking cannabis in order to get more of a high. He was aware of 'head shops', shops selling water pipes and other smoking apparatus but had not used them. Lack of money was again an issue, so the group made their own bongs - their smoking apparatus had to be portable and disposable. 'Sometimes do a bit of bongs and that, we make our own bongs sometimes like out of bottles and that, 'cos we 'ant really got any money, bongs cost like money from bong shops and that, it's like twenty five quid for a decent one, we just make them ourselves. Give like blow-backs and that, bit of like a box as well, do that', he demonstrates holding a cigarette between cupped hands, 'like between your fingers, and you're s'posed to get more out of it but it dun't really do much more. So really just smoke spliffs that's it. Well sometimes we have buckets and that, but not that much 'cos there's no point bringing a bucket out and a bottle of water and everything.'

He and his friends used bongs in order to make their cannabis go further, to get higher more quickly and to get a different, more energetic high. He suggested attaining this energetic high was dependent on being in a good mood and not tired

before smoking - an awareness of 'drugs set'. Again some of the reason for using bongos was their greater efficiency and a lack of money to spend on cannabis.'When you smoke spliffs like it gets you caned and that and your laughing but with bongos it does it proper fast and that. It depends what mood you're in. When you have a bong if you're a bit tired then you're straight off to sleep, like you just lie on the floor, like go to sleep there and then. But if you have a bong when you're in a top mood like you'll get caned for ages and like "Ah no way I can't do anything now." Then the effects'll start coming properly and then you'll just be buzzing off everything. But if you just have a few spliffs it doesn't get you as fucked as when you're on bongos. If you have a spliff you lose pure weed like you know all the smoke comes off it. When you have a bong like you hardly have to use anything, you use like half a spliff it'll go round about five people. Like times the spliff by about five.'

Spending his limited money on cannabis meant he didn't have money to buy new clothes but he felt that overall he would rather spend it on cannabis. 'When I've got money right, I think "Right I'm gonna buy some weed with this." but if I didn't smoke weed or anything then I could spend it on other things like clothes and everything and have loads of money in the bank and everything. I s'pose that's a bit of a downside but that's what I'm doing, so I'm gonna carry on doing it. I wanna get new clothes and everything - like the clothes that I've got at the moment have got to last me fucking ages until I get a bit more money in the bank and get myself some more but I'm not really arsed cos I'm doing what I like doing.'

Alex felt that the main downside to using cannabis was the impact of spending his evenings smoking it instead of doing his homework. He was concerned about his performance at school but approached it with a degree of ambivalence, perhaps even fatalism. 'At the end of the day I know that I would rather go out and get caned than sit at home and do my homework and if you don't do your homework then you're fucking up at school and you might not got the grades you want so that's a bit of a downside.'

Alex enjoyed playing sport both in and out of school. He didn't think that his smoking, drinking, or cannabis use had had much impact on this aspect of his life. 'Well I suppose if you want to become like a top boxer or something then you can't smoke cannabis or anything you can't like drink or anything but it doesn't affect you that much if you're just playing football normally or playing rugby or doing a bit of boxing. I do boxing like about three times a week and that, it's not affected me not at all. I do smoke quite a bit and I do smoke cannabis and I drink quite a bit. It doesn't really affect you that much as long as you keep on with your training so I don't suppose it affects your sport or anything.'

Although he enjoyed the sport, Alex was not keen on school. He felt that academic subjects were limited and that school should address more of the practical difficulties of real life. 'It's just a load of shit really. They teach you about stuff that just happens in there, like they don't teach you to cope with things like they should do. They teach you all about fucking subjects and that but they don't teach you anything else.' He also felt that because of his background he didn't fit in with the other students. 'Like it's s'posed to be a posh school and that and I don't really fit in. I grew up in [X town] really and that's like, I s'pose you could call it pretty rough, it's a lot worse than 'round 'ere and that.'

Alex clearly had difficulty relating to some people at his school, the following passage suggests that they are both operating from a very different set of social rules. He thinks this is in part due to the context of being in school, other students continue to apply a set of rules for being in school whereas he regards these rules as childish. 'It depends really there's a proper load of them that are like nob-heads, proper stuck up and everything. You know everything about them's just false - and they're not into it [cannabis]. They don't do anything, they're just fucking nob heads and it's not just cos they don't do anything. They're just nobs, fucking - I can't explain it but they just don't want to be friendly with anyone. They're just like fucking dead nobbish with you - like just a dick - like grassing you up for things, like just because you told them to fuck off one day. And they don't seem to understand that if they just came out with you one night and just started being all

right with you that... Fucking they don't understand that if they don't want to do it, they just want, to drink there'll be no problem. Fucking they just do dickish things they're just nob-heads.'

He feels this is not because they do not use drugs but that they make no effort to be social and that their worlds and activities are entirely alien. His ire is not reserved for those at school but extends to anyone who is incapable of operating within his groups norms. 'There's like a dick over there he comes on and he's a fucking dick. He lives round here and that but he's a just a nob, he's just a penis, can't understand how much he's a fucking dick, everyone just fucking hates him cos he's a dick.'

Alex acknowledges that he generally gets on better with those at school who use cannabis or other drugs despite coming from different backgrounds. It seems to provide an activity with a common set of rules and expectations which can supersede those of the school ground. 'They come from like dead posh places... and that like at the school that I go to. You'd think with their background that they wouldn't want anything to do with it but about eight out of ten do mostly what I do. Saying that a hell of a lot of them don't. There's a few of them, like my mates and that do. A few of my mates that are my age and go to school and that they're into E's and whizz and that - ten times as much as what I do - but some of them don't smoke weed.'

Alex had first tried cannabis with his cousins who lived in a less affluent area of the city. This area, noted for its social problems, was where he had himself grown up. 'They started it a lot younger than me. My cousin just said "Just fucking try it", one day, he didn't force me or nothing. I just started it up like that. I was about ten or something. I didn't start smoking it properly though until I was about twelve. But I wouldn't say I was peer-pressured into it or nothing. I wasn't forced. I just thought I'd try one day when I was offered it.'

It is through this cousin that Alex maintains his connection with the area where he grew up. It was through contact with his cousin's friendship group that Alex first came into contact with dance drugs, though he is cautious about using them. It is also apparent that Alex now identifies more closely with the *home group* than with these friends. Alex clearly saw an association between drug use and social background. Below he explains the drug use of his friends from X town as a consequence of their 'mad backgrounds' but he cannot account for the drug use of some of his school friends in the same way. 'I've got a few mates that are into E's and everything else but not that many. It's about twenty of my mates or something that are into it, not many. A load of mates from [X town] do like mad shit, like half my mates from [X town] are a bit fucked up. Like they all come from like mad backgrounds so that's why they do it I s'pose. 'Cos they don't really get taught anything, like I didn't really get taught about drugs that much, but at the end of the day I know not to fucking do mad shit. 'Cos fucking speed totally fuck's you up I know, but I'd rather do that than fucking - 'cos you can't go to a rave and get stoned, 'cos stoned makes you a bit lazy and if you go to a rave and you're dancing, you could get pissed I s'pose but, I think speed to be honest that's why I do that.'

Though he was cautious about using other drugs, Alex had come to the view that the effects of different drugs were appropriate to different contexts and situations. In the context of a rave he thought other drugs were more appropriate than cannabis. 'It's totally different cos you go there to dance, you don't go there to sit down or anything. You go there to fucking buzz off anything and everything - like the MC's that are telling you to fucking go off your head and everything, you go there for that. So that's why I think people do speed and E's and things. I think people who do them on the streets are a bit fucking muppets and everything cos what's the point in going doing it on the street. There's nothing to do on the street, you might as well just fucking smoke a bit of weed and that, just have a bit of a drink, save yourself some fucking hassle - and E's fuck you up more as well so I wouldn't do that shit.'

In contrast rather than his taste in music driving his cannabis use Alex suggested that the context provided by the effects of cannabis moved him to explore new types of music. ‘I’m into all kinds of music, I’m not into just one. Like I’m into Rave music, I’m into Oasis, like Stone Roses and fucking just, y’know Pulp Fiction I’m into and all that shit. I’m into - I know it’s pretty sad - but when you’re caned and that listen to fucking Jazz FM. It’s usually on about half eleven at night and that, you just stick it on the radio and everyone just buzzes off it. It’s just all bass-lines and everything - I’m into bass-lines and that. It’s the same tune but everyone, like hears a different bit out of it and everyone, like, tells each other and then you hear all the different bits and then you buzz off it even more. That’s why we listen to Jazz FM - not much but quite a bit. Stoned and only stoned we listen to that, just sit back and listen to it and it just plays with your head. It depends really what you want, what kind of mood I’m in. I listen to it all the time, I’m into music.’

Alex tried to explain how he could direct his experience through the interaction of cannabis and choice of music. ‘Yeah even if you’re dead chilled out and you listen to some Chemical Brothers when you’re caned it’ll just - it won’t like badly mess you up or anything - it’ll just mess you up and it’s not in a bad way it’s in a good way and it’s top you’re there and you’re just like - you don’t - you’re not tripping or anything, you just sit there and you’re just like yeah this is top this and you just like buzz off everything Chemical Brothers and that it doesn’t it doesn’t really change the effect you’re still caned and everything but you feel different.’

Alex also used different types of music to access particular memories, he found the effects of cannabis are helpful in this respect but also twist the memories. ‘I suppose it’s cos you’re listening to different kinds of music, if you listen to indie when you’re caned it just makes you... it brings back memories of when I listened to fucking indie music and that, I remember [Old town] and [X town] and all that. If I listen to hard-core it just brings back pure memories of raves and stuff. Basically brings back memories but the memories are a bit fucked up because - they still fucking take you off and that - but it’s still good.’

He believed his use of cannabis allowed him to concentrate better on music and heightened his appreciation of it, he explains this congruence of two of his interests in terms of 'fit'. 'To me cannabis fits in with music cos you listen to it and get into it a bit more if you're just normal you're just sat and you're listening to it. You don't pay attention to things that you would when you're caned. Like you pay attention to more bass-lines and everything, like y'pick out more little bits out of it that you buzz off and that, and like you listen to it. Even when after you've picked it out, when you're normal, you can hear it and that so... it just fits in as far as I'm concerned...'

Alex also used cannabis to heighten the experience of films and suggests that using cannabis in this way is different to using it in a purely social context. 'Well if you go out to a film or something get caned before it, if it's a funny film you laugh a lot more, if it's a scary film or something then you just then you shit it a lot more but just on the street and that doesn't make any difference. Just on the street, or in someone's house, it doesn't make any difference because at the end of the day you're all fucked and you're all laughing and things - it doesn't really affect anything.'

Alex along with one or two other members of the group played the guitar, while he did not use cannabis when playing guitar at home on his own, he used small amounts when playing with his friends and on occasion played while very stoned at parties. 'If I'm with my mates who play the guitar and everything, then like get together or something, have a bit of a fucking play, get caned and play some tunes and that. When I play it at home I'm not usually caned. At a party or something, if there's a guitar there then I'll play the guitar when I'm fucked.'

In a further suggestion that he is using cannabis in both a functional way and as a social activity, Alex describes the ways in which he uses cannabis while playing guitar. 'I probably could say I play better guitar when I'm caned because, like I remember I picked up a bass guitar, I started coming out with this mad bass-line when I was fucked and I couldn't play it when I was not fucked.' Alex also liked to draw after he had used cannabis, 'Sometimes I just draw whatever comes into my

head, like when you're caned or something, just draw something mad. Depends how bored I am to be honest. It's mainly something I turn to when I've got fuck all else to do - like when all my mates are out or something. You fuck up a lot more when you're drawing stoned but I reckon it comes out better, cos you're paying attention to more detail, like mad bits in the picture, so I reckon it'd come out better but it'd take you fucking ages to draw it! Y'know what I mean.'

As we have seen Alex no longer identifies with his friends in X town and does not identify with many other students at school, he identifies instead with the group with whom he meets to smoke cannabis where he lives. 'At the end of the day its something to do and we can all do it. We all know people we can get weed off and that. Like I can get served cos I'm a pretty big lad and that but like nearly all them can't get served for beer and that so - it's just fucking what we do, it's what I grew up with like.' In moving to a better off area and sending Alex to a 'posh school' it may be expected that his parents have some aspirations for him. Aspirations which are not entirely congruent with spending his evenings smoking cannabis and failing to achieve at school. 'Fucking my dad'd go fucking apeshit. Cos like my mum knows I smoke and that and she doesn't fucking - me dad caught me smoking and fucking leathered me for it. Me mum knows I smoke but she hates the thought of it and I've never - I'd hate to see my mum if she caught me with weed or anything and I'd feel snide cos y'know what I mean. Like she's dead against it and everything, like when she grew up.....'

Though his teachers consider him to be bright Alex has a rather fatalistic view of academic achievement, in relation to his activity rather than his ability. Alex also appears to see professional careers as beyond his social ambit. 'If you get shit qualifications you're gonna find it so hard to get a job... I know this is an important year, like you could say you wanted to be a fucking pilot or something but at the end of the day it depends what your results are dunnit. So I don't know till I get my results, if I get shit results then I'll get a shit job but if I get good results then I'll do fucking whatever I want.'

Nevertheless, he does think he'll stop smoking cannabis for his GCSEs. 'Yeah when I've got my exams on and shit I probably won't smoke it- I'll probably still do it on the weekends and that but nowhere near every night y'know I'll have to do fucking pure work and everything a won't do it in the week I'll just do it on like Saturday days and nights and that I won't - I'd end up doing what I did last year and just fucking up everything so I need to give it a bit of a rest for my GCSEs and that...'

Alex thought that he would continue to use cannabis after getting a job and a flat but would stop once he was married and had children. 'I'll probably keep on doing it for a very long time, cos at the moment I don't see anything wrong with it, so I'll carry on doing it to be honest. Probably always will do it, like till I'm married and I've got kids and then I'll probably sack it off, when I fucking settle down and everything. Like I'm only fucking fifteen, my life's hardly begun and like when I've got a proper job and everything, I've got money coming in all the time, then I'll be doing it a hell of a lot more. Going out places and stuff like that. I'll probably have a flat or something and my mates'll have a flat. I'll be just going down there all the time and doing it then, or going out to the pub or something and having a few pints and that. Just going round to my mate's flat, or just on the way home just having a spliff or something. So I'll probably carry on doing it, I can see myself doing it for a long time to be honest...'

The hour came to an end and the tape finished with Alex still talking. The rest of the group were congregated around a bench further down two others had joined them. I had intended to interview Spud next, since he seemed to be a central figure in the group's cannabis use. Spud wanted to carry on smoking so introduced me to his friend Gary who had just arrived.

4.3 - Case Study Two: Gary

Gary didn't consider himself much of a smoker compared to the rest of the group. He was sixteen and had left school that year. Gary preferred drink and cigarettes to cannabis and smoked only a small amount when he was hanging around with

friends that smoked it. He had previously been more involved with cannabis but had cut down after being caught smoking cannabis on the way to school - the police had been involved and his parents informed. He was cautious about other drugs and said that he wouldn't hang around with anybody that was using any other drugs. He had not used any other drugs himself and did not intend to. He thought he would probably continue to smoke 'a bit' of cannabis if 'it was about'.

Gary had not enjoyed school and seemed glad to have left it behind him. 'Didn't really like school, it weren't like for me, y'know what I mean. Some lessons - like PE - I did like that.' Sport was it turned out Gary's primary interest, 'Boxing, I box, play football, play snooker, play a lot of snooker', it was the first time I had seen him become fully animated.

Happier, Gary turned, looked down and his expression changed, 'I reckon its wrong really', earnest but a little unsure he continued, 'Well it depends how you use it, like us lot down here no-one ever really gets bothered with nothin' y'know what I mean. Everyone just gets a little bit, but like people higher up and everything you hear about people getting they're legs broke and all that. I don't think it should be legalised me. Like I don't really smoke that much - like probably out of these and that.'

I had been a little surprised that having just arrived and not smoked any cannabis Gary had been keen to come for an interview. I was quite happy with this, having started to worry that the others would be too stoned to interview after an hour of smoking bong. It became clear in the coming weeks that the group started the night with bong and gradually changed to spliffs as the evening wore on. On reflection I think Gary had come out late hoping to avoid the bong and finding them still going was relieved to find an alternative activity.

I was a little concerned that he was not really a regular cannabis user - this fear proved unfounded. He had used in much the same way as the others but something had changed, 'But like what 'appened was like this time last year I used to smoke

a good bit of it. Not a lot like y'know. Then I got caught by the police. So that was it then I just stopped really.... I was just going to school in the morning. Having a spliff and that just as I was walking through this other school. Just walking down the side of the passage and one of the teachers was coming out of the gates and that. Then he just says you're from [Church School] and all that, and next thing I know - he didn't chuck us out or nothin'?

'... just got into school and that but I spruted [sic] to them it was a roll-up. But like, what I did, instead of like keeping it with me and throwing it somewhere else, I threw it on the floor carried on walking down. And then the next minute they're over at the gates before I'm there, and then the teacher just says, "Oh he was smoking sommat I think." They just said right - got in the office, they just said "Was it cannabis?" I said "No." He said, "we know, cos we're just going to tell the police anyway and get this analysed and you'll just be in more trouble.", so I just said "yeah it was." they said "have you got any more", didn't have any more and the police come. Didn't even get a caution. They just said like "don't do it again or you will get like more severe punishment", but I just got a bollocking and that.'

The police had then contacted Gary's parents. 'The police phoned and everything. They gave me a right bollocking and all... I wouldn't go through that again. Me dad's well straight about everything. If anybody does owt wrong it's like he's always going on about it and.'

He thought his parents would be concerned if they knew he was still smoking cannabis. 'I don't think, no they wouldn't like it at all no.' Despite this Gary did not think this had put him off smoking cannabis. 'Oh not really. I reckon everyone does what they want really, long as they don't bother nobody else innit.' Gary went on to suggest why this might be, smoking cannabis was a central activity for most people he knew.

He went back to thinking about the rights and wrongs of cannabis. ‘...every person I know really who comes out around ‘ere, ‘round everywhere smokes weed. So like I don’t know, I mean you get all idiots but I don’t reckon it’s the weed. Like we don’t like y’know the [adjacent suburb] lot. Right? Like we don’t like all them lot. But they’re - like a lot of them are all thieves y’know like. Like us lot ‘ere there’s not one of us whose ever been in trouble, y’know for anything serious. Well no-one has really, no-one’s ever been in trouble, no-one’s ever beaten up anybody, nobody’s ever done owt, y’know what I mean?’

Gary is clearly concerned about the illegality of cannabis and the fact that both he and his friends use it, while engaging in a criminal activity, they are not to their minds criminals, unlike ‘the [adjacent suburb] lot’ who by dint of their wider criminality are criminals. Gary had, outside the interview, used the term ‘wrong-un’ to describe one of a group who had wandered through the patch. This term seems to convey the basics of his thinking, a Manichaean distinction between the criminal and the ‘hard-working honest man’, that is so commonplace it is taken as ‘common sense’ in Gary’s immediate culture. It is a simple and pragmatic system whereby, ‘Everyone does what they want really, long as they don’t bother nobody else innit.’

It is this outlook which leads to his views on the illegality of cannabis. ‘I ‘spose if you legalised it you’d stop all that wouldn’t you, cut the crime down wouldn’t you. Cos like most crime’s drug-related intit really. All the house robberies and all that... I ‘spose that’s other stuff [other forms of drug use] but they shouldn’t really legalise any of that though should they.’ Gary had strong opinions on other forms of drug-use. ‘I think any person that uses anything other than cannabis, I reckon we should just stick ‘em all on an island and let ‘em all inject ‘emselves to death and that, they’ll all die and that.’

Accordingly despite the fact that much of the rest of the group had either used, encountered, or anticipated using other drugs, Gary was either unaware of this, or did not acknowledge it. ‘I wouldn’t have anything to do with anybody who

uses anything else really no way.’ Gary considered this lack of wider criminality as a feature of his friendship groups and as a neighbourhood attribute, ‘No there’s no-one ‘round here like that no you might get some up there but not round ‘ere no.’

At this point Gary gestures again towards a marginally less affluent area. We went on to discuss whether he would continue seeing friends if he knew they were using other drugs. Though his initial reaction was immediate and intuitive, he seemed to need to rationalise it. ‘Yeah it would cos if they’re going to go onto that then they’re going to get in debt cos like that stuff’s ‘sposed to be dear intit or something, really no-one who does that is no good anyway so I wouldn’t bother.’

He had not come into contact with, or been offered any other drugs. ‘No not that I could say no, just weed, that’s all it is really, just weed. I s’pose if you said to one of the dealers you get the weed off, “could you get us this stuff?” they probably could but it’d be like weeks later probably or something like that - I wouldn’t bother with that stuff.’

While Gary enjoyed smoking cannabis with his friends, it is clear that he preferred alcohol. ‘Yeah, I drink yeah, I love drinking - I don’t drink a lot. I drink like on a Saturday, go and play snooker, then go down the pub have a couple of pints and that. I drink at night on the weekend as well so...’ Gary then discussed the conditions which determine whether or not he, as a casual smoker reliant on other people’s buying habits, would be smoking cannabis. ‘Some of these, make a big thing of like Friday night trying to get a ten or something. I don’t really smoke it that often I ‘avent bought it for ages so I just have a bit now and again when I’m out.... It depends really. Like this week now everyone’s probably got weed in and last week was the same but like in the winter you know nobody’s out ‘n’t that, so you don’t really. It’s like on and off, one week we’ll be ‘aving the beer and that, or just the money. It just depends, like at the moment all them there just got a job, they’ll only be working for a month - y’know till they start college - so they’ve got a bit of money so we’ve got a bit in.’

Gary's experience of cannabis, in contrast to that of some of his friends, was clearly more soporific than euphoric. 'Like [on cannabis] all I want to do is just sit down and relax. If you're out at night about seven o'clock and you have a weed and you're really stoned, you really feel like you just want to go home and like watch the telly and like half go to sleep. You don't want to be out messing about playing football and that.' He did however acknowledge the same problems with violence associated with alcohol use as his friends who preferred cannabis. 'Y'know people like get drunk and that, start fighting. I don't think you'll ever hear of no-one doing that from weed at all.'

At face value it seems that Gary's use of cannabis, which started off much like the other members of the group, had been tempered by his experience of getting caught smoking cannabis on his way to school, the subsequent involvement of the police, and his parents reaction to the situation. There was however some indication that his reduction in use was also connected with a change in lifestyle, leading to long hours at work and college and his entry into the 'adult' world of drink. 'Well I'm working all the time now. I'm getting up at six, I'm not getting home till five - that's on weekdays anyway. Friday-night, Saturday-night, Sunday-night, I'm working from nine till twelve pot collecting. So it's really play snooker at weekends, or in the week like this. If we aint on here we'll be up [the park], playing football and that and just do that really.'

While he enjoyed drinking in pubs and joining 'the adult world' he continued to see his friends on the park. There appeared to be a number of reasons for this. He had relatively little money to spend drinking in pubs. He had established long-term friendships with a number of the group (going back perhaps to playing-out as much younger children.) Also, and perhaps more importantly he had established roles and a higher status within the park group than he did in his adult settings.

4.4 - Case Study Three: Spud

Spud was the most engaged with cannabis and the most enthusiastic about it. Though he had only started smoking cannabis a year before, his use had rapidly increased and he now sold cannabis to fund his own use. Having left school the previous summer he was working full time in a Modern Apprenticeship. He smoked cannabis in his lunch hour and after work. He had used LSD once or twice and liked to drink and go to pubs and clubs, but enjoyed cannabis most of all. He thought he would carry on smoking cannabis.

From the evening's outset a number of things had becoming apparent in relation to Spud. Firstly, he considered any time he was not at work to be his stoned-time and it would be quite impossible to interview him unstoned; secondly, Spud was dealing. While Spud had quite sensibly decided that dealing openly in front of me would be inappropriate, I had been aware of a stream of 'customers' throughout the night, some of whom stayed for a short while, others who paid more fleeting visits.

At one point, two lads rode through on a scooter. 'Anyone seen Spud?', The passenger yelled. 'Think he's up there somewhere', came the reply, 'Cheers - later.' They tore off in the direction indicated, overshooting the particular bush and wheeling back around as they saw a head emerge. When Spud eventually assented to interview he was already quite stoned.

We sat on the table of a park bench, feet on the benches, the microphone between us. The noise from the rest of the group subsiding as they took a welcome break from the 'master bongman'. Spud was better dressed than the rest of the group, fashionable in a teenage, adapted sportswear kind of a way. He was however short and skinny with the kind of gawky teenage features that had not quite grown into themselves. Though a little cocky, perhaps even domineering within the group, this seeming confidence turned out to be a thin veneer, a fact I think not lost on his friends.

Spud was at the start of the interview noticeably stoned and responded only in short sentences. As the interview went on however he became increasingly voluble. 'Err, I smoke it a lot.... Every day, all the time, every day.' He savoured this phrase, repeating it, 'Every day, all the time, every day.' He considered that he smoked more than most of his friends. 'Yeah I probably smoke more don't I. Yeah I smoke more.'

When I first ask who he smokes cannabis with he says, 'Everyone, everywhere.' he grins, revelling in the phrase, its inclusiveness and the rhythm of the words, repeating them. 'Everyone, everywhere.' At this point one of Spud's numerous acolytes appears out of the gathering darkness. 'Cos he buy and sells weed you see so.', Spud replies, 'Erm mainly these lot though smoke it with these don't I?'

Spud considered he had ten to twenty people he regularly smoked cannabis with and sold to but the present group were the only coherent group and his main friends. 'Just about ten, no I've got about twenty - everyone down that end, but they don't always stay together everyone, it's a bigger group.' Spud had a clear preference for cannabis over alcohol. 'I know, it's just better, I mean if you were going out it can really harm your health if you're drinking and shit. If you're smoking weed, if you've got backy in and that it could give you lung cancer, but if you're smoking pure weed it's like proven, it widens your lungs, makes you healthier.'

Spud caught himself, 'Just I think it's healthier than drinking, healthier than smoking as well, cos you don't really get addicted to it.' he clarified. 'You're addicted to weed.', the acolyte announces his reappearance. 'No!', Spud replies emphatically. 'Bullshit', says the acolyte. Realising Spud is being serious, the acolyte renegotiates his position, 'It's not addicted if you wanted to stop you could stop.' Spud capitulates, 'No, I know it's a lot easier to stop than say smoking but...', disagreement averted they both relax a little, 'Or drinking a hundred times - it depends how the day goes innit. If you've had a really shit day at work, you want a weed. You just want a joint to stay awake.' Spud, having played his master bongman card, had changed his mind and decided on a different tack when the acolyte had tried to bolster the role.

As the acolytes drifted away again Spud started explaining what he liked about cannabis. 'It's more to calm down than anything. It just relaxes you and you're in a good sense of mind really - you feel good.' Spud had initially, until we got started talking about cannabis, spoken slowly, a little despondently, as we turned to the topic of cannabis he became more animated, his responses became longer. We moved on to the topic of bongs and buckets. 'Yeah buckets are a lot worse, you get fucked - s'different. If you're smoking weed through fucking spliffs and shit it's just to keep you calm, but y'know if you're having buckets you're getting wrecked. I mean if you want to get wrecked, you'll have a bucket. I mean you come out at night to get wrecked, so you just have buckets and shit. But I mean just having a relax, you have a spliff.'

As well as using different ways of smoking cannabis to achieve different effects, Spud also used different types of cannabis for this reason. He started by trying to describe what it feels like to get 'wrecked' and the differences between types of cannabis, 'Ah you're fucked, you just feel so mad, it's shit, you're sick. Or if you're smoking black and shit it's more for when you want to go to sleep. Black, just gets you caned, so you want to just go to sleep. Sputnik's more like to get you wrecked, but bush is to calm you down right. Skunk that's the best.' Trying again to help me understand what he meant, he related it to alcohol, 'Its like getting really pissed but you've not got some of the effects that - you don't feel like you're going to be sick or anything - it's *mad*.'

Spud and the group had access to different types of cannabis including skunk, resin and bush but were largely dependent on what was available. 'Depends what's going around cos sometimes it's hard to get hold of certain things I mean at the same time cos it's from different people.'

Asked what he would like if he could get any kind of cannabis Spud had a clear preference for skunk but felt there were some benefits to resin. 'Skunk! a load of it! - I don't know, it sort of depends really, cos smoking skunk it don't get you the same sort of high it's a different high. I mean you really are fucked then, I mean

you have one spliff an' you're gone but with normal shit you need to get like a ten or something to get pretty stoned. If you want to get wrecked you want about half ounce.'

Spud had left school a few months before the interview and was generally enthusiastic about work, he liked getting paid and saw it as no barrier to his cannabis smoking although he felt that his use had 'levelled off now'. 'Yeah modern apprenticeship, so they'll keep me on. Good pay and everything but I think it'd be better having a job than having to - you have no worries, you have no worries about buying a weed, about buying a beer, whatever, doing stuff, getting clothes and shit.'

Spud felt his dealing had widened his social circle and that in selling cannabis to people he had learnt to accommodate and socialise with people that he would not have previously. 'Yeah it gets around the people that you used to think were all nob heads yeah, you don't want to see any of them, you start to get to know them and they're all all-right. Everyone's the same if you get to a certain level of your dealing.'

In selling cannabis Spud sold mostly to other lads. 'Yeah mostly lads - not many girls who buy it. I mean they smoke it but they don't buy it.' His dealing had given him access to criminal networks, which on one level he romanticises, 'They do everything, most of them get all chipped in cos they all know all the dodgy people, everything dodgy's from them. It's the black market isn't it, they get all the fucking dodgy clothes and dodgy cars and everything. If you wanted anything you could get it off them, at the end of the day they'll get you anything.'

Another side to his position as the group's main dealer was access to other drugs, including cocaine. '...they've offered it, but I just say nah I'm not into it mate. They go all right safe, they're not particularly arsed. If they really wanted to they'd make you sniff it and make you addicted but I mean but they're not like that. They're not that style. It's another line of business for them, they're not bothered. I mean if you don't take it, you don't take it, it's no skin off their back.' Spud reiterated that drugs were just one aspect of the black market, fencing and other criminal activities for

the people he bought from, 'The person who I get my main stuff off like I've got a sort of a middle man but I mean it's like I know him and stuff, he don't even smoke the stuff, he just does it and he's got cars and everything.'

Spud had an interesting perspective on cannabis and wider criminality, considering that cannabis dealing could lead to wider and riskier criminality. 'The only thing is it's illegal. I'd say most you wouldn't get as many prisons as crowded cos you wouldn't need to have dealers and people would stop robbing stuff for shit... Erm it'd just calm it down cos I mean a lot of it, a lot of robbing. I know this for a fact - you may say "Ah yeah no-one robs to get their weed" but I've known people who've had a lot of weed robbed off 'em. They've stashed it and they've had like about three kilos robbed and they've had to get the money or they'd get shot 'n' they've done it. They always get the money, they've got big scams.'

While Spud obviously enjoyed dealing cannabis to his friends he was very aware of the risks of moving higher up the food chain and had decided to avoid this. Although he was enthusiastic about his cannabis use and had no intention of stopping, work had 'levelled off' his use and meant that he no longer saw much of his friends who used more heavily. By the time we had finished the interview most of the group had drifted off. Two of Spud's friends had waited for him though and as he wandered away they joined him leaving a final group of three lads lounging over a picnic table passing a spliff around and looking up at the clouds as the sun slowly set. There were some new faces here though I recognised Paul from the bong smoking in the clearing earlier. I asked if he had time to do an interview for an hour before he went in. He did, so leaving his friends we made our way to an adjacent bench and began.

4.5 - Case Summaries

The case summaries below provide a snapshot of respondents from across the three cohorts. Summaries for the above case studies are included to illustrate the relationship between the case studies and case summaries. These include brief descriptions, key attributes from the interview and their relation to the typology (detailed on p 133).

4.5.1 - Case Summaries Home Group (1998)

Interviews were carried out in the summer of 1998, snowballed from two initial contacts they took place in the parks and green spaces where the users met to smoke cannabis. In return for their time the respondents were each given a £10 music voucher. Carrying out the interviews in the areas where the groups met to smoke cannabis allowed for primary observation of their contexts of use. All respondents were males. All of the group were white British, lower-middle and working class.

4.5.1 a) Alex

Alex was tall, well built and looked a little older and more confident than some of the others. He doesn't look particularly stoned. He plays rugby, boxes and likes listening to music, he plays a bit of guitar and likes to draw. He grew up with an extended family in a less affluent part of the city and won a place at grammar school before moving to the area. He feels he doesn't fit in at school. He first smoked cannabis aged ten with his cousin but was twelve or thirteen before he started smoking cannabis more regularly. He drinks occasionally and more recently has used speed at rave nights a couple of times. He thinks he'll probably carry on using cannabis when he's older but intends to cut down over the next year for his GCSEs. He has not been doing well at school recently, he's not too sure what he wants to do after his GCSEs, the outcome of which he views with a degree of fatalism. He works occasionally as an apprentice mechanic with his brother-in-law and he sees this as a fallback position if he does not achieve academically. Alex used both socially and operationally, the characteristics and his understandings of the meanings of his use was indicative of a type 2 - 'sophisticate' model of use.

4.5.1 b) Gary

Gary didn't consider himself much of a smoker compared to the rest of the group. He had finished school - which he hadn't enjoyed (except for PE) - and was starting a bricklaying course. Gary preferred alcohol and cigarettes to cannabis and smoked only a small amount when he was hanging around with friends that smoked it. He had previously been more involved with cannabis but had cut down after being caught smoking cannabis on the way to school, the police had been involved and his parents informed. He thought he would continue to smoke 'a bit' of cannabis if 'it was about' (i.e. his friends had some) but had not used any other drugs and did not intend to. He was cautious about other drugs and said that he wouldn't hang around with anybody that was using any other drugs. Gary had not enjoyed school and seemed glad to have left it behind, this did not appear to be a lack of aspiration, rather that Gary had found his place in life and was happy and confident with where his life was going. Gary's use suggests that he may at one time have been a type 1 user, however his current use is characteristic of type 3, ambivalent social use.

4.5.1 c) Spud

Spud was the most engaged with cannabis and the most enthusiastic about it. Though he had only started smoking cannabis a year before, his use had rapidly increased and he now sold cannabis to fund his own use. Having left school the previous summer he was working full time in a 'Modern Apprenticeship'. He smoked cannabis in his lunch hour and after work. He had used LSD once or twice but was not as enthusiastic about this as he was about cannabis. He did like to drink and go to pubs and clubs but enjoyed cannabis most of all. He thought he would carry on smoking cannabis. His enthusiasm for cannabis, his understanding of the aims of his cannabis use, when possible to get as high as possible and the number of contexts in which he used are characteristic of type 1 use - 'stoner'

4.5.1 d) Paul

Paul was the oldest in the group at 19. He'd been smoking cannabis for about three years. Living with his parents he mostly smoked cannabis at a friends house, some nights he would go to the pub but if both those were out, he would hang around on the fields with the younger group. He was waiting for compensation from an industrial accident that happened when he had been working in a fast-food restaurant. He had since found another job. His use was broadly consistent with type 1 use, he used as much and as often as possible, primarily for social reasons. However, aspects of his use point towards the development of type 2 characteristics. While he does not use cannabis functionally in creative pursuits, he is interested in tailoring effects to the situation and using cannabis in the appreciation of cultural products. Some of this increasing sophistication in his cannabis use appeared to relate to exposure to a greater repertoire of psychoactive substances in a nightclub context. This may give an indication of the movement from teenage friendship group styles and understandings of use to a 'young adult' phase involving understanding and using cannabis as part of a wider repertoire in mixed-sex groups in wider networks.

4.5.1 e) Sam

Sam had been smoking cannabis for three or four years. He had left school the previous year and his use had increased with his income. He thought his job was good but didn't enjoy it as much as when he first started, feeling that it was inevitable that he would get fed up with it. He came onto the fields mostly to see his friends. He had previously smoked with school friends but didn't see much of them since they had started work. He had started using amphetamines at a dance music night, a few of his friends used ecstasy and LSD. He enjoyed cannabis more than alcohol but did drink with friends in pubs at the weekend. His use was a less extreme example of type 1 use, than that provided by Spud. Cannabis was his favourite drug, and using cannabis his favourite pastime. Though he had a passing interest in dance music he did not connect this with his cannabis use. While he had more conservative rules about use than Spud and favoured smaller groups he was the most committed and enthusiastic user in these groups.

4.5.1f) Dave

Dave was part of a smaller peripheral group which coalesced around Sam, who met on fields close to the first interview site. Though this group intersected with the main group and occasionally sourced cannabis from Spud, Sam did most of the buying for this group through alternative contacts. Dave had started smoking cannabis with friends the previous summer. He was a keen football player and had previously avoided both cigarettes and cannabis because of fears of their impact on his fitness. The previous summer he had been injured and had taken to hanging around on the fields smoking to fill the time. He had started playing football again at a less competitive club and thought he should now cut down. He intended to enrol at college and go to University, partly for the job prospects, 'accounts or something' and partly because he thought he'd have a good time there. Furnished with a false ID he had recently started going drinking in pubs and clubs, though not very often since he didn't have much money. He spent his mornings in bed, afternoons on the park playing football or basketball. Dave was a type 3 user, he used socially to fill time and was largely ambivalent about the effects of cannabis. To an extent it seemed he had failed to sufficiently 'learn' the effects. He was most enthusiastic when accounting losing control over use and experiencing unexpected effects though he had little enthusiasm for repeating these experiences. Dave was the interviewee who most closely resembled accounts of 'experimenting' with cannabis. He appeared to fulfil the majority of his social needs through playing football, though it also seemed that small cannabis smoking group fulfilled some introspective needs which were not met so well in this context.

4.5.1g) Pete

Pete was fifteen at the time of interview and would be starting his final year at school after the summer holidays. Skinny and slightly studious looking, Pete intended to do A-levels at school and was considering a career in Physiotherapy after university. He was the youngest of three, his two elder sisters had completed university and held professional jobs. He had used cannabis and amphetamine with one sister - she had framed this as being a safe place for him to experiment. He had not enjoyed the amphetamine and decided it was the wrong context, it might

have been better in a club situation. A type 3 user Dave enjoyed smoking cannabis to relax but considered he used much more in larger groups and with particular people. Unlike other type 3 users he brought a degree of sophistication to his use which appeared to come from his sisters' understandings. He had initially smoked cigarettes but now smoked only cannabis. Pete was concerned to keep his cannabis use away from school and his parents. He was keen on sport including running and athletics and had competed at a reasonably high level before deciding the commitment required in competitive sport was too high.

4.5.2 - Case Summaries School Group (2003)

The *school group* were identified during focus groups carried out in one Manchester school as a part of the follow up phase of the 5-year longitudinal study of drug use in schools in and around Greater Manchester (Roy et al., 2005). The interviews took place in private offices in the school, during school hours. The respondents were not in this instance recompensed for their time. While the first cohort was made up of an extended group of acquaintances who used a particular location the second group came from a radius of up to six miles from the school and from wider socioeconomic circumstances (this was an impression gathered from the data - demographic information to support this was not routinely collected). Data collection in this context (and the previous focus groups) allowed for primary observation of the school context which along with the cannabis using group is the primary peer group context for most of the sample.

4.5.2 a) Phil

Phil first smoked cannabis with friends when he was thirteen. Fifteen at the time of interview he had continued to smoke cannabis with this same group. He had not smoked cigarettes before. He smoked with his friends most nights. They sometimes smoked at home where they enjoyed listening to rap music, but liked to listen to jungle when they got very stoned. On week nights he split a 'twenty bag' of skunk with four friends. At the weekend depending on how much money they had would smoke half an ounce to an ounce in one evening between the four friends. He enjoyed playing football and often got stoned before training. Unlike the first group

who considered alcohol to be more expensive than cannabis Phil (again unlike the first group) usually only smoked the more expensive skunk. Phil was a type 1 user, he reported that his group were characteristically committed users.

4.5.2 b) Mike

Mike was the youngest of three brothers and though he had started smoking cannabis with friends now also smoked with his brothers. He enjoyed cannabis and thought that it helped him to experience the mundane with fresh eyes, allowing him to experience over-exposed parts of popular culture without preconceptions. He also believed cannabis use had made him more outgoing. He was more engaged in the adult world than most, through his two older brothers and a Saturday job in the city centre. This cosmopolitanism occasionally put him in difficult situations with older drug users using drugs that he was not comfortable with around him. He found that in following his brothers lead he had adopted successful strategies for negotiating these experiences. He recognised both a functional and recreational aspect to his own drug use and drew and wrote poetry while stoned. Though he had used cannabis with his girlfriend he mostly used with friends. A type 2 user he used cannabis extensively in his social groups and enjoyed writing poetry and drawing after smoking cannabis.

4.5.2 c) Tyrell

Tyrell came from a Jamaican family and had grown up in a less affluent part of the area. He enjoyed rapping and playing music, he was a committed cannabis user and he used it regularly in his music making, often with friends. He also used cannabis socially. Tyrell thought the quantities that some of his school friends used were excessive, suggesting 'I smoke just to get high. Not to get wasted like some fools in school.' Unlike most of the respondents Tyrell did not pool his money with others to buy cannabis he felt this allowed him better control of his use, using his own personal rules around use rather than conforming to the rules and norms of the group. He shared his cannabis only occasionally with close friends. Tyrell was a

type 2 user, most of his group were type 3 users, it seemed that he only used occasionally with type 1s. A close friend of Marvin, Tyrell did not however seem to be aware that Marvin had been paranoid smoking cannabis.

4.5.2 d) Marvin

Marvin had been in an 'incident' at lunchtime, immediately before the interview, and was quieter and more withdrawn than he had been during the focus group. It appeared to be a brawl possibly with a race element. He decided however that he would like to go ahead with the interview. Marvin came from an Afro-Caribbean family. His parents were both professionals and had done well out of education, Marvin was not however particularly academic. He had problems both at home and at school. He usually smoked cannabis with Tyrell, unlike Tyrell he did not play music, he was just 'into lyrics, just writing lyrics and stuff'. With Tyrell and his other friends they would 'rap over the beat, just instrumentals and stuff - with a microphone - but the lyrics aren't rubbish, they're alright - just write them down'. Cannabis, music and the more relaxed atmosphere around Tyrell's family appeared to give him a much needed break and an opportunity to relax. Nevertheless he had experienced negative side effects including anxiety and paranoia and was cautious about cannabis use. While he smoked cannabis in a type 2 setting Marvin was distinctive as a reluctant type 3 user, he used because of the social situation but appeared to get little positive from the direct effects of cannabis.

4.5.2 e) Gavin

Gavin was part of a large group who met in local parks and green spaces. He looked slightly older than some and was able to drink in pubs but found they were too expensive. Gavin smoked cannabis but did not smoke cigarettes. He preferred to buy in large quantities which he kept at home and portioned up before he took it out. He often 'sorted out' friends but was worried about the legal status of doing this and was concerned about 'becoming like a dealer'. Gavin was concerned about his school results and limited employment opportunities. He raised the prohibitive cost of motoring as an example of how his age group were disenfranchised

and that this could lead people into criminality. This seemed to also relate to his concerns over 'sorting' out mates with cannabis. Gavin's parents knew about his cannabis use and accepted it but did not like him having cannabis in the house. He had smoked cannabis in school time before but now avoided it. He thought his year group had a particularly bad reputation for cannabis use and bad behaviour at school. Gavin reported his group had regular low level encounters with the police, who routinely moved them on. He thought that the legal status of cannabis and alcohol gave the police an excuse to persecute his age-group. Gavin was a type 1 user with a particularly social focus though he seemed to be developing a tendency toward type 2 use.

4.5.2f) Andy

Andy had started using cannabis in the previous summer holidays, at age fifteen. Living several miles from the school, he smoked with two main groups, school-friends and a group of six friends from home, mostly at each others houses. He thought that some parents didn't like this but that others 'aren't bothered'. The friends put money in to buy an ounce of sputnik a week of which Andy thought he smoked about a quarter. This was mostly smoked through bongs 'a big tall one - got it from Dr Hermans', which he thought was 'better cos I don't think spliffs get you stoned, bongs more harsh.' While stoned he liked to watch films, listen to music, watch football and play computer games. He played for a local football team once a week, often getting stoned before training. Andy was a curious mix of type 1 and type 3 user. While he was highly committed his use was naive and it was not clear that he had the social skills to take the type 1 position at the centre of the cannabis smoking group.

4.5.3 - Case Summaries Late Twenties Reflectors (2004)

The group chosen were all members of an extended social group which had socialised and used cannabis together in their teens. Still in contact the group had nevertheless gone in quite different directions in the coming years. Some were still using cannabis and other drugs on a regular, or occasional basis, while others used much less frequently or had stopped completely. Snowballed from the researcher's

existing social network they were interviewed at the home of the author. The data was collected during the author's MSc work (Lamb, 2004). The analysis emphasised the diversity of impacts on the sense of identity and the fluid place that cannabis and other drugs use may take in life narratives. It stressed the contextual and fluid nature of the narratives people use to describe themselves and the influences on their lives. The group were predominantly white British, Zeberdie came from a South Asian family.

4.5.3 a) Brian

Brian was a type 2 user in his teens, he used cannabis in playing and listening to music. Though he did not use cannabis regularly any more, he continued to enjoy and value its effects. He believed that cannabis use had in some ways made him the person he was. He continued to have a cosmopolitan cultural outlook which he believed had been in part fostered by his use of cannabis and other drugs. He had in his early twenties used dance drugs extensively. Though he thought he would enjoy using dance drugs again he found they were no longer relevant to the situations he found himself in. He continued to be open about much of his past use with family, and friends, though he made a judgement call about revealing past use to work colleagues.

4.5.3 b) Dougal

Dougal had been a type 3 user throughout his teens, he relied on others to supply cannabis and it took him time to master the technique of making joints. He moved toward type 1 use in his twenties though combined this with an increased interest in cultural participation through dance drugs. This confirms that the typology is limited when describing older users with larger drugs using repertoires. It may also suggest that type 2 characteristics can develop over time as cannabis becomes a routine part of life. However, Dougal's cultural interests remained stereotypical focusing on mainstream drugs cultures and lacked the cosmopolitanism that characterised type 2 users active, creative engagement with culture. Dougal continued

to use cannabis on a regular basis finding that the openness in use which he had as an older teenager had to be tempered and he was careful to conceal his use from family and work colleagues.

4.5.3 c) Dylan

Dylan was a type 2 user in his teens and continued with this pattern of use. He had used and experimented with a wide variety of common and more exotic drugs. Socially awkward in his early teens he felt cannabis had opened up new social worlds to him while at college. He drank little and considered cannabis as a mainstay. Working in the music industry in his early twenties he was involved in the dance music scene and regularly smoked cannabis instrumentally at work. He felt able to moderate his use but continued to use regularly across social situations and in making and listening to music. He found that many in his social networks (configured mostly around music) continued to use cannabis and other drugs both instrumentally and socially.

4.5.3 d) Zeberdie

Zeberdie had been a type 3 user in his teens. Slightly younger than the rest of the group he was very outgoing and had gone on to use a wide variety of drugs across his many social networks. He was not particularly committed to any one drug but used whatever was around with the people he was spending time with. Zeberdie was an example of a type 3 user who while highly engaged in cannabis use had limited commitment. The actual effects of any drug appeared secondary to the activity of socialising. He continued to use a variety of drugs but felt that they could be accommodated within his work and lifestyle.

4.5.3 e) Rusty

Initially a type 3 user Rusty had quickly become a type 1 user buying cannabis to supply the group and later others. Highly committed, regularly using large quantities of cannabis he went on to deal cannabis on a wider scale for a number of years. He recognised the social position this gave him and believed that many

aspects fitted with his natural inclinations and talents. He had ceased cannabis use abruptly when he had briefly joined the army, after which he went through a period of high anxiety and paranoia. He was now unable to smoke cannabis without feeling unwell. Growing up his father had alcohol problems and some of his concern lay in drawing parallels with his father's problems. He did however continue to drink alcohol.

5: Findings and Interpretation

The case studies provided a picture of the lives and opinions of three of the teenagers and the place of cannabis in their daily routines. The findings and interpretations presented in this chapter are based on observations and interpretations which were extant or could be built from the primary data. These findings explore and interpret what the data says about these questions. The discussion chapter then develops the concepts and examines the ways in which these concepts relate to existing concepts around drugs and identity in the literature.

The three cases reported above were the first three interviews conducted, presented chronologically. The many other cases were all interesting and any three could have been chosen. The first three cases happen to be strangely representative, firstly, in that they point up the diversity of the group. More importantly, the cases provide examples of the three particular types of user that were apparent across the analysis of all three cohorts. These differences relate to different degrees of commitment to, and involvement with cannabis, styles and understandings of use. In this typology Spud is a type 1, or 'stoner', Alex type 2, or 'sophisticate', and Gary type 3, a 'social smoker'. The case summaries provide further examples, their relationship to the typology is summarised below (Table 2, p 136).

For all three types, participation in the group appeared to provide an important social environment, some characteristics of which were not otherwise available to them, or did not serve their purposes or needs as well. This raises a number of questions: Firstly, why cannabis? Secondly and perhaps an important clue, why are these groups almost exclusively male? Do they fulfil a need which is exclusive to male teenagers, or only to some male teenagers? Is this group providing a developmental need, is it incidental, or circumstantial? If it is fulfilling social developmental needs, how are these needs fulfilled in groups or individuals who do not use cannabis? Finally, if cannabis is fulfilling a developmental need is this limited to adolescence? What then are the potential implications for individuals' future use of cannabis, or of other drugs?

5.1 - Stoners, Sophisticates and Social Users

Spud, type 1, was the most committed to cannabis at the time of interview. Using, procuring and trading cannabis formed a major part of his daily activities both at home and at work. This level of involvement meant that cannabis played an important part in many of his social roles, relationships and networks, the way he presented himself and the activities he engaged in socially. He derived enjoyment from the effects of cannabis but this appeared secondary to the roles, relationships and networks which his use and dealing created, maintained and facilitated. Dealing cannabis provided him with a ready supply of 'personal' ('spare' cannabis paid for through his dealing activities) to share with his friends, and he was socially in demand to sell small amounts in his larger networks. Buying cannabis provided him with access to older and adult social networks. Selling cannabis maintained his connections to his peers and to younger networks. Under the surface Spud appeared a little socially awkward and the roles developed through dealing cannabis seemed to provide an important source of confidence and a demonstration of his social competence. This appeared to be in part proving social competencies to himself and in part in displaying them to others. Cannabis provided Spud with a way of understanding and projecting his social status and he displayed his involvement as a symbol of his competencies and status.

Being 'the kind of person who likes a smoke' was part of Spud's social display, and it acted as a container for his values and self-beliefs. These values informed and were informed by the social rules, assumptions and understandings which developed around cannabis use; being 'easy going', 'relaxed', 'a good laugh', 'trustworthy', 'capable', 'a good mate', and so on. Some of these rules and understandings were shared within and beyond the group, others were contested. The negotiation of these rules and understandings within the group revealed hierarchies, divisions and factions. These rules and understandings were involved in bounding the way that the group used cannabis, the meanings they brought to their use and had consequences for the formation of the group. Spud did use cannabis in a functional way,

but this (in contrast to type 2 users) was mostly confined to enjoying the direct effects and helping time pass more quickly at work - his main reason for use was social.

Alex, type 2, though he enjoyed cannabis, was a little less committed and enthusiastic than Spud. However, as well as using cannabis socially, he used cannabis functionally in a much greater variety of ways; he used it to pass time when he was bored, to make films more interesting, to make new types of music more accessible, in drawing and in making music. Cannabis was not essential to any of these secondary functions but he believed it enhanced his experience of them. While Spud's networks revolved around cannabis use, for Alex they were a secondary feature of the relationships and networks around his wider activities. Correspondingly, cannabis formed an aspect of the way he presented himself but as it related to his sport, art, music and culture. Alex bought some cannabis from Spud but also bought from other sources and he derived a degree of status from his ability to navigate and maintain these networks. Alex smoked smaller quantities of cannabis than Spud and more spliffs, as opposed to bongos. Cannabis was nevertheless a central feature and the central activity of the social group on the park he spent most of his time with. Alex shared many of the values and associations about cannabis that Spud did, however he had another layer of cultural associations with use around his other activities.

Gary, type 3, was at the time of interview the least committed, though he had in the past been more involved. Part of the reason for his increasing detachment from cannabis use, he explained through his experience of having been caught smoking at school. However, it also appeared to relate to his growing involvement in pub culture. Gary now rarely bought his own cannabis and smoked it 'when it's about', a shared activity with the social group, but said he would not go out of his way to smoke it, or procure it. While the others were more likely to buy their own cannabis, Gary usually put cigarettes, alcohol, or a little money into the group buy. While he had in the past smoked cannabis to make time pass more quickly at school (he did not enjoy school), he no longer used cannabis in any functional way.

Using cannabis had become solely a social activity, something he happened to do with a group of established friends. Gary used significantly less cannabis than the other two and on the whole preferred alcohol. He no longer particularly enjoyed the effects of cannabis and used strategies to moderate his use while with the group. Alex and Spud both used 'being a cannabis smoker' to make new friends, seeing it as positive and congruent with their values, while Gary concealed his use in other networks. Gary's values were less consistent with those of the rest of the group, though he assumed that most of them were shared with the group, and he was keen to press commonalities with the group and differences to other 'criminal' groups. Gary's understandings about cannabis appeared to be reverting towards his fathers 'working class' values and seemed also to reflect a growing identification with the values of the pub culture where he drank and played snooker. However, Gary had little status in these adult settings and still valued the friendships, and the more equal footing he had in his relationships with the smoking group.

The typology of commitment then involves a number of dimensions, which are outlined in Table 2, and discussed further below. The type 1 user, or stoner, is highly committed to cannabis use and it forms an important part of the way they live their day to day lives, the people they come into contact with, and is a preferred way they present themselves to others. Cannabis use provides a symbol to others and to themselves of the kind of person they are. This is not to say that 'being a cannabis user' is central to their identity, but rather that it acts as a convenient container, a proxy through which they display aspects of themselves and their values. The social roles which they play in relation to cannabis provide them with their main opportunity to display aspects of themselves from which they derive value and status. While they might also use cannabis for functional reasons the social aspects of use are thus the most important to them. Their display of connoisseurship involves demonstrating knowledge and capability in the most effective routes of administration to maximise the effects and the capacity to use a greater quantity than their peers. This capacity is demonstrated through their social display of how much they enjoy the experience of taking the drug and its effects and the ability to maintain their display of competence under the effects of these large quantities of cannabis. The type 1 user therefore requires less committed

users in order to demonstrate their greater commitment and competence. Their continued commitment is contingent on continuing to derive status and value from these displays and a perception of being valued in the social relationships which their use creates, facilitates and maintains.

	Type 1: 'stoners'	Type 2: 'sophisticates'	Type 3: 'social users'
Commitment	highest	most contingent	lowest
Identity	cannabis central to social performance in many contexts	cannabis consistent with valued identities, activities	don't self-identify beyond as badge of group membership
Social Networks	valued networks based on cannabis use and wider networks associated with dealing	networks focused on cannabis and on wider activities	cannabis only a feature of cannabis using friendship group
Trajectory	difficult to maintain level of commitment - likely to move to type 2, or 3, or to suspend use, most likely to experience difficulties when stopping	most likely to continue to use - appreciation of context and control over use - most likely candidates for gateway to polydrug use	most likely to suspend use, avoid using too much, suffer from 'whitey' - could move to type 1, or type 2 use but appears unusual
Function/ Instrumentality	use cannabis to construct their social self and self-value	use cannabis socially and in valued activities	use cannabis solely as a social activity
Cases	<i>Spud</i> , Rusty, Paul, Sam, Phil, Gavin, (Andy), Rusty	<i>Alex</i> , Tyrell, Mike, Brian, Dylan	<i>Gary</i> , Dave, Pete, Marvin, Dougal, Zeberdie

Table 2: Typology of Commitment

The type 2 user, sophisticate, while they may most often use cannabis in the same social settings and groups as the other types have a greater functional orientation to use. They derive a greater range of benefits from the direct and indirect effects of cannabis in their wider activities. Unlike the type 1 user, for the type 2 user connoisseurship involves not the ability to consume the greatest quantity of

cannabis, in a way which maximises its effects, but rather the ability to control and direct the effects of cannabis via the quantity smoked and the route of administration, in order to maximise their enjoyment of the effects and the fit between the effects and their activity. Their use and understandings are then perhaps the most sophisticated of the three types. They value this sophistication and see this as being a 'grown up' and 'responsible' orientation to use. For type 2s their display of their use of cannabis is part of a wider cultural repertoire. These cultural understandings and associations are nascent and in many ways naive but cannabis use influences the way they interact with culture and cultural products. They understand their wider activities as influenced by cannabis use but not contingent on cannabis use. They share many of the same values as the type 1 user and may have a more active part in constructing, negotiating and maintaining these values within the group. They value the type 1 user for the opportunity they provide to cut loose and 'over-do-it' a bit and as a foil to their more sophisticated understandings.

Type 3, or social users value the friendships and activities which grow up around the use of cannabis but enjoy the direct effects of cannabis less. They appear to smoke cannabis as an incidental activity of the social groups and settings which happen to be available to them. Some continued to use cannabis despite having regularly experienced unpleasant effects. Marvin (p 127) reported continuing to use cannabis functionally with friends while writing rap music despite having regularly experienced negative effects. The greater reports of negative effects could well be related to the greater tolerance of the other users who used more cannabis, more often. If they attempted to 'keep up with' the more committed users they would inevitably consume too much cannabis and be unable to control the effects resulting in anxiety, paranoia, or a 'whitey'. The social group and activity of cannabis smoking nevertheless provided them with an important social context which did not appear to be available to them elsewhere.

It can be seen that these three types are not entirely distinct, there is some overlap and there can be a movement between types of use. The functional dimension (see p 206) in type 2 users makes them in some ways different to the other two groups.

Cannabis use did not appear to make those who were not initially interested in creative pursuits, or in learning about creative cultural products, more interested or more involved in them. For those with an initial interest their use of cannabis added to their experience. The involvement of type 2 users in the cannabis smoking group provided some validation of the activity of using cannabis to the other types of users who were not actively engaged with them. Some of the cannabis smoking groups participated in by the *school group* appeared to have no type 2 users and involved only type 1 and type 3. Type 2 users also reported smoking cannabis in groups which predominantly included type 2 users. In this case there could be a variation in commitment to use similar to the type 1 to type 3 spectrum. However, the type 2 users interviewed all also participated in wider groups whose function was primarily social and included type 1 and type 3 users.

There is also a degree to which the typology is relative. It is possible for instance that somebody who is a type 1, in a less experienced group may also be a type 3 when they are smoking with a different group who are more experienced. However, their existing understanding of the social value of being a type 1 may then prompt them to increase their use and tolerance to fit with the norms of this alternate group. Type 2 users are not beyond enjoying the ‘game’ of displaying the ability to consume in quantity and their actual use if they smoke regularly in this context may be closer to a type 1 user. Group composition, social attachment to the group or to other members in the group are then important dimensions in understanding an individual’s cannabis use, and the way their use fits into that of the group; as is the overall level of commitment within the group and the activities they engage in while smoking cannabis.

One might wonder why these different types of users with different interests in cannabis choose to use together when their immediate interests might seem better served by smoking cannabis with others closer to their own type, or for type 3 users, finding alternatives which better suite their interests. There appeared to be a symbiosis in the roles available to these different types within the group. Type 1 users needed less experienced users for their display to make sense. The wider

cultural associations and interests of type 2 users provided a social licence to the activity of smoking cannabis, validating, normalising and bringing meaning to the activity. Type 3 users consumed cannabis primarily in order to fully participate socially in the group which provided them with roles and activities which they were otherwise lacking.

5.2 - Why Cannabis?

Respondents of all three types were unanimous in relating their primary motivation for cannabis use was as a social facilitator. They explained this as ‘it’s just something to do innit’, what they meant by this was that it provided an activity which made the limited contexts available to them (hanging around in parks and green spaces) more interesting. The effects of cannabis were reported as relaxing, providing a release from day-to-day concerns and putting them in a state of mind conducive to socialising. Understandings that behaviour while stoned was affected by a psychoactive substance provided an excuse for acting in ways and saying things which might otherwise be perceived as inappropriate, providing a further opportunity to cut loose.

The choice to smoke cannabis was for all types, a conscious preference for cannabis over alcohol. Type 3s often preferred alcohol but used cannabis for both pragmatic and social reasons, or just because ‘its something a bit different isn’t it, than drinking’. Cannabis was usually used on its own, sometimes in conjunction with other illicit drugs, but most often with alcohol and cigarettes. While direct experience of other illicit drugs was limited, mostly to experimental or one off use by the older members, many had come into wider social contact with other drugs. This might be through an awareness of friend’s or siblings’ use, being offered other drugs, or more general awareness and associations fostered through media exposure, or drugs education campaigns. Several reported other people who had come out onto the parks having used other drugs (most often ecstasy) this was considered silly, juvenile and inappropriate to the social situation. Using cannabis was by

contrast understood as pragmatic, reasonable and appropriate to the social situation. This understanding was in large part derived from the nature of the substance and the social context, but these were also learnt social understandings.

Focus groups revealed that prior to initiation there was limited understanding of what the effects of a drug might be and limited interest in developing these understandings. If cannabis did not form a part of their immediate social environment there was little interest in it and people were happy to derive their understandings from media and others with more direct experience. Broadly it was considered uninteresting and irrelevant, outside of the consideration of health and social problems in society, in which it was presented at school. As substances began to appear in the social networks and life-spaces of teenagers, understandings of the contexts of use of different substances developed, building initially on understandings projected in mass media, cultural products, films and television. These were, however, experienced as distant from the lives of young people and not directly relevant to them. While the mediated representation of substance use, and cannabis use, formed an initial background idea of what drugs use might be, or be like, it was not until they became aware of drugs use in their more immediate social groups that the need to develop further understandings of the meaning of cannabis use and the possibility of wanting to use, or to 'try' appeared. The meanings and contexts that substance use generally, or cannabis use in particular, might take on for the individual were not based on media representations. Rather in order to fully make sense of friends' use media representations were bracketed. A different set of understandings then developed based on the experiences related by friends' or siblings' use and observation of the use and behaviours of others in their wider social networks.

The age at which different drugs appeared in the life-spaces of the teenagers differed widely. Social class and family circumstance appeared to have some impact on the age of cognisance in social networks. However, if the individual did not identify with the person who was using they did not feel this behaviour had any direct relevance for them, or might be something they would emulate. Overtly drug-centred behaviour, or the use of substances that were considered dangerous,

or inappropriate to their age, or the social context, resulted in that person (and their behaviour) being labelled as a ‘smack head’, or ‘druggie’. This was extended to their interpretation of that person’s wider behaviour through labels such as ‘knob head’. In this way inappropriate or risky behaviour was defined and negotiated by the persons immediate social group, and their own behaviour validated through their social group, was confirmed as ‘safe’ (this was group argot meaning ‘good’, which was apparent in the first cohort but a particular favourite of the second cohort). These understandings of what was normal and what deviant were then further negotiated on a more fine-grained level amongst sub-groups. Amongst larger groups there was an acceptance or understanding of a degree of difference, which could be accommodated in a wider set of rules and values centred on the idea of ‘everybody does what they want to innit, long as it doesn’t affect anybody else’.

The majority appeared to first use cannabis with a trusted friend, or sibling, in a small group (less than five) context. There appeared to be little direct connection between these initial friendships and later involvement in the teenage cannabis smoking group (which were generally larger). For those interviewed ‘trying’, followed by intermittent regular cannabis use, had begun with occasional or weekly use aged 13 to 14. Although some had tried cannabis significantly younger, they found it had at that time, no place in their lives. The progression to regular use and the establishment of the cannabis smoking friendship group took place between the ages of 14 and 16. Some smoked daily, some were smoking just at weekends, others smoked on some weeknights as well. While not all members smoked daily, some of the group would be available, providing the opportunity to smoke daily. Additionally many had experimented with cannabis before, during, or after school and for the older ones at work, or college. This was not however a regular thing for most respondents though they reported knowing of other people who did get stoned during school hours. While at first sight this might appear obvious, it is important to recognise that regular cannabis use was predicated on having a group to regularly use cannabis with. There were no reports of regularly using cannabis alone, other than as an adjunct to regular use with a group.

As the majority of cannabis smoking in this age group took place out of doors there was a seasonal dimension to their cannabis use. The group was larger during the summer and the long summer holidays played a part in its construction. During the winter months it was reported that members were inclined to drift off, or congregate in smaller groups. From 16 onwards personal circumstances diversified, pubs and clubs became a feature of the social scene and respondents progressively moved beyond the predominantly male teenage social group. With this diversification of personal circumstance, patterns of cannabis use became concomitantly diverse making generalisation more difficult. This brings the focus of this analysis to the patterns of use of the male teenage social group, which appears to last from two to three years, between the ages of 13 and 18, for most involved. This age range at the lower limit seemed to relate to onset of puberty, physical and social maturity. This also influenced their perceptions of the upper limit, though this was more complicated and the diversification of personal circumstances; continuing education, college, apprenticeships, work, moving into rented accommodation and so on seemed to be the most important factor. Observations were based on the 'snapshot' of the constitution of the group and their reports at the point in time at which their regular use took place in public spaces. Different approaches would be needed to better understand these later transitions.

The progression to regular use and the type of use engaged in could not be understood at the level of the individual. It was only through the establishment of the regular cannabis smoking social group that cannabis use became regular. Since the fundamental activity of the group was to meet to smoke cannabis, it held little interest for those who did not wish to use. Meeting regularly with the group, at the places and times they met to smoke cannabis was indicative of wanting to smoke, the how to smoke and the subsequent activities, meanings and understandings were developed and negotiated from this starting point.

5.3 - Using Cannabis

The group's timetable for use appeared to be an adaptation/ augmentation of traditional British working class drinking culture. It was used to relax and socialise at the end of the day 'after tea' on week nights, with a weekend 'binge' on Friday and Saturday nights. The majority drank beer, or lager, only occasionally during the week and drank more over the weekend, this was often in addition to cannabis. The majority however preferred to smoke cannabis by itself during the week on a number of pragmatic grounds:

- It was easier to get hold of
- It was cheaper
- It was easier to conceal
- And therefore easier to keep from day to day
- They didn't have to deal with hangovers
- Cannabis was less likely to lead to aggressive or antisocial behaviour
- The high could be achieved relatively quickly compared to alcohol
- The range of effect from 'relaxing' with small amounts, to 'getting fucked', or 'mashed' allowed them to eek it out, or binge, according to the situation and their finances
- The effects of even relatively large amounts of cannabis smoked in the early evening would have dissipated to an extent by the time they went home
- The effects were felt to be easier to conceal from parents than alcohol
- When apparent to parents the effects demanded less from them and were easier to ignore
- The effects were more conducive to the environment (sitting around on parks and scrubland)
- The effects could be moderated through quantity and route of administration to suit reflective moments with small groups or more raucous larger gatherings

Cannabis was used both functionally and socially; the diversity of functions was a measure of both the diversity of effects and their contextual nature. It performed a number of functions socially and for the majority it was this aspect that most interested them. The effects of cannabis were felt to be particularly conducive to the social setting that teenagers found themselves in. The effects on the individual and the functions to which these were put give clues as to the function of cannabis in the group setting. The act of sharing cannabis and the hierarchies of this sharing formed an important aspect of group formation and the development of bonds within and beyond the group. Much like the traditional 'round' in the pub, passing cannabis around was used as a symbol of inclusivity, sharing cannabis was however much more affordable to the group.

Equally the effects of cannabis were both subjective and social. Effects were dependent on the social context, the quantity and potency of cannabis, route of administration, and state of mind of the user. This led to a situation where cannabis was claimed to have what at first sight seem to be contradictory effects, in some circumstances increasing attention and focus, in others promoting daydreaming. Effects reported ranged from relaxing or soporific, to giddy and euphoric and on to mildly hallucinogenic states. The length of action allowed them to get high in the early evening yet be in a reasonable state to encounter their parents when they arrived home and be in a fit state for school the following day. Cannabis was thus felt to be a versatile, pragmatic and generally safe drug which could be adapted to fit the majority of circumstances the young people found themselves in.

Smoking too much cannabis led to a 'whitey' which though unpleasant at the time soon passed without any lasting damage, other than perhaps to self-esteem. The whitey provided the group with a bonding and status game akin to traditional 'drinking games', friends would be 'pushed over', laughed at and ribbed a bit, but looked after, would recover and keep smoking. The ability to avoid, or to 'handle', a whitey became a symbol of competence and a source of identification with the group as 'experienced' users. The demonstration that they would ultimately be looked-after contributed to group bonding.

While cannabis was used to augment other activities, smoking cannabis was in the group context primarily seen as an activity in itself. In smaller groups cannabis was used usually in spliffs, for its relaxing properties and for introspection and talking out ‘deep and meaningful’ subjects. In larger groups, more often in bongos, use tended toward ‘heroic’ quantities and the aim of getting ‘wasted’, a giddy euphoric high characterised by getting ‘the giggles’ and being visibly ‘mashed’. Smoking cannabis while engaged in other activities had two types of aims. It could be used with general activities to make mundane activities more entertaining. It was also used for particular activities for which specific effects of cannabis were felt to be particularly suitable. For type 2 users this might be creative pursuits, or consuming and learning about cultural products. However, all types of users might watch films, listen to music, or play football while stoned. Often this functioned to make otherwise repetitive, mundane, uninteresting or boring activities novel again by experiencing them through the lens of being stoned.

Reports of the quantity of cannabis smoked differed markedly, there appears to have been both under-reporting and over-reporting, often by the same individual in different parts of the interview. There are a number of possible explanations for this. At various points in the interviews respondents might portray themselves as ‘responsible, sensible smokers’, or as ‘hard-living party animals’, or would contrast their sensible use to other ‘fools’ and ‘idiots’, who they believed smoked too much, or too often, or in the wrong situations. Because cannabis was commonly shared and buying was often communal, differences in the amount bought and the amount consumed confused the situation further. Most had been involved at one time or another in a large ‘sesh’ often at a ‘free house’ and put money in to buy large quantities of cannabis communally. This appeared to represent the highest quantity smoked in one session. Most were frequently ‘skint’ and ‘crashed’ cannabis off each other. Availability differed for different members of the group and some would trade beer, cigarettes, or food for their share of the night’s cannabis. The amount of cannabis bought by an individual, given the amount that was shared, offered little indication, even for the user, of how much they actually consumed. Particularly for type 1 users who occasionally claimed to smoke very large quantities, the sharing of cannabis allowed them to maintain a belief in their extraordinary capacity for use.

The quantity they actually consumed appeared to be in fact only slightly more than that of their peers. This suggests that self-reports of spend, or quantity consumed are not intentionally misleading but that the overall spend across a group probably gives a better indication of the quantity consumed by an individual. In smoking cannabis the group were trying to achieve a shared state of mind which was not served by consuming radically different amounts.

5.4 - Cannabis and the Social Group

The *home group* were interviewed in the early summer during the summer holidays. Their use at this time was governed primarily by resources, by what their peers were doing, and by their individual preferences for cannabis or for alcohol. They often found it difficult to find work and what work they did find was often casual and involved irregular hours. Those in work smoked cannabis in the evenings and at weekends. Those out of work smoked bits and pieces during the day and ‘crashed’ cannabis from their friends in the evenings. The *school group*, outside of few friendship pairs, did not smoke cannabis together; outside of persistent GCSE coursework they had no particular school pressures at the time.

There were two main modes of socialising using cannabis, relaxing or ‘chilling’ in small groups, and ‘getting wrecked’ in larger groups. Getting wrecked was often reserved for weekends. The fact that much of the group’s social world revolved around parks, fields and public spaces and that friendships were often dependent on circumstance rather than shared interests or values meant that cannabis could play an important part in smoothing interaction between potentially disparate groups. Using cannabis became a shared activity and interest in itself. This was put down to the effects of cannabis, making people more easy going and helping to get into the social flow. It was considered that these social effects of cannabis increased the size of the social group and lead to a perception that cannabis use was ‘normal’ for a person in their situation. While cannabis use could make socialising with new people easier it was not considered to be the only, or necessarily the most important factor.

Often during the week people were in smaller groups, at weekends and in larger groups and there was more focus on using bongos and smoking larger amounts of cannabis. The aim of smoking large amounts of cannabis was consistently to get high and get ‘the giggles’. The source of their humour involved disjointed thinking and jumping between disparate contexts, there was an awareness that this was a direct effect of cannabis. Another source of humour involved the status games around ‘pulling a whitey’. This activity of smoking to excess in large groups, sometimes in combination with alcohol, was common to all respondents. While individual users often had personal rules which they used to control the effects of cannabis, part of the appeal of the large group setting appeared to be getting caught up in the moment and transgressing these personal rules.

5.5 - Roles, Rules, Symbols and Rituals

The rituals of skinning up, preparing bongos and the sharing and developing of techniques for smoking cannabis, were an important part of smoking cannabis as an activity in itself. In learning to use cannabis there was an interrelationship between learning to recognise the effects, learning to control the experience and learning to skin up and prepare bongos. In repeating the preparation of cannabis, methods were shared, refined and personalised. In learning to prepare cannabis for smoking respondents displayed competencies and preferences and, as they became experienced cannabis users, developed an aesthetic of use. The personalisation of rolling techniques was an important aspect of sharing joints. This combination of knowledge, practice and presentation was expressed and experienced as a connoisseurship of cannabis.

The use of cannabis presented opportunities to develop friendships and social networks, prove self-efficacy and social competencies, and provided a symbol of that competence. Determinants of social competence included:

- Ability to ‘skin up’
- Ability to construct makeshift bongos from materials at hand

- Knowledge of drugs and drugs cultures (both cannabis and wider):
 - Generic names for cannabis
 - The group/ generational generic name(s)
 - Names and qualities of different types of cannabis
 - Different routes of administration and their effects
 - Cultural associations
- Access to cannabis of different types and to other drugs
- Competence in using drugs (mainly cannabis) socially with older teenagers and adults
- Development and testing of theories about how to manipulate the effects
- Knowledge of drugs folklore and culture

There were three main types of rules relating to cannabis. There were rules which were developed to mitigate physical and social risks; only buying from known and trusted friends, only buying in small amounts, not getting lay-ons, not smoking at school, or in areas where you might get caught, and not getting caught by your parents. Other rules surrounded the social mores of the group; not taking more than your share, putting in money or cannabis, not bringing friends who wouldn't fit in, or who couldn't adapt to the group's behaviours, known as not 'being a dick'. This related to a wider set of rules around psychological well-being and maintaining enjoyment of cannabis. These rules seemed to change the most during learning, they were concrete for initiates and progressively transgressed as users became more experienced; only smoking with good friends, not smoking on your own, moderating use to avoid 'going under' or having a whitey, keeping an eye on friends when they 'went under', being positive, not bringing others down.

These rules were not universal, though they were common across groups they were not universally instituted or obeyed. There were more rules for initiates than for novices, or for experienced users. Learning to use meant first learning the rules, then figuring out where and when they could, or should be broken. As users learnt to control the experience, became familiar with rituals and comfortable with

their place and status within the group many of the rules became unnecessary. Boundaries could be deliberately pushed in order to maintain a degree of risk and uncertainty. This rule breaking could also affect the cannabis experience itself.

This involvement with ‘rules’ relates to the cannabis humour based on rapid and straight-faced dislocations or jumps between rule based contexts. The interaction of the experience of cannabis and rules involved deliberately flirting with the paranoia that is always latent in the cannabis experience, providing a degree of excitement when use became routine. One of the most important functions of the larger group was to provide and maintain a reservoir of high spirits and humour that held paranoia at bay. Consequently greater quantities of cannabis might be smoked in the large group than in smaller groups of closer friends.

The need to rely on friends to keep the experience of cannabis positive brought a high degree of mutuality to both large and small groups. While the group had a responsibility to keep the night fun and enjoyable, individuals had a responsibility not to bring others down. Though this might be true of other groups it was emphasised through the use of cannabis. Individuals in learning to direct their mood while stoned became more aware of their capacity to do this in other contexts and gained a sense of self-efficacy from this. Successful ways of directing the experience became codified in group and subgroup roles and rituals. Type 3 users could take a break from smoking by the ‘going shop’ ritual, understood by the remainder as ‘Gavin always goes shop’. The expedition to buy ‘munchies’ involved interacting with the normal, un-stoned world providing a degree of excitement and self-efficacy (proving the ability to control one-self while stoned). They then brought the others food, allowing them to maintain their status in the group while avoiding smoking too much cannabis.

A key, and widely held rule was that they would not judge one another, ‘everyone can do whatever he wants as long as it dun’t harm anyone else.’ It was not clear that this was practiced, they would not openly judge their friends but there was not universal agreement on who made the grade as friend. Whether to smoke cannabis:

when, how, where, who with, how much, were all subject to the group decision making process and influenced by the group hierarchy. In-group and out-group distinctions were however blurred. While there was a belief that these understandings were shared, they appeared to be highly personal and in practice were filtered through group and subgroup hierarchies.

The teenage friendship group could be seen to operate on three levels: the friendship pair, friends of friends, and the extended group. The particular group which met to smoke cannabis was characteristically diffuse and circumstantial. While there were many closer friendship pairs, many in the group had very little in common. The size of the group was limited by the number of people with whom cannabis could be reliably shared, with people who brought something positive to the experience, and with a reasonable expectation that the favour would be returned - it seemed to number somewhere between eight and fifteen or so. This said it was not clear that each member of the group would nominate the same fifteen others, so we could also consider a wider group still of those that each central member would consider part of this wider group.

One of the functions of the extended group was to level out vagaries in the supply of money and cannabis. Outside of type 1 users, members would not always be in possession of cannabis but group membership meant cannabis was always available. It is worth re-emphasising that the extended group existed only because of the shared activity of smoking cannabis and cannabis provided the sole activity around which the group coalesced. Without cannabis it would not exist as a daily group; drinking groups which were not daily but focused on weekends, were differently constituted, and had different aims, including to meet girls. Groups in which cannabis use was a secondary rather than primary activity were dependent on availability of the activity. For example, there was a subgroup who played football on the fields while smoking cannabis, but this required light to play by, and as it went dark they would congregate with the larger group.

Given the individual differences within the group there were a number of strategies for maintaining friendship and identification with the group. Differences were concealed from the wider group and conversation focused on inconsequential banter and cannabis affected humour. The activity in this wider group centred on smoking bongos, spliffs might be passed around with the bongos, but the bongos maintained the kind of giddy high which suited the jokes and banter. The cannabis humour, involving radical jumps between disconnected contexts, made it a kind of 'you had to be there' humour which again re-enforced the shared experience of the high.

In smaller groups, of under four or five and in friendship pairs, conversations could be much more wide ranging. Here the teenagers were more likely to use the reflective effects of cannabis smoked in joints to 'talk shit'. This could mean anything from oblique observations on the world (not unlike the cannabis humour) to over-involvement in arguing an otherwise meaningless point, or it could mean talking about life's imponderables, a 'life the universe and everything' kind of conversation.

While individuals and friendship pairs had shared rules and rituals around use, these rituals were more contingent on social hierarchy in the wider group. Within the group there were widespread tacit assumptions and declarations of shared rules, meanings, rituals and values. However, in discussion with individuals it was clear that they did not agree on many things, the shared understandings of the group were not the understandings of individuals. This ranged from the most enjoyable way to smoke, the best techniques, the amount that it was reasonable to spend, to opinions about the acceptability of other drugs. There was a difference between personal rules, friendship pair rules, subgroup, and group rules, the expectation that each set of rules was shared to an extent with the group was largely unfounded in each case. This was not widely recognised and most preferred to maintain the illusion of agreement, however there were a few individuals who recognised it and reported that they gave precedence to their own rules over group norms.

5.6 - Resources, Hierarchies and Status

The *home group* for the most part had little money and it appeared for this reason that they were relatively unconcerned with dress. They were usually impeccably clean but their clothes were mostly old to the point of being a little faded and bar a little sportswear unbranded. Choice of clothing did not appear to extend much beyond making sure it didn't look like your mother had dressed you. The group style, such as it was, tended toward the slightly out of date or nerdy for the simple reason that they spent the vast majority of their income on cannabis, cigarettes and alcohol.

An individual's resources: time, money, social and psychological resources, underlie and bound the choices they can and do make. As young people reach the end of compulsory schooling, resources and particularly a relative lack of resources, and a lack of control over resources, is one of the major demarcations between adult and child. It was clear that wealthier peers also used cannabis and often other drugs, so lack of resources cannot be seen as the only motivating factor. While some of the *school group* had considerably more money, they nevertheless spent much of it buying, sharing and indulging in more cannabis. Clearly money alone could not always buy them access to alternative activities which might fulfil some of the roles that cannabis use played in their daily lives.

Many felt significant demands on their time from school, homework and family and household commitments. Although in reality they had significant quantities of free time, they appeared to experience this as time recovered, stolen back from legitimate pursuits such as homework. There was a degree of ambivalence to this, investing time in performing well at school seemed risky and the returns on this time distant and uncertain. Access to paid work was patchy and any employment they could find was usually casual, transitory and low paid. While they were happy to spend pocket money on cannabis, alcohol and tobacco they often wanted to buy things (clothes, music, etc.) with earned money, they wanted to have 'something to show for it'. The type of employment available to this age-group, who are by and

large unqualified and unskilled, as low paid and often casual could also involve changeable and unsociable hours. For those who had left school their resources diverged. Those going directly into employment had, for a time at least, compensation for their lack of scholastic achievement, however it still took time to achieve what they considered as adult markers: cars, housing and stable relationships.

The ability to source cannabis, an illicit drug, required the maintenance of friendships, acquaintances and wider social networks. It involved risk and the maintenance of trust. In the *home group*, with Spud as a dealer and a key member they could usually source cannabis from him with little or no threat. While they could buy cannabis from Spud however, most other members also bought from elsewhere. The availability of cannabis from a trusted friend (Parker et al., 1998) was important and existed, however there was a frisson in sourcing other types of cannabis from other sources. Often this would involve older brothers, cousins, or wider family members, or those of close friends. It could involve moving up or down the social ladder, a moment of class tourism. The ability to safely navigate these more adult networks demonstrated competence and could be displayed symbolically by having more exotic types of cannabis. Since the availability and quality of cannabis from different dealers changed, procurement often involved ringing around networks.

Having different types of cannabis to the rest of the group could function as a social symbol, when shared with the wider group. Often this special cannabis would be kept largely to one's self and close friends and merely talked about with the group. This, along with learning new ways of using cannabis, or new associated understandings, formed a part of the connoisseurship of cannabis. The ability to procure cannabis in extended social networks was perhaps above all a display and a symbol to one's self, of one's own competence. The consumable nature of cannabis, that the special cannabis would only last for a short time, required that these networks be maintained, or new ones forged. The procurement of cannabis as much as the smoking of it provided a reason to make and maintain friendships which would otherwise break down. It also provided opportunities to test and learn the limits

of trust. There was a greater element of risk in these procurement encounters, of social failure, or inadequacy, or of physical violence, getting mugged or beaten up, though this appeared rarely to have happened. There was also the more real threat of getting 'blagged', sold low weight, or low quality cannabis, or of being otherwise tricked and losing your money. Nevertheless, these forays into extended social networks also provided stories to be brought back to the group.

Cannabis could be seen as providing an opportunity to prove to others and to one's self that they were 'clued-up', 'street-smart' (they would probably have said 'safe', but this was used in lots of context specific ways). The reality of buying cannabis was that it was reasonably low risk and easily available. Access to dealing networks was graduated, tiered, the younger and less experienced buying from others on the park, got a degree of the same frisson that the more experienced got visiting the house of a local dealer with an older or more experienced friend. In each context they learnt a set of behavioural rules from their advocate, and by observation of the situation. The majority held a rule about not getting 'lay ons', not borrowing cannabis off a dealer, or owing them money. In reality many did borrow cannabis, but from the trusted friend who was dealing, rather than somebody they knew less well.

Entering the cannabis smoking group, learning to smoke and enjoy cannabis, and navigate the norms to become a popular member of the group, often provided the first opportunity to develop and demonstrate these key social competences to one's self and to the group. It involved many familiar skills, but some new ones, presenting a degree of challenge without too much threat. Movement between initiating groups and more sophisticated groups provided a further step during which smoking technique was refined and a degree of tolerance and ability to control the experience built up. As use became more sophisticated and connoisseurship emerged, a knowledge of and interest in different types of cannabis and an interest in knowing more about cannabis in wider culture often followed. Smokers could then demonstrate and share their own competencies, connoisseurship and knowledge with others. Procuring cannabis then provided a further way to test

and demonstrate these social and personal competences. This could move on to procuring for others, or for the group, perhaps in larger amounts as a group buy. This also demonstrated the trust of the group, in giving the individual their money, raised the stakes and the risk of getting ‘blagged’, equally it increased the social kudos and status attached to satisfactorily pulling off the deal.

Entering into the rigmarole of procurement thus provides many opportunities for display of social and personal competencies resulting in a degree of status within the group which in and of itself can be rewarding. It is not an explanation for use, it is an aspect of use, indeed some people would actively avoid the activity and instead buy and use small amounts of whatever their friends had available. Their appeared to be a class element in patterns of procurement, those coming from more humble backgrounds often had a greater access to cannabis and could use this to gain status within the group. Those coming from wealthier backgrounds perhaps derived more from the class-tourist, non-risky risk-taking element.

In common with cannabis procurement, a routine theme in reports of alcohol use was participation, or forays, into adult social worlds, either in local pubs or in clubs in the city centre. Drinking in pubs or clubs was however felt to be expensive, cannabis was generally considered to be cheaper than alcohol and was for the younger looking more easily available. One of the main reasons given, across both cohorts, for using cannabis over alcohol was violent and aggressive behaviour by drinkers. However, many considered that they were likely to use more alcohol and less cannabis as they got older.

There was an overall preference for using alcohol at the weekends, usually lager and beer (often with cannabis), while cannabis was more often used on its own during the week. Some users preferred one substance over another, while others used them interchangeably depending on circumstance. Mixing alcohol and cannabis, although common, was generally thought to be problematic, particularly if either were used to excess. A number reported using smaller amounts of cannabis

with alcohol with no ill effects. This appeared to involve a balancing of the time of consumption, quantities and routes of administration to achieve a synergistic effect, or to mitigate the problems of mixing.

Cannabis was considered to be a highly social drug and its use and impact on the different social contexts of young males provides the net in which we must consider the individual understandings given to cannabis use. For individuals in cannabis using groups, it played an important role in developing friendships and social networks. Individuals in the group performed different roles. Status in the group was dictated on a number of dimensions, some transitory, others more lasting. While the group denied any form of hierarchy, there was an explicit if fluid status hierarchy with routine decisions being taken by proxy by particular individuals. However, individuals in the group believed choices to be their own and that the group operated in a democratic way - in that the group were generally in agreement and everyone had a chance to opt out and go home, or split off and join a different group for a time.

Nearly every respondent denied that not smoking cannabis led to being excluded from the group however, very few who did not smoke cannabis appeared to hang out with the cannabis smokers while they were smoking cannabis. As activities moved towards more alcohol consumption at weekends, those who did not smoke cannabis were more likely to be involved and the group dynamics altered to accommodate this. The key to understanding the hierarchy within the cannabis smoking group was its purpose - to 'smoke weed'. More specifically to have the best time smoking weed that you could by constructing, or joining the group which best fitted the way you wanted to smoke weed at that particular time - to get mashed, or to chill out. If you didn't want to smoke weed there was little point, or interest, in participating in either group and you went home, or went to play football, or do something else.

The first factor in the hierarchy was based on physical resource, do you have, cannabis, money, tobacco, beer. If you don't, do you usually have some, and do you share yours when you do. The second was based on social resources and competencies, do you have the basic competencies as a weed smoker; being able to skin up (well), being capable of controlling your use to achieve a similar high to everybody else. If you don't meet any of the above do you have another role; are you entertaining, are you funny, are you willing to play the group clown. Are you popular, do other people hang around longer, or come out more often when you're there? Other roles included the group policeman/ bouncer, maintaining the group norms both behavioural norms and with regard to sharing.

Age was important in the configuration of group roles, if you were older you were more likely to have a job, have money, have cannabis, have established friends, an established group and an established position within the group. There was a cut off though, past the late teens being on the park with the kids was seen as 'sad' and weird. Younger and other cannabis naive participants appeared to be valued for entertainment value and as an audience for the knowledge of more experienced members. This might involve vicariously experiencing the novelty of the effects of cannabis, watching knowingly as they smoked too much, or 'sending them under' (doing things to 'freak them out'). This all seemed to be done in a friendly and good humoured way and often novices would have a particular friend or champion amongst the more experienced users, looking after them within the group.

While initiation might usually start with spliffs, in the bong smoking group cannabis naive participants would inevitably smoke too much cannabis resulting in a whitey. The whitey was considered unpleasant but not ultimately dangerous. Although the group had rules relating to looking after one another, they also recognised enjoying a slightly callous, derogatory humour in watching somebody else 'go under'. Being able to control intake and effects to avoid these experiences was in one respect a performance of competence as a cannabis smoker, as was being able to take large quantities of cannabis without ill effect. Both can be seen as confer-

ring a status as competent initiate, no longer naive. 'Going under' is then a failure of competent performance and a status threat (Goffman, 1969) on the one hand but is something which everybody goes through and has a social value to the group.

Status games are a common feature of adolescent groups and the game of taking too much cannabis has much in common with the more established traditional drinking games (Beccaria and Sande, 2003). The important thing is not the status failure but participating and taking the status failure in good grace. Failing but still being part of the group reinforces acceptance. These games serve to test the limits of pleasurable cannabis use and display personal strength of character in overcoming them and carrying on, both to the group and perhaps to one's self. Putting one's self through this unpleasant experience, getting through it and relying on the group to look out for you while undergoing it is a way of demonstrating faith in the group.

The small 'chill out' group could be a transitory assemblage, but the reflective introspective aspects of this group activity dictated that it mostly centred on closer friends, with other less well known members brought in to feed conversation. It could also be used in getting to know other people better. The activity of these smaller groups was much quieter with none of the attendant raucousness of the larger groups. In this context they would often drink as well as smoking cannabis. The primary activity was usually talking in a slightly spiritual, distanced and detached from everyday experience kind of way, often cannabis humour here was particularly black, or ironic. These kinds of conversations, which appeared to fit well with the cannabis experience, are recognised as common to most teenagers and appear to have a developmental function.

5.7 - Cannabis and the world beyond

The teenagers had three particular social settings in their lives: home and family life, school (and work) life and social life with friends. A few were members of sports clubs and so on, the teenagers seemed to categorise such settings as some-

where between school and social. These were settings where they met their friends, but were subject to a degree of adult authority. It was not unusual however, to use cannabis in these settings. Cannabis could be used at school, or with school friends outside school but while they felt they knew about the cannabis use of their school friends it appeared to be unusual to bring cannabis into school amongst the groups interviewed. Firstly the risks of getting caught were considered to be too high, secondly many were concerned about school performance and future life-chances. The effects of regular cannabis use on short-term memory (Brown, 1998) were widely recognised and a number of respondents reported stopping or moderating their use over exam periods.

Cannabis was frequently used with elder siblings, or individuals were aware of cannabis use by their siblings. Openness about cannabis use with parents was less usual, although some smoked with their parents' knowledge, many felt parents were strongly disapproving. The drug use of siblings and particularly between brothers was a theme that ran throughout the data. Often cannabis use was felt to be a shared activity which had brought siblings together and given them something to do together. This was particularly apparent where there was a significant age-gap between siblings. Pete (HG) reported using cannabis with his two sisters and had been introduced to amphetamines by one of his sisters. Pete's understanding of this was that his sister was giving him the opportunity to experiment in a safe supervised environment with older people who had previous experience of the drug he was trying. Despite this Pete had not enjoyed his experience in this context thinking it better suited to a club environment.

The drug use of elder siblings had an impact on parents' negotiation of cannabis use by the younger sibling. Mike (SG), the youngest of three brothers all of whom smoked cannabis, had found that a fairly liberal regime had already been negotiated by his elder brothers. While Mike would not openly smoke cannabis in his bedroom, he would smoke in his brother's bedroom and could smoke cannabis openly in the garden of the family house. This theme was not uncommon and

appeared to be partly related to older siblings being unable to afford housing and increasingly living in the family home long after they would traditionally have left home, leading to widening negotiations of behaviour in the family home.

Many respondents used cannabis with cousins and with wider family. Alex's (HG) use of cannabis with his cousins gave him a sense of connection with his family roots but also gave him a behavioural bench mark, he no longer fully identified with his cousins who, living in a deprived area, did 'mad-shit'. This was also the case for Tyrell (SG) whose Jamaican family had both a range and polarised opinions on cannabis use. Tyrell occasionally used cannabis with an uncle, though both Tyrell and other members of the family disapproved of the uncle's drug use in connection with other undesirable behaviours.

There were three key strategies for dealing with parents and cannabis use: concealment, incrementalism, or confrontation. Any of these strategies could be adopted by teenager or parent and there could be several strategies in play at any one time. It was felt that cannabis use in parental generations was a hidden activity specific to particular groups. Therefore despite societal normalisation there remained a strong pressure on parents to play their role in relation to more extreme stereotypes of cannabis use. The roles that parents took on in relation to cannabis use had a relationship to both the actuality and stereotypes of use. Within certain limits they seemed to find it best to ignore use, only reacting to it when it impacted other areas, such as school work or family life. When parents did act they often overreacted, particularly if or when the teenager's use was socially visible and they were forced to react to maintain their own status.

A number of cases revealed issues around family, race, religion, ethnicity and class in relation to cannabis use. For Tyrell and Marvin (SG) smoking cannabis provided a source of identification with a Jamaican culture they felt associated with, through their ethnicity and family but also distanced from, having grown up in the UK. Marvin's successful professional parents had tried to distance themselves and Marvin from these associations; Tyrell's family appeared to take a more relaxed

stance. These wider cultural alignments were more clearly understood and articulated in the late-twenties reflectors. For the teenage cannabis users they formed part of the background in which appropriate behaviour was negotiated, though their understandings of the origins of wider social rules and meanings were less developed. This leads to two key themes revealed in the data and the analysis - cultural naivety and nascent identities (see p 193).

The teenagers were characteristically culturally naive; they had yet to fully develop the wider knowledge and understandings which would locate their behaviour in accepted social meanings. Indeed one function of the cannabis using group was to provide an arena in which to practice negotiating control over social meanings and understandings. In relation to their cannabis use and traditional notions of drugs cultures and their association with youth styles, movements, and musical genres, the teenage group's understandings were characteristically naive and most appeared to have a limited interest in, or identification with such things. The drugs culture they understood and were involved in was localised, it was rooted in their immediate environment, the people, places and things they found around them. This is not to say that they were unaware of cannabis in a wider cultural context, rather that they did not locate their own experience in these contexts.

The teenage years, through both changes in the body and in adopting and adapting to established social conventions about adulthood, arguably represent the greatest period of change in the life course. As such the teenagers lived with a present they experienced as limited and lived with a firm eye to the future. Who they could be and the ways in which they could express this during this transition period were severely limited but the cannabis using social group provided a proving ground for exploring and developing ways of being and acting socially. The roles and relationships involved in the group and activities can then be understood as transitional proxy roles (see p 193). They were used in place of social roles which could not yet be established. Inherent in this idea is that roles are containers through which we display identity, status and values. These dimensions are all in flux in the teenage

years, but the teenage social group provides opportunities for learning through identity play. Cannabis use in the teenage social group appeared to be performing a number of useful functions in this regard.

The teenagers' lives were at a point of transition, no longer children, but not yet adults, the world around them seemed to provide few places for them. Those that society made available to them were controlled and regulated spaces where their behaviour and activities were structured and bounded. In these structured environments their behaviour was constricted by role and precedent, and felt to be under scrutiny by a present, imagined, or threatened authority. For those that could gain access to adult social spaces, pubs, clubs and so on, there was a sense that they were just dipping a toe in the water, they did not yet belong in these spaces or with the people who occupied them. Their access to these adult worlds was always contingent (on older acquaintances, money, or not being found out). This illegitimacy was experienced as a lack of status, as not being on an equal footing with the legitimate inhabitants of the space. Consequently the norms, rules, meanings, understandings and behaviours of these groups while they might be aspired to were not felt to be appropriate to the teenagers. Their behaviour in these spaces was correspondingly imitative as they learned to fit into a social game they did not fully understand and lacked the social and material resources to play.

The teenage cannabis smoking group provided a transition space in this social limbo. While they needed the learning experiences provided by these forays into adult social worlds, they also needed to be part of a group of their peers, where they could take an active part in co-constructing the social meanings of their behaviour. The group appeared to provide an arena for identity play, for trying out ways of acting and behaving, seeing the social effect, for learning to navigate the difficulties of self presentation and the power plays in the social construction of meanings. The size and constitution of these different overlapping social groups gave everybody some place in a social nexus which could accommodate them, their behaviour and their understanding of its meanings. A key feature of why an individual became part of a particular group was that it provided a setting where they felt confidence

in their control over self-definition (Goffman, 1959). As such participation in the teenage friendship group provided a feeling of security and agency which was lacking in the teenagers' other life contexts.

Becoming an adult relies on having an understanding of what it means to be an adult in a given culture and society and social group. There are distinct differences in expectations and understandings both within and between groups. Educational performance and social class expectations were each important in this regard. Those who had not performed well at school and those from lower social classes overwhelmingly expected to enter the labour market earlier and to pass social markers in the establishment of adult identities earlier. This is a period of translating personal resources into social capital, social roles, status and concomitant responsibilities in the adult world. It has been widely acknowledged that this phase of life has been extended in recent years. This has been attributed to increased participation in further education and to difficulties in establishing one's self as a quasi-autonomous agent in the adult world.

While there were significant individual differences, many commonly understood markers of this movement to adulthood were observed. Situational markers were based around: establishing a career, moving out of home, settling down with a partner and having children. Learning to drive and getting a car could also be added to this list. These items can be seen as symbols of autonomy, however the route to this autonomy and the security of this autonomy rely on social roles and relations. This aspect was rarely verbalised within the accounts of the teenagers but its impact underlies much of their behaviour and understandings. Traditionally there has been an expectation that while lower classes establish these markers earlier there is a corresponding reduction in the status and stability of such markers. There was however a recognition that this is no longer necessarily the case, this took the form of degree of ambivalence to educational performance and the status traditionally ascribed to professional roles.

Understandings of status within the group revealed a strong moral dimension related to work. Those who expected to go into manual jobs (after a short period of training) saw A-levels and University as an extension of childhood roles, lacking in responsibility. This could be seen as an accommodation to personal expectations and achievements. For both those who chose to go directly into employment and those who intended going into further or higher education, it was clear that this perceived extended childhood and continuing reliance on parents was not seen as a choice but rather as an unwelcome accommodation to prevailing social circumstance. Amongst the *school group* there was a strong feeling of indignation and fatalism about their situation. For instance, while they had a limited understanding of the cost of property, there was an awareness of the prohibitive cost of motoring. This example appeared indicative of a wider perception in which access to key markers of adulthood were felt as being unfairly and indefinitely denied to them.

5.8 - Cannabis and Identity

As explored further in the following chapters, discussing identity involves an interpretive step and findings relating to identity must be read as open to other interpretations. The findings point towards two issues in relation to cannabis and identity. Firstly, these issues relate to the nature of the relationship between cannabis and identity during the period of participation in the teenage cannabis smoking social group. Secondly there are the more speculative questions about how cannabis use and participation in the teenage smoking group interacts with the 'normal' process of identity development that takes place in the teenage years and the implications this may have for their future.

The kind of identity problems reported in relation to drugs of addiction involve the use of the drug coming to affect all an individual's social networks, their perceptions of themselves and others' perceptions of them (McIntosh and McKeganey, 2000). For the individuals interviewed in their current context of use this would seem to be a small risk. Their choice of cannabis was predicated on the fact that it provided them with social benefits while it did not bring significant problems,

or impact on other areas of their lives. Their relationship with cannabis and the potential for problems then lies in more subtle and individual dimensions of ‘what constitutes a problem for them’, for example:

- Will they continue to smoke cannabis beyond the teenage friendship group?
- Does this have implications for other drugs use?
- Will cannabis use affect their development of other roles and relationships?
- Would they continue to use cannabis despite experiencing physical and mental health problems, such as anxiety, paranoia, short term memory loss, and so on?
- Would they continue to use despite experiencing social problems related to their use?
- What impact will external social and economic conditions have on the continuation or cessation of cannabis use?
- Will they find ways to accommodate cannabis use in ‘normal’ adult roles?
- How do the benefits and costs of cannabis use change as they make the transition to adulthood?

The contexts, impacts and risks of developing problems with their cannabis use are likely to be different for each type of user and will inevitably relate to wider social changes. For all, there appeared to be a possibility of continuing use, whether they continued to enjoy cannabis, were indifferent to the effects, or experienced negative effects. A clear finding was that for the majority, cannabis use was something they regarded as appropriate to their current circumstances but that would cease to be appropriate to their circumstances in the future.

Type 1 users appear the most at risk of developing the type of problems identified in relation to drugs of addiction. The social networks which develop around cannabis use do form an important part of their identity. However, they appeared to regard their involvement with cannabis as a ‘phase’ appropriate to being a teen-

ager, they did not see adult roles as congruent with long-term continued cannabis use. They considered cannabis use as an authentic and appropriate response to their circumstances as a teenager. As teenagers they understood that the roles which they developed around their use were proxy roles which would become less relevant as they developed 'grown-up' adult networks. The increased risks of dealing cannabis at an 'adult' level were not attractive and there was a stigma in becoming a 'drug dealer'. Type 1 users invested a lot of time and energy in maintaining their use and their social position as a cannabis user. However, the very social benefits that accrued from being a cannabis smoker appeared to diminish with age since the role has less social value in the adult world. If the type 1 user will cease to use cannabis when they no longer continue to derive social status from their use, the question then turns on understanding the changes in conditions which lead to this change.

If these changes relate, as they appear to, to changes in social expectations of the individual as they move towards adulthood, this leads to an interesting perspective on youth and early twenties subcultures. Construction of, and participation in, subcultures might then be read as a transitional buffer between social expectations in childhood and in adult life. The level of use and involvement in cannabis use by the type 1 user suggests that cessation is likely to be abrupt, changing only when other roles arise to provide them with the social status which they previously derived from cannabis use.

There was a suggestion that this period of transition may in itself be problematic. A type 1 user in the late-twenties-reflectors group (Rusty, p 130) described ceasing to use cannabis completely in relation to a period of crisis. After successfully gaining an officer training position with the army, a long held ambition, he had to stop using. He successfully stopped abruptly before beginning his training. However, he had problems adjusting to the army, he felt out of place amongst other more middle class trainees and was uncertain that he wanted to continue - two weeks into the training he decided to leave. On returning home he immediately returned to heavy cannabis use but found that he experienced crippling anxiety

and paranoia. Believing that he had experienced physical withdrawal and may have developed a psychological dependency on cannabis, he remains unsure whether cannabis was responsible for his decision.

The greater use and commitment of type 1 users and their need to display their capacity for use to others would seem to make them the most likely group to decide to stop using completely. This relates to both the self-limiting impact of their degree of use and the social pressure of maintaining this level of use. If this abrupt cessation takes place when appropriate alternative roles have been attained and their social value has been relocated within these roles this is likely to be an unproblematic transition. However, if forced to question the meanings, values and status which they previously derived from the cannabis smoking role without alternative frameworks in place, this could potentially have implications for their mental health and wellbeing. This might account for, or contribute towards accounts of cannabis withdrawal.

The type 3 users, while they smoked less cannabis, seemed to be much more likely to experience negative effects, particularly when smoking with more experienced users. This was accounted for by their lower tolerance and during the learning to use phase, their inability to negotiate the status games in the cannabis using group. Type 3 users were less involved in the creation of the meanings of cannabis use and appeared less likely to internalise these values, or to use their cannabis smoking status as a social 'badge'. Since they were largely indifferent to the actual effects of cannabis, they are likely to continue to use cannabis only as long as they accrue social benefits from doing so. They may gradually drift away from cannabis use over time, or they may decide to stop using as their perceptions of the costs and benefits move toward cessation. They are more likely to have alternative networks which do not involve cannabis and they are more likely to have concealed their use in these wider networks. The risks for type 3 users might then be confined to the immediate negative effects they experience while smoking cannabis and they are unlikely to experience the social impacts that may affect type 1 users.

Type 2 users used cannabis functionally in a greater range of circumstances and situations and were more likely to have social networks involving such functional use. For them perceptions of cost and benefit therefore included both the social dimension, the symbolic dimension and the functional dimension. Both this, their greater control over their use and their experience of cannabis, suggest that they are the most likely group to continue to use cannabis into adulthood. While for the other groups the movement to adult social roles and networks tipped the balance towards cessation, this group are likely to continue to participate in social networks around their activities, which are in turn more likely to accommodate cannabis use. While not actively engaged in these activities or these roles cannabis use could continue to function as a role symbol of their membership of these groups.

Since type 2 users appeared to be the most actively involved in developing and negotiating the rules, rituals and meaning of cannabis use, the values underlying these meanings were broadly congruent with their own self-understandings. While they derived more benefits from their use they did not suffer the same social pressures to continue use, or to use as heavily, as type 1 users. They derived their status in these groups not from their cannabis use, as type 1 users did, but rather from their activities, regardless of the connection of these activities to cannabis use. This suggests type 2 users are unlikely to experience problems if they do decide to stop but they are less likely to stop using, and more likely to start using again after cessation, since they are likely to continue to maintain social networks in which cannabis is available. The three types are then unlikely to experience the kind of identity issues put forward in relation to problematic drugs users. There remains however the possibility of health risks; risks related to long-term use in the type 2 user, problems of social and psychological adjustment in transition in type 1 users, and the problems of anxiety and paranoia while stoned for type 3 users. These issues will of course overlap to some extent as the typology does.

If there appeared little overt social pressure to use, there were social benefits in deciding to use at this point in their lives. While the teenagers considered youth styles and cultures seen in the media as constructed and inauthentic, cannabis use

was a part of their own local DIY culture. This may account in some ways for the presence of cycles in recreational drug use - for the drug to remain authentic the meanings attached to its use must be personalised. It was in the movement from exotic substance to commonplace activity that the teenagers learned to use cannabis and in doing so learnt about the negotiation of meanings in groups and networks. The typology and interpretations appeared to be consistent across the three cohorts, however the implications must also be considered in light of ongoing technological, cultural, and structural change. While the findings have been broadly rooted in the data, the following discussion develops them further and relates them to these wider dimensions and to existing concepts and theory.

6: Discussion

This thesis set out to explore the meanings of cannabis use for teenagers whose cannabis use was characteristically non-problematic (Becker, 1953). The interpretations of the findings focused on the way that these individuals and groups used, experienced and understood their use. The construction of identity is an ongoing dynamic process of producing and reproducing meaning, situating one's self and one's actions within the nexus of social and personal contexts in which a person lives. As such there is a limit on the extent to which identity can be seen as an extant property of primary data. To move to discussing identity involves an interpretive dimension, this move to the abstract is necessary and implicit in any qualitative analysis (Sandelowski, 1993). This chapter outlines the implications from the viewpoint of social theories of identity and teenage cannabis use, the types and scope of theory and the implications for further work needed in moving from this exploratory work to building useful mid-range theory.

The case studies presented (p 87) were exemplars of the three types of user identified in the findings (p 133), the case summaries (p 121) provide further perspective on the typology and its derivation. The cases are not a representative sample and no consistent demographic data was collected by which to relate cases to other social dimensions. This said, examination of their relationship to cannabis, and the way it fits into their lives does offer the opportunity to see the different ways that they use cannabis, how they understand their use and what they get out of it. Some of the things they got out of their cannabis use are particular to them, or to cannabis, but the majority are not, they relate to general social needs. For this group, for a number of reasons, using cannabis just happened to be the way that they achieved them. Some of these reasons related to limitations of personal, financial and social resources and access to alternatives. However, others related to the potentials of illicitity and exoticism and the fact that cannabis and intoxication generally exists outside the norm, socially legitimising within the group, forms of behaviour which may not otherwise be acceptable.

The findings emphasised that understanding cannabis use must involve a focus on the place of cannabis in the lives of young people. The majority of those interviewed reported few negative experiences of cannabis use and considered their use to have a few negative impacts on social functioning, life-chances and the choices open to them. This is not to say that their use is necessarily without risks but for them, as for the academic, the potential for harm at the level of the individual is difficult to predict (Macleod et al., 2004b). They did not perceive cannabis use itself as a 'risky' behaviour and most felt capable of moderating their use when necessary.

There are limitations to the kind of knowledge an inductive, explorative approach with a limited sample can provide. What this approach did allow was to examine both the individual, personal meanings of cannabis use and the way these meanings inform, and are informed by, the social groups which provide the context for cannabis use. These meanings emerge and are created in the moment but they inform and are informed by a longer perspective in which the teenagers understand their current situation and their cannabis use as part of their daily lives, their past, and an imagined and socially constructed life-course.

The interpretation of findings suggested that for these users cannabis was not central to their understandings of themselves (Anderson, 1994). It could though be used as a symbol for valued aspects of themselves and for communicating understandings about themselves to others. Much more importantly for these groups, cannabis was central to the development and maintenance of a particular set of social relationships which had valued characteristics. I will argue that these characteristics and the value placed on them can usefully be understood by thinking about identity and identity transition. The group and the activity provided the teenagers with a novel and emergent social context, the process of learning to use cannabis involved the social negotiation of the meaning of use and the presentation and management of identity in a social context. Both procurement and use facilitated the development and maintenance of the group and a wider set of non-contingent

social relationships (p 191), the value of which for the teenagers was to provide the freedom and space to explore and play with the expression and management of identity, the construction of personal and social rules and meanings.

The teenage cannabis using group had, by both nature and design characteristics that were particularly suited to providing this space for exploring identity but it also had characteristics which limited commitment to cannabis and to the group. Cannabis smoking and the relationships around it were felt to be appropriate to their age and to a time of transition; however, they did not anticipate continuing to use cannabis in this way, or continuing to value cannabis, or the cannabis using group. The value of cannabis was itself contingent and time-limited, the majority perceived that cannabis use was normal for them, at their age, but would cease to be normal as they moved into adulthood. This related to a common ideal of adulthood as presenting and being accepted as an autonomous, legitimate and socially valued person with stable access to the resources needed to support this position. However, they recognised attaining this as a potentially difficult and protracted process which could be subject to ongoing social negotiation.

In the introduction (p 5) I argued that a focus by researchers on the problems of drugs use has resulted in the construction of academic and political understandings that often bear little relationship to the mundane realities of the broadly recreational drugs use as experienced by much of society. To fully understand the nature of problematic drugs use we must also make sense of the ways in which drugs are routinely used without significant problems. The findings further highlighted the limitations of approaches which focus too tightly on cannabis or drugs use, placing it at the theoretical centre. The results of this inductive approach suggested that to understand the place of cannabis in teenagers' lives requires a wider focus, incorporating their day-to-day lives and the way that they understand and manage the place of cannabis use in their lives.

As the previous chapter suggests, cannabis was not central to the lives of the teenagers, or to their identities, but this is not to say that identity is not central to understanding their motivations for use. This argument is built on and relates to much previous research in both cannabis use and on sociological understandings of identity. This chapter argues that the relationship we should concentrate on is not the direct relationship between cannabis and identity but between participation in the cannabis using group and developmental and psychosocial needs in identity transition. The particular characteristics provided by the cannabis using group and the value placed on interacting with this group appeared to be particularly well placed to meeting some of the social and developmental needs of these teenagers at a time of identity transition. A time when they are discovering and exploring identity and learning to use the tools through which socially constructed identities can be managed and manipulated.

6.1 - Cannabis and Social Groups

The importance of the cannabis using peer group has long been recognised, however interpretations of the relationship between the peer group and the behaviours of drug use have varied in their sophistication (see p 35). The concept of 'peer pressure' was resisted by the teenagers - it was, they insisted, their choice to try, their choice to use, their choice to continue to use, who to use with and who to reveal their use to. However, they describe how, once part of a cannabis using peer group, they were indirectly influenced in how to use and how much to use by the context and activities of the group. The ideas developed in the following pages describe how their motivation to use is in large part rooted in their wish to participate in the group and its activities. This in turn is rooted in the function that the group performs in relation to identity and identity development. The normalisation of cannabis use amongst their wider peers allowed them to tailor the way and the quantity they wanted to use by participation in one or another group, to decide not to use cannabis, or to only use alcohol. Use of alcohol, particularly in sufficient

quantity to get drunk was more often than not limited to weekends, both because of: availability, cost, parents and after-effects. Using cannabis on the other hand facilitated a group which were available to socialise every night.

One conception of peer pressure relates to the ideas of ‘conformity pressure’ in group situations, this is often rooted in Ericksonian psychological identity theory (Vigil, 1988). Here the sociological aspect of identity is taken to involve ‘identification’ with the group, however the findings did not suggest a high level of identification with the group. Rather the very value of the group as a vehicle for transitional identity development was in its non-contingent nature - it is not a group of ‘people like me’, they are at most ‘a bit like me - in some ways’. Identity in much of the literature is routinely elided with identification with a group, previously this type of identification and the cultural symbols around it have been suggested as a source of peer pressure (McIntosh et al., 2006). Identification requires that a group has a distinct set of characteristics, shared values, understandings and behaviours which are recognised by participants and communicated to others both in the group and beyond, bringing with it a set of assumptions that can be made about individuals from their level of commitment to the group. The data suggested that commitment was not to cannabis, or to the group in particular - they were committed to being part of a cannabis using group not to the cannabis using group that they happened to be a part of. This suggests that the teenage cannabis smoking group should not be understood through the ‘youth gang’ perspective with its attendant features of ‘identification’ and ‘signification’ (Vigil, 1988).

6.1.1 - Youth Cultures and Subcultures — Symbolic Use?

An alternative conception of the teenage friendship group, suggested by the commitment to a group rather than the particular group, is to see ‘identification’ and ‘signification’ as commitment to a ‘lifestyle’ associated with ‘youth tribes’ (Bennett, 1999), or subcultures with associated styles of dress, language, or musical styles (Forsyth et al., 1997). This did not however appear to be a highly salient feature for those interviewed, rather the majority were characteristically uninvolved, uninterested, or culturally naive. For those that did have a significant

interest in music or culture it was more wide ranging, and often less contemporary, including lots of music from the past. For those that had little interest in music their tastes were more likely to be confined to a particular genre, however this genre had little influence on their dress, and appeared to hold little further meaning for them.

In the *home group* their dress was by and large conservative and uniform, a preference for 'tracky bottoms' and sportswear, over jeans and t-shirts was the only discernible difference between members of the group. It was reported that some other groups were 'all sportswear' groups but the majority were not, there was a perception that this could be class related and might indicate a more 'gang' type group. For those interviewed that took some interest in dress, their style was a set of personalised idiosyncrasies rather than an overt badge of tribal membership. This is not to say that these subcultures are necessarily unimportant, rather that they were unimportant for these individuals at this time. The interpretations developed in the following pages come to suggest some alternative explanations for why and when subcultures may become important (see p 200).

If they did not display or report a high degree of identification, or signification of group membership through dress or culture, it remains possible that cannabis use itself, or the way in which it was used could be a form of signification. Interestingly this cannabis use as a social 'badge' is thought unlikely by Becker (1953), however Becker's background suggests that his experience and sample may have been older and more culturally sophisticated, seeing cannabis use as passé. While the teenagers considered that sometimes you could guess the kind of other young people who might smoke cannabis, it was widely regarded that this was unreliable and that many unexpected people smoked cannabis. As such, it was not routinely used as an overt symbol between groups. Rather than as a badge in initiating contact with other peers, cannabis use was reportedly revealed in the process of getting to know people, then in providing a shared activity it had the potential to foster a relationship. Preferences in the ways in which cannabis was used seems to have conferred some sense of belonging within groups, but it was not considered the main factor in the construction of in and out groups. Construction of in and out

groups did however seem to be important, this involved ability to competently take part in the 'games' of the group, mediated by more capricious personality dynamics between individuals. The main symbolic aspects performed by cannabis within the group and amongst other cannabis users concerned signification of competence and sophistication in the way it was used.

One of the principal sources of value for individuals in the teenage cannabis smoking group was that it functioned as a micro-culture. This is to say it was small enough that the participants could take an active part in co-constructing the meanings that their behaviour held for them. As such the participants recognised that there was a 'normal for them', in their individual role within the group, as well as established, conditional and also transitory group norms, in which their individual 'normal' was accommodated, as well as wider social norms for both their age-group and social position and for other people. Their understanding of being a teenager, being in a time of transition, was thus used as a normalising mechanism which allowed them to maintain the belief that it was normal for them as teenagers to be using cannabis, while maintaining that cannabis use was not 'normal' in wider society.

The teenagers were in some ways resistant to the idea of societal normalisation characterised by Parker et al. (1998). While they acknowledged that cannabis was widely used by people their age and older, most preferred to bound their own use by an understanding that it was a transitory phase. It seemed that if they considered cannabis use to be normal for everybody they would no longer have the same degree of freedom to create individual meaning from their own use, since the meanings of their individual use would then be accommodated within wider cultural or subcultural understandings of use. They understood their own use as a kind of extended experimental use, an allowable period of youthful transgression. They wanted cannabis use to be 'normal for them' but the things they got out of the teenage cannabis group required that it was not 'normal for everyone'. Their

freedom to construct their own meanings of use required that it remained on some level exotic and esoteric, if not in wider society, within the context of their own lives.

Cannabis using teenage social groups have been considered from a social capital perspective (Lindström, 2004). Lindström, citing Fukuyama (1999), suggests that the decision to use and continue to use cannabis relates to a 'minituration of community' which links levels of generalised trust to the extent, quality and form of social participation. Lindström's findings were consistent with this argument, suggesting that high levels of social participation combined with low levels of trust increase the probability of cannabis use. Lindström suggests that high participation with high trust and consistent value systems in 'strong' social movements such as labour movements, churches and political parties would reduce the risk of cannabis use. Increasing cannabis use in this view could be related to social changes which diminish such inclusive social movements.

The findings of the current study, while not inconsistent with Lindström's thesis, point towards an alternative mechanism. I have suggested that the value of the cannabis smoking group relates to its non-contingent nature, its members do not want, or expect, great things of the others in this group, no great degree of trust is required. The function of 'looking out for each other' seemed to be performed by a trusted friend within the larger group. Simmel's conceptions of the nature of trust suggests that trust should not be considered from an 'affective and abstract' moral basis rather it is the result of a process of 'expectation, interpretation and suspension' (Möllering, 2001:403). Suspension allows trust to be bracketed in the absence of information, this Möllering argues is the central feature of trust, it is a faith that the particular aspects required of the relationship will, barring confounding factors, be forthcoming.

Risk taking might be considered as the result of misplaced trust in the peer group, however cannabis use was not considered as risky and the type of trust in the wider group was low in its expectations. Möllering (2001:403) argues that 'Functional

consequences of trust such as risk-taking, co-operation, relationships or social capital should not be confounded with trust.’ The teenage cannabis using social group demonstrates this - trust is just not a highly salient feature of the functions the group is required to perform. The group sets certain boundaries on appropriate behaviour, but within this a major activity of the group is ‘taking the piss’ out of one another and learning to manage identity, and threats to status, under this barrage. In the group, therefore, trusted friends could be expected to suspend their defence of one another (which in other areas of life may be relied upon) to allow the target the chance to successfully defend themselves and enjoy the competence and boost to self-esteem in providing a witty comeback or in successfully absorbing the insult with good grace and without losing face.

Within these boundaries there was an expectation of a background level of trust which operated within and beyond the group. There was a general expectation that you should be a ‘good bloke’, which would involve for instance, sharing yours and others cannabis in a reasonable way, ‘sorting out’ a mate when they did not have cannabis, and more generally not acting aggressively and not engaging in wider criminality. The moral dimension of ‘cannabis use is wrong’, or ‘cannabis use is against the law therefore cannabis use is wrong’ (which might be a feature of participation in ‘strong’ social movements) was circumvented by the normalisation of teenage cannabis use, rather than by the values constructed in the miniaturised community of the cannabis smoking group. The concept of a miniaturisation of community is thus useful but it should not be seen only in the negative - it holds potentials that wider cultures do not. The construction of a miniaturised community and a miniaturised culture within the group was central to its function but the associated value systems that are constructed were fluid and only applied to the activity of participation in the group. The decision to export aspects of this system to wider groups or other areas of life were individual and limited.

In the current study there was not an apparent low level of ‘generalised trust’, rather trust was contingent on circumstance. The teenagers had grown up on the outskirts of a large city and considered managing the attendant risks of different situations

to be a basic adult competence. This competence was expected of all in the group and assessing - and the ability to negotiate - appropriate levels of trust for a given situation was taken for granted. They did not have a general mistrust of others; rather their orientation to trust was a necessary adaptation to living in a diverse society. If the value of the teenage friendship group was as a means of generating and maintaining a set of non-contingent social relationships we should not expect it to provide high trust supportive friendships, since this runs counter to its primary function.

6.1.2 - Context and Environment

The context of this phase of cannabis use is important in understanding its meanings for those involved. There appeared to be a relationship between the particular geography available to teenagers and the social groups involved in this distinctive form of cannabis use. It takes place in small (the sample suggests over 4 but less than 15, depending on the personalities involved, with smaller groups involved a different type of use) overwhelmingly male groups of a similar age (14-18 with a core of 15 and 16 year olds). These groups congregate and interact with other similar groups in green, interstitial spaces. This is not by choice a 'street-corner society' (Whyte, 1943), it was not public and open to all-comers, the teenage social group was constructed as a semi-private space where they might meet new people but retained some control over the people they would meet. Partly this preference for more private spaces led to the use of park and scrubland, they also appeared to value being 'close to nature' (Moffat et al., 2009).

This being close to nature was particular to the suburban context of the sample and it was unclear whether it played a particularly large part or was more co-incident. Modern towns and cities are characterised by their relationship to the car, the adult world becomes a series of home, workplace, shopping and leisure spaces interspersed by car journeys. This is often associated with a recognition of both the privatisation of public space and an increasing demand on land use in dense urban and suburban landscapes. In these spaces there is a conscious or underlying

recognition of our degree of 'fit' with them, our control over them and our 'right' to be in them. To use such spaces involves learning to negotiate our legitimacy and status within them.

To take an example from my own life, legitimacy in a shopping centre requires resource (money, credit, time), a purpose (to buy shoes, to window shop) and a set of behaviours and predicates that communicate that we are a legitimate user of such a space. In the first instance as an owner of outsize feet my legitimacy as a consumer comes into question since shops believe it is not incumbent on them to stock shoes outside of a normal range of sizes. Secondly my (from the shop assistant's perspective) increasingly demanding and goal directed behaviour (wanting to buy shoes) detracts from the 'shopping experience' of other shoppers who are catered for. In this moment I experience stigma, a lack of control over self-definition (Goffman, 1969), such that no matter what other conditions I have met (having resource, needing shoes, adopting the heuristic conventions of a legitimate shopper) I am not able to negotiate the conditions for legitimacy within this space, since it involves having feet within a particular range of sizes, which are then casually browsed for. This initial stigma over time leads to further loss of legitimacy in such spaces (shoe shops) as my need for shoes leads to behaviours which do not conform to expected shopping 'norms'.

This, admittedly oblique example, nevertheless neatly demonstrates the experience of stigma over a physical attribute which is difficult to change. The teenagers experienced stigma in relation to the legitimacy of inhabiting social spaces, over social expectations that they do not have resources, or the necessary social competencies to participate in these adult social spaces. Part of the reason cannabis use would cease to hold the same value post-adolescence was that this lack of legitimacy would pass simply as they got older. In the mean time, the interstitial spaces of suburban worlds inhabited by the teenagers provided them with a physical space where they had control over the markers of legitimacy, fit, and belonging. These meanings however require an activity in order to engage with, and to make sense of a space - in this way, the activity of smoking cannabis becomes a way of making

the space 'theirs'. Of all the activities available to them cannabis appeared to be the most conducive to spending time in these spaces. This suggests an alternative conception of rebellious teenagers, rather than setting out to rebel, lack of a place for them in accepted understandings of social spaces, forces them to create spaces and activities within these spaces which provide a place to belong. These spaces and activities provide a source of meaning for being in these spaces which cannot be fully shared by those who do not share the lack of legitimacy in 'normal' spaces.

The association of cannabis with this interstitial social and physical space that has been made their own could also influence their view of what cannabis is, does, and is for. Using cannabis could become a way of delineating time and space as 'their own'. If being a (male) teenager in adult social worlds was experienced as implicitly stigmatising, cannabis could then be read and configured as a way of reclaiming control over identity by establishing that their own group meanings are in operation rather than those that are dominant in the social space (Goffman, 1969). If being in a shopping centre is experienced as illegitimate for a teenage boy (lacking in coherent social frameworks in which to bring meaning to inhabiting this space) being stoned with friends in a shopping centre provides an alternative set of meanings. While this does not legitimate the teenagers' presence for the other users of the space, it provides the teenagers with an alternative way of inhabiting the space which can hold meaning for them. However, by establishing an alternative set of meanings associated with the space, the teenagers necessarily come into conflict with 'legitimate' users of the space who implicitly define the teenagers as illegitimate. This is the common complaint of 'kids hanging around', which society has come to define as an issue of public order.

Within the teenage groups which used the parks and scrubland there was a degree of territorialism over spaces but they appeared to accommodate other people, or other groups, moving on rather than risking confrontation. This said they did discuss avoiding certain people and they suggested a particular tension between those who were drinking and those smoking cannabis. While they suggested that for non-smokers, drinking with the group while they smoked cannabis was

a way to accommodate them, this related to moderate drinking. It seemed that while smoking joints and perhaps having the odd beer they could accommodate drinking, drinking to excess was not conducive to the cannabis smoking group. Equally while they were smoking bongos it would be difficult for a drinking non-smoker to participate. The presence of drunk and potentially violent peers in the environment seemed to be their greatest concern for risk in the environment. While an occasional dog-walker might walk past they tended to ignore the group and the group ignored them. It seemed that cannabis use could serve to cloak their activity from that of other age-groups helping to provide a degree of separation between them and others using the space. Adults, particularly at night, seemingly avoided interacting with them while they were smoking cannabis.

Competition for use of space did seem to be more of a problem during the day and some reported walking further afield to areas which may have been more risky to use at night-time. In the evening they could generally find somewhere closer to home where they could meet and where others could expect to find them. While they reported the contemplative effects of cannabis to be conducive to 'getting close to nature', it seemed to have less impact when the primary activity was smoking bongos. It seemed this 'riskier' activity of smoking bongos was done more often in less risky environments, again suggesting that for these groups, experiencing risk-taking and the display of risk taking was taken in a measured and considered fashion against a background expectation that they were actually quite safe (Peretti-Watel and Moatti, 2006).

6.1.3 - Procurement Networks

An important aspect of the symbolic function of cannabis within the group involved the ability to procure exotic varieties from beyond the friendship network. While cannabis was procured from 'known and trusted friends' (Parker et al., 2002) and could be procured within the cannabis using friendship group, there was also a tendency to source it from beyond the immediate group. Procurement of cannabis externally to the group offered a chance to develop relationships and interact with a wider spectrum of people than those who one would be most comfortable routinely

using with. Often it seemed those with the contacts to buy cannabis came from lower social classes, or lived in less affluent areas, performed less well at school and had lower aspirations. As well as the immediate peer group the data suggested it may be useful to consider the characteristics of procurement networks and the relationships they serve to maintain.

The procurement of cannabis involved developing and maintaining social networks in a potentially dangerous and unregulated part of the adult world. While there was an awareness of risk it appeared to be minimised by following a set of rules and by the structures of the cannabis dealing system. The rules for the teenagers involved; not getting 'lay-ons', not buying or dealing in larger quantities and not to tread on anybody else's toes. Equally, local dealers appeared to have a set of common-sense rules; younger teenagers were dealt to by older teenagers, not those in their twenties or older, they would give better value deals for those buying more cannabis up to a certain limit, thus minimising contact with the teenagers, deals were usually done by car and organised by mobile phone. By contrast the teenagers themselves would deal in smaller quantities at a higher profit ratio - offering another reason why members of their group might choose to procure elsewhere. This suggests that the 'trusted friend' model (Parker et al., 2002) is limited and a more fine grained analysis of dealing hierarchies and the movement between stations in this hierarchy is necessary. It was in their interaction with dealer networks that many teenagers considered the 'risk' element of cannabis use to lie and this is another area where there was the opportunity for a 'flirtation' with risk that they felt confident of mitigating.

This risk in procurement was felt to be by and large graduated and they felt a degree of control and choice over the level of risk they were happy to take. However, the ability to procure cannabis in itself brought a degree of status, this was augmented by being able to get better cannabis, a range of different types of cannabis and being able to get better deals for cannabis. This can be understood from role-status models, with this 'special' cannabis acting as a symbol of competence in social networks. Sharing this cannabis demonstrated the individual's ability required in

the establishment and maintenance of adult social networks. The status gained from this performance within the group appeared to be minimal, compared with the personal satisfaction in this competence display gained by the procurer. The group also gained a sense of performance satisfaction from having this capacity within their close social group. Amongst those who had longer experience with cannabis it was suggested that cannabis 'droughts' increased the level of risk that people were willing to take but also served to extend networks and change the position of operators within the dealing networks. There is therefore the potential for greater risk in procurement at times when cannabis supply has been attenuated. There was however, also a suggestion that overall supply had over the time of the three cohorts stabilised and overall choice in procurement had increased.

The findings emphasise the limits that must be placed on understanding drugs use through traditional dialogues of risk (see also p 268). Prior study of the operation of social networks in risk-taking, smoking, and drugs use has suggested that risk-taking and non-risk taking behaviours are learnt in peer clusters (Pearson and Michell, 2000). This work however involved younger adolescents, and defined smoking and cannabis smoking as a risk behaviour a priori which the cannabis users across the current study did not. Cannabis was not experienced or considered as risky, rather it was understood as safer than alternatives such as alcohol or tobacco use and the activities around use were experienced as less problematic than other activities of male teenage groups. While respondents were aware of a risk dialogue around cannabis, they did not identify with it, they recognised that many aspects of life involved managing risk and they believed themselves competent in managing the risks that they associated with cannabis. Some of the teenage cannabis smokers in the study did report identifying cannabis as risky when they were younger, but had rapidly redefined it as essentially non-risky as long as a few key rules were followed. The stratification of risk and status within the cannabis using peer group allowed individuals to choose the amount of risk they felt comfortable with. The risks when they started smoking cannabis appeared to be mitigated by learning, constructing and adhering to group and personal rules. As they became more experienced and cannabis became more everyday they appeared to rely on and adhere less to these rules .

6.1.4 - Contingency of cannabis

The findings stressed the, at first sight, self-evident fact that membership, and the continued existence of the cannabis using group, was contingent on the use and availability of cannabis. In understanding the contingency of the teenage cannabis using group we must understand it from a number of perspectives, a general set of 'weak' contingencies, and a special set of 'strong' contingencies. Weak contingencies related to the contingencies specific to the group and the activity, strong contingencies related to Giddens' (1991) conception of contingent and non-contingent roles, (see p 191) and involve essentially existential contingencies. One way to think about this is through the idea of needs (Maslow, 1943), strong or existential contingencies involve the satisfaction of basic needs through long-term relationships with high levels of long-term investment. Weak contingencies relate to the satisfaction of conditional rules for social participation in satisfying transient social needs. The concept of contingency is important, role contingency is no different to wider contingencies. Contingency merely describes the relationships and boundary conditions for any particular value, be that in roles, ownership, identification, activity, belief and so on. As such contingency is relative. Non-contingent values, roles, activities, behaviours and so on are those which are relatively independent of the nexus which supplies an individual's direct needs and instead can be directed towards more distant needs.

Participating in the cannabis using group then involves weak contingencies, the first contingency is to use cannabis, secondary contingencies relate to the need to maintain the friendships and relationships in the group in order to have a place in which to use cannabis, and to maintain the networks in which to procure cannabis over the expected duration of participation. The question arises as to, in what way is this different to the contingencies of family and school life? Most importantly, they are not consequential in the same way, it does not carry the same costs and risks of not performing the required role in the required way. While teenagers might be able to assert some measure of symbolic or actual rebellion against the rules of the school and the family, they must ultimately keep this rebellion within the bounds that the other party will accept. The teenagers understand that eventually

failure to maintain their role in school and the family could have a direct effect on their immediate existential needs, food, shelter and so forth. The cannabis smoking group creates and maintains a set of rules providing a safety net for the initiate and a framework for progressive transgression as they move from novice to experienced user. These rules around use and wider behaviour exist primarily to keep the group a pleasant context in which to use. Beyond this the group provides a space in which the teenagers have a high degree of freedom in their behaviour and the way they present themselves socially.

While the immediate social roles of the teenagers related to relations within the family, school and groups centred on activities (such as sports clubs) it is only the social context of peripheral friendships that exists outside these contingent adult frameworks. While teenage cannabis smoking groups could include, 'best' or long-term friends, engagement between individuals within the groups often appeared to focus on more distant members. The groups appeared to have an important function in practicing adult social relations within the safety of one's own age-group. It seemed to act as an experimental space where teenagers could try out different behaviours and ways of relating. The constitution of the cannabis smoking group, and the secondary activity of procurement reveals a strong focus on developing and maintaining peripheral social networks - often at the expense of focusing on more established relationships. The group is made up of individuals with disparate life contexts, different aspirations and values, almost flung together by the local context provided by the parks and public spaces and the common activity of smoking cannabis. This context is at first sight unusual, how does this disparate assemblage provide the security one might expect as necessary to experiment with identity, when close relationships do not? Particularly since focus groups and observations suggested that much of the group's interaction is characterised by 'taking the piss' and challenges to masculinity.

The type of masculinity being negotiated in the group was all about challenge and response, confidence and self belief. It appeared to be more meaningful than that reflected in contingent relationships, on the very basis that it is non-contingent - the

two parties do not have to accept the meaning of the other party. There was no cost except to a peripheral friendship, which was ultimately expendable. This kind of banter operates on a principle of tension and release, differences in meaning and status are articulated, producing a tension which is held for a time before being released, by either the acquiescence of the other party, or the two parties shifting the context from the 'serious' to that of 'the game'. It is about competent presentation of masculinity, and management of self-presentation, not about displaying masculine attributes in roles where they have any actual salience (partner, fatherhood, work role etc.) While this may be a particular feature of male teenage groups, it appears to change little over time and is also apparent in older groups, sports teams and pub games. For the teenagers, a major advantage in using cannabis rather than alcohol in such status games was that large quantities of cannabis could be consumed without fear of overdose (Brown, 1998).

Friendship pairs often seemed to be seen as more contingent, having the characteristics of being mutually supportive with an investment in continuity, each member gaining a sense of identity through developing a deeper understanding of the other over time (Giddens, 1991). The data suggests it is wrong to judge the value placed on non-contingent relationships by the same criteria as contingent ones. The non-contingent relationships were not less strong or less well developed versions of close contingent relationships rather they performed a different function. It seemed in large part to be in the very lack of contingency in peripheral social relationships that their value lay. The non-contingent aspect of these relationships is what allowed for identity play and experimentation. The bounding of peripheral transactions in nothing more than a mutual display of good will, an acceptance to take one another on their own terms is central to them, but failure to display this is ultimately for both parties inconsequential. The consequences of rejection in this context being only a moment of hurt pride and the need to move on to another peripheral relationship in which the requisite good will is displayed. The two actors in the transaction do not need to have equal social status, rather it requires some signal of mutual agreement to suspend prior status differences in the transaction.

6.2 - Cannabis and Identity

Social roles have been a key concept in sociology and sociological conceptions of identity. In Goffman's (1959) conception each social role (such as being a builder, a father, a son, a friend and so on) has a set of role expectations which bound its performance. These expectations are built on past performance of the individual and on wider social expectations about the role in play. Goffman's ideas can be read as a crystallisation of sociological thinking about these problems. As others have built on them a general set of ideas, what we might think of as a standard undergraduate curriculum of identity has developed (Posner, 1978). McCall and Simmons' (1966) ideas of role hierarchies provide a way of thinking about the relative importance of roles and the impact these hierarchies have on the way the role is played out. Implicit in McCall and Simmons' approach was the idea that the value an individual places on a role will be proportionate to their investment in it. McCall and Simmons therefore looked at interaction times for an indication of differential investment in roles. There is an expectation that roles involving a high level of investment involve a similarly high level of commitment and in turn that there is an expectation of continuity in the role being valued.

From this perspective what is most interesting about the cannabis using friendship group is that although there appears to be a high degree of investment in terms of time and resources, the teenagers routinely suggested a low level of commitment to the group as a whole. While there were valued friendship pairs the groups were characteristically diverse and diffuse in their backgrounds, values and understandings. The group and its activities were valued but they were understood as transitory. From the perspective of conventional understandings of identity this presents a conundrum. Why are these individuals committing large amounts of time and resources to a group and activity to which they have low levels of commitment, and indeed low levels of identification? What's more, while they are smoking cannabis with the group they are often ignoring, or investing less in activities and roles to which they otherwise have a high level of commitment. One answer might be that it is the simple pursuit of hedonic pleasure (Duff, 2008), however the majority of reporting focused on describing the pleasure they drew from the social context of

use. The pleasure they derived from cannabis in contingent relationships (e.g. with siblings) appeared to relate in some ways to bringing aspects of the freedom they associated with its use in the non-contingent context to the activity.

It seems to be just this aspect, of an overwhelming investment in non-contingent roles that they have little future commitment to, which is the most frustrating for parents and others with whom the teenagers have a committed and ongoing contingent relationship. They avoid spending time with their parents and family, avoid the family home in favour of cold, damp fields, skip homework and spend the majority of their limited income on an activity they recognised as being disapproved of (if not legally risky) which seems at odds with their articulated goals and aspirations in life. Interestingly their goals, aspirations and values did appear to be derived from their parents and were by and large mainstream, non-alternative, and in many ways rather conservative.

Traditionally identity theory would suggest that individuals are motivated to behave in ways that are congruent with their identity or identities. For instance a sportsman should be seen out practicing in a tracksuit, but should not be seen smoking, an office manager should be seen in a smart suit, but should not be seen doing manual work. According to this view increasing congruence with core identities and tight management of role perceptions should lead to a greater feeling of security and to an 'attained' identity (Erikson, 1968). Clearly transgression of such role congruent behaviours is commonplace - it can function as a way of softening status differences, or showing that you 'don't take yourself too seriously'. Demonstrating to teenagers the incongruence of illicit drug use with other valued activities, aspirations and identities has been pursued as a means of deterrence. This analysis suggests a number of mechanisms which explain why the effectiveness of such approaches may be limited.

Many traditional and 'commonsense' ideas about the relationship between teenagers and cannabis use, have assumed that there is an anxiety and uncertainty associated with this stage of transition which can put those experiencing it at risk of

cannabis use. Accordingly this may be in some way mitigated by the relaxing properties of cannabis. Alternatively it has been suggested that the effects of cannabis promote or exacerbate this ‘teenage angst’. By contrast the majority of teenagers interviewed in this study seemed broadly happy, socially confident and only displayed anxiety and frustration in relation to the fact that they were, as teenagers, socially subordinate in many of their relationships and in relation to uncertainties over their future prospects. Against this background, they did appear to derive a degree of social confidence from their experiences of competence and acceptance in the extended friendship groups with whom they used cannabis. Interestingly, in focus groups the cannabis users often appeared more confident and adept at self-presentation than many of their non-cannabis using peers. This may of course be an artefact of their greater engagement in a topic which held more interest for them.

The majority of models of the relationship between identity and problematic drug use suggest that drugs use has become central to the lives and identities of users (Koski-Jännes, 2002; McIntosh and McKeganey, 2000). The model outlined above of non-problematic use providing a valued social activity suggests a further way of understanding why individuals may continue to use cannabis (and other drugs) even when they experience problems with that use, which may also be applicable to some problematic contexts. It seems that peripheral non-contingent relationships may also be important in understanding aspects of mental health and wellbeing. This is built on in insights from recent work on mental health in ‘hard to reach’ groups (Lamb et al., 2011), which in turn was influenced in many ways from insights gained in the present study. It seems that identity transitions, not just in adolescence but in later life also, are supported not only by long-term contingent relationships but that non-contingent relationships play an important role.

For these teenagers cannabis provided a means of generating, facilitating and maintaining these relationships which was chosen from a limited range of options available to them. For the majority, their commitment to cannabis might therefore be read as secondary to these social processes. That is to say that the association

between cannabis and identity is not a direct one, rather it is rooted in a normal social process - participation in the cannabis smoking group satisfies a need for non-contingent relationships at a time of identity transition. Thinking about these processes suggests some interesting ideas for wider thinking about identity. Much of this is rooted in Giddens' (1991) conceptions of contingent and non-contingent roles, in relating these ideas to the data, two other concepts became useful which are not routinely used; nascent identities and proxy roles (p 193).

6.2.1 - Role Contingency

A contingent relationship is one in which people are bound together through an interconnection between roles in the satisfaction of basic needs and in which both parties are reliant on the competent performance of the other party (Giddens, 1991). Many contingent relationships relate to core roles, such as familial and work roles. Wider contingent relationships are characteristically transactional (e.g. the doctor patient relationship) and the transaction requires a shared understanding of each other's roles and value. The value system can be configured externally to the situation, or may be negotiated between the two parties, or the wider immediate group in which the transaction takes place. The transactional nature of contingent relationships tends towards the production of both formal and informal rules bounding conduct. Both family and school contexts for the teenagers were, and were experienced as, contingent; the roles and relationships in these contexts were bounded by rules and expectations.

Giddens suggests a longstanding contemporary trend towards bounding contingent relationships in intimacy - a common reciprocal understanding as equals. This relates in some ways to democratisation of the domestic sphere. The equality demanded in the relationship requires that status differences are concealed or bracketed. If successful, this results in what Giddens terms 'pure relationships' (Giddens, 1991). It is unclear to what extent this actually occurs within contingent relationships and to what extent it is an ideal model of communication which merely conceals the underlying power and contingency. Non-contingent roles are chosen roles and relationships, which lacking contingency appear to be in some

ways better placed to absorb the ideals of the 'pure relationship'. The general antipathy of cannabis using teenagers, when questioned, to the idea that cannabis smoking is the result of peer pressure seems to relate to this. They choose to use cannabis, and they choose the group they will use cannabis with. The cannabis smoking group is an unusual context in their lives, it provides a social framework that involves constructing and maintaining a set of 'pure', non-contingent, chosen relationships. Their membership of the group is contingent on their continued and regular use of cannabis. The value they place on these relationships and activities are their motivation to use and continue to use, rather than any overt pressure to use from the group, or any individual in it.

The illicit activity of smoking cannabis binds the relationships, from their inception, in the necessity of some degree of mutual trust. The act of openly using or admitting to using cannabis in front of another person, offering cannabis, or accepting someone into the cannabis smoking group, is in itself a demonstration of trust and social acceptance. The use and maintenance of multiple sources for procuring cannabis, is important as a display of competence, but is also important in allowing users and dealers to cloak what is essentially a transactional (and therefore contingent) encounter in features more congruent with non-transactional relationships. This kind of trust, that is a bounded trust specific to a particular set of roles, relationships and transactions suggests that the relationships involved in using cannabis are not sufficiently articulated through the concept of 'generalised' trust (Lindström, 2004) but should be viewed through Simmel's conceptions (Möllering, 2001). Equally contingent relationships and core roles involve specific expectations and trust in the satisfactory resolution of particular aspects of the relationship.

The teenagers' descriptions of the way cannabis fitted into their lives made clear that the principal roles and relationships were bound by contingencies. Evidently no one role can satisfy all needs and many aspects of a role will be in opposition or mutually exclusive. To take a common example it is difficult to be both a parent and a 'best friend', and attempting to elide the two roles will generally

involve inadequate performance in one or the other role. Much research focuses on the importance of ‘supportive relationships’ in wellbeing, taking on socially positive roles and behaviours and avoiding negative behaviours such as cannabis use. There appears to be less interest in the importance of wider roles in peripheral networks such as those characterised in relation to the teenage social group. The data, however, suggested that particularly when there is increasing strain placed on contingent relationships there was a limited capacity to express elements of identity which were not congruent with expectations of that role. By contrast peripheral non-contingent relationships such as those with the cannabis using group could accommodate a wider range of identity expression, albeit at a lower level of salience. The cannabis using group is evidently not the only source of non-contingent relationships however it appeared to be particularly effective in constructing, maintaining and facilitating this kind of relationship.

6.2.2 - Nascent Identities and Proxy Roles

Some of the most important concepts to emerge from the analysis provide a way of relating teenage cannabis smoking and the way it is understood, to the way that the teenagers experienced and negotiated the transition phase between child and adult. This transition phase can be understood through the twin concepts of proxy roles and nascent roles and identities. The analysis suggests that these nascent identities are transitory assemblages which the teenagers find and construct on the way to achieving longer term personal and social goals. Additionally they can also act as proxy roles through which they satisfy their immediate social needs. At this point in life, the question ‘Who am I?’, relates more to ‘Who will I be?’, than to ‘Who have I been?’. The primary concern about non-problematic users, relates to the question ‘What impact does teenage cannabis use have?’ on the question ‘Who will I be?’, and how does this impact future health, life chances and choices.

To account for the experiences related by the teenagers we need a concept in which the imagined contents of roles which have not yet been established can be expressed in the roles which are currently available. I have used the term ‘nascent identities’, these are important identities (valued personal attributes) which at the time they are

being expressed, explored and brought into being have no role in which they can be appropriately manifested. The roles in which these nascent identities are expressed can be thought of as proxy roles. Any role can be thought of as a container for expressing personal qualities and existing and available roles were used to develop these role contents when the desired role was not currently accessible. Nascent identities then exist in the teenager's idea of the requisite role contents of a desired role (a not yet achieved, or achievable role) but can initially be manifested only in the contents of other existing, or otherwise available, social roles.

The freedom and capacity provided by the unusual, exotic context of smoking cannabis, stood apart from the rest of the teenagers' lives. The informality, freedom and social negotiation in the 'learning to use cannabis' process allowed them a space where they were free to invent and negotiate their own meanings, identities and values in an environment in which they were on a similar footing with their peers. This process is predicated not on normalisation but on cannabis being exotic, hidden, different and novel - outside their experience prior to use. The inherent nature of the substance and its effects, which necessitate a 'learning to use', provided a context where they must construct personal and social meanings, understandings and rules. Within the group, which is as a whole characteristically naive; the initiate is shown a way to access this hidden experience, the novice hands down the secret knowledge that they have discovered, the experienced user learns how, when and where to safely challenge these meanings, rules, and understandings.

The concept of latent roles is an established idea in role theory, Gouldner (1957; 1958) developed a theory of 'latent' and 'manifest' roles. Manifest roles are those roles which have been established and the requirements and expectations of the role negotiated socially. Latent roles however relate to personal attributes, beliefs and behaviours which are not socially accepted as relevant to the manifest role at play in a given social context. Roles are containers through which people can assert aspects of themselves and through which they negotiate their social status. Roles can be stable, where through established conventions and previous personal

negotiation of the role contents, individuals have a reasonable expectation that their role presentation will be accepted as successful, and positively reflected by the other party in the social transaction. Or more often, and increasingly, roles can be fluid, subject to ongoing negotiation and revision - such roles have been described as 'postmodern roles' (Giddens, 1991). Here the established symbols and rituals of traditional cultures are contrasted with the transience of fashions, technological redundancy and a form of relativism brought about by commonly operating across multiple competing value systems.

Role symbols are physical artefacts which can be used to present aspects of the self and the roles one holds in both a manifest, or latent capacity. Characteristically they are the tools one uses in pursuance of the role which can over time become emblematic of that role even after they cease to be actively used (an architect's compasses, or a doctor's stethoscope). In Heideggerian terms these tools can be conceived as 'equipment', however, for an item to be equipment it must satisfy the criteria of being 'ready-to-hand', habitually and commonly used and constantly present in the environment where its use is manifest (Heidegger, 1927). Symbolic equipment is a different class of technology to the tools which are in contemporary physical use. Equally latent role symbols are not equipment in the same sense; they are a means of displaying status that is not inherent in the manifest role but has been transplanted from a different role. The use of latent role symbols can therefore provide a way for moving status from one context to another when operating across multiple value systems.

Rituals are established and socially recognised patterns of actions or behaviours, the meanings of which are sufficiently codified to be considered a culture. Knowledge of a group's rituals and competence in carrying them out confer status within the group and display membership of, or identification with the group. The rituals around use within the group were personally constructed by the group and negotiated by its members. That is to say that while the ways the group used cannabis were informed by wider culture, the group's own particular 'miniaturised culture' must be considered when understanding what cannabis use and member-

ship of the cannabis using group meant for them as individuals. The symbols they valued were personally distinctive artefacts such as home-made, improvised bong, the construction of which displayed their skill and ingenuity. This knowledge was shared but in its application was always personally distinctive. The group by and large did not use commercially available symbols such as T-shirts, smoking paraphernalia, or trinkets bearing a cannabis leaf logo.

Latent identities refer to the contents of otherwise manifest established roles which are not in play, or accepted as relevant to the role which is being performed at a particular time. The identity as cannabis smoker could be expressed as a latent role in the school context, and other social contexts of the teenagers by type 1 and type 2 users. For the adult reflectors who continued to use cannabis - or more often, expressed an intention to continue to use cannabis without actually coming to use it very often - their identity as a cannabis user was primarily, or entirely latent. However, they continued to hold it and express it through cultural knowledge in appropriate groups. It appeared to provide them with a connection to youth, their youth, and to both youth and other drug using cultures, and provided a way of expressing some values which they still held. Cannabis had moved from being 'equipment' and being 'ready-to-hand' to being a symbol that could be used or concealed as part of a battery of social symbols used in navigating different social groups.

I have argued that roles are containers for the expression of personal attributes, values and status. While there is a strong preference (perhaps socially, or structurally instituted) to demonstrate attributes through core roles, core roles may not provide the opportunity to communicate valued attributes. Further, established roles may make it difficult to express and explore attributes which are necessary to advance roles, to change roles, or to move to new roles. Proxy roles can then provide an explanation for the importance of developing and maintaining non-contingent relationships in times of identity change and transition. These proxy roles can provide positive re-enforcement of competence in the role contents of the desired role, in part satisfying the need for that role content to be accepted,

and increasing confidence in the ability to perform the desired role when and if it becomes available. By attempting to learn, develop, negotiate and hone these role skills inside the proxy role (or roles) individuals hope to come to the desired role, when it does become available, better equipped to succeed. Additionally by demonstrating the capacity for competent performance of the role contents this may make the desired role more likely to become available.

Proxy roles are then, characteristically roles in which there is enough latitude available in the performance of the role, that the other parties in the social transaction are willing to accommodate role contents, values and status that would normally be considered beyond the ambit of the role that is in play. A classic example of a situation deliberately arranged to provide proxy roles might be the management training ‘away-day’, where an alternative activity provides the opportunity for capacities such as leadership and mentoring to be displayed without fear of threatening established role hierarchies in the primary work environment. The joke of the away-day is, as everybody knows, the tendency for the group to directly transfer existing role hierarchies to the new situation. Capacities displayed in this alternative context being inevitably perceived as a threat in the primary environment.

Proxy roles are commonplace in the lives of many teenagers, they will adopt, or be assigned roles in school projects, sports teams and other extra-curricular groups in which they can practice and try out different potential role contents. If the provision of this kind of proxy role was the answer to fulfilling social and developmental needs, or mitigating behavioural problems (and it may of course help) that would be a relatively easy thing to do. However, the type of proxy role provided by the teenage cannabis smoking group appears to be different. Some of these differences appear to relate to the differing nature and potentials of contingent and non-contingent relationships. One of the interesting features of proxy roles is that unlike primary roles, the time and other resources invested in them do not appear to be experienced through the conventions of investment in terms of profits and losses. Rather the ‘costs’ of a proxy role seem to be written off against the primary roles which they come to influence.

Current conceptions rely to some extent on the assumption that roles and the groups in which they are held are valued and there is an expectation of continuity. I have argued that the teenage social groups described are by contrast characterised by transience and the expectation of transition to more ‘adult’ roles in which the behaviours of the teenage cannabis smoking group will no longer be congruent. Conventional theories address this through the concepts of role salience and role hierarchies (McCall and Simmons, 1966). The teenage cannabis smoking group was unusual in that the value placed on the relationships were directly related to their non-contingent character (Giddens, 1991). To put this another way, the roles played in the teenage cannabis smoking group are valued precisely because they are not salient over the longer term. The quite large degree of investment in these non-contingent friendship groups and into behaviour which is not at first sight instrumental in achieving extant goals, all occurs against a background expectation that the role and its attendant relationships will at some point in the near future be redundant.

6.2.3 - Bounding Adult and Teenage Roles

For individuals to find the value of this group they must first try cannabis (usually outside of the context of the group) then continue to experiment with it, then find, or in some way construct the group. There is no way of them knowing, a priori, that the group will provide them with this important context. This is not therefore a predictive theory of initiation of cannabis use, rather it suggests a theory of a positive context of use. It implies that having found these benefits to using cannabis with such a group, the individual will (barring external influences) continue to smoke cannabis with the group until such time that the characteristics provided by the group cease to be available, or cease to be important for the individual.

Since the social and self-acceptability of being part of such a group appears to be age limited, to continue using after this point involves finding or generating new contexts. Additionally if the developmental functions have been met, it requires finding new functions and understandings of the meaning of use for the individual which can be socially accommodated post-adolescence. One possibility is that

these understandings offer an explanation for the normalisation of heavy cannabis use post-adolescence, as an indicative symbolic mechanism for negotiating and displaying differential status and values as a response to difficult and uncertain social and structural conditions.

The bounding of adult behaviour and roles are structural, they are built into social norms and solidified in the apparatus of the state. As an adult the opportunities to change identity are limited and controlled by the societies in which we live, objects generally have to be paid for, the money to pay for them earned - equally the behaviours open to us have prices or benefits. As a child both the objects and behaviours open to us are normally limited and controlled by parents or guardians - a role assigned to them though state and society which they perform with varying degrees of success. Between the adult bounded by society and the child bounded by the family is the teenager, or young adult. While parental control is gradually relaxed the young adult moves towards the freedoms and opportunities of adulthood. A rational ideal of equitable society involves opportunities which are generally designed to be reciprocal and are organised on a reward principle. The teenager takes driving lessons and is rewarded with the freedom to travel, studies and is rewarded eventually with work, money, status and so on.

This is of course a simplified, idealised and above all rational abstraction. Basic competence in these reciprocal performance reward axes, is learnt from early infant-hood and the performance of them appears to be in some way hardwired into the brain chemistry of many animals. However, layer upon layer of complexity is built up in the relationships and behaviours of even small and distinct social units (remote tribes for example). Actions repeated by an individual lead to habits and the day to day differences in their performance and the concomitant rewards to status and influence. The repetition of actions in daily life lead to ritualisation and symbolic activity, objects and environments - and differences in these attributes to cultures. The actual performance and reward through this culture can now become abstract, the correct performance of the ritual with the correct symbolic setting

become socially paramount and the possibility arises for gratification distanced from action. This perspective has become commonplace in social anthropology, particularly in the work of Douglas (1975).

For all the supposedly postmodern, or what have been better termed ‘fluid’, aspects of identity, attitudes around the performance and responsibilities of key social roles provide nodal points anchoring and bounding behaviour. While it seemed that there was a greater degree of uncertainty over material reward and the resources to fulfil key social roles, the importance given to achieving and performing roles in relation to child-rearing, relationships, familial responsibilities and work roles remains. Proxy roles and non-contingent relationships may again be valuable in this context allowing people to negotiate appropriate evaluations of role performance outside of the primary role and bringing renewed confidence to that role. This complicates the normal picture of what constitutes a ‘supportive’ relationship, which is often considered to be protective of risk behaviours, such as cannabis use. It suggests that the concealment of contingency in modern relationships and social transactions (Giddens, 1991) is often no more than a happy and ideally mutual conceit. The central dimensions of personal identity, in which self-esteem is rooted, remain to the individual avowedly contingent. The importance of less contingent relationships is that they can offer a different range of support to these primary roles.

Adopting alternative or subcultural lifestyles can be seen as a way of aligning one’s self to a different set of values. Signifying this association through dress, behaviour and social identification signal that one’s behaviour should be judged through these alternative value systems. It appeared that for the teenagers there was a tension in entering such cultures. They could provide an alternative source of validation and normalisation of behaviours which could not be accommodated within the value systems the teenagers had grown up in. Since these alternative cultures could call into question the materialistic aspects of conventional status assumptions of roles and resources they could be useful to teenagers as a way of negotiating the meaning of their lack of access to resources. For the type 2 users this could be consistent

with their understandings of the intrinsic value of talents, culture and creative pursuits and their feelings of intrinsic status as a creative person. The orientation to alternative lifestyles favoured by the group (and perhaps society generally) was rather, to use vague symbolic gestures toward these alternative cultures to express their alignment with 'deeper' values than mass consumer materialism. However, at the same time they appeared to retain a traditional orientation to core roles and valued access to resources and ways of displaying their status and achievement provided by materialist culture.

There seemed to be an extent to which cannabis could be used as a symbol, that a person is a member of an alternative subculture and their behaviour should be judged by alternative value systems. Cannabis use in isolation however was not indicative of this, it had to be used as part of a wider vocabulary of symbols and behaviour in order to fulfil this function. This vocabulary was reliant on competent use of historical referents which the teenagers were not usually keen to align themselves with. Rather they wanted to control and own the meaning of their cannabis use, such that it was a DIY, authentic part of their particular youth. This involved keeping a distance from the historical referents and from mass media and mass market symbols of 'youth'. Constructing their own micro-culture in which the meaning of symbols was particular to them and revealed and supported by their immediate social networks, allowed them to make use of everyday items while subverting wider symbolic conventions.

6.2.4 - Personal Identity

While much of this analysis focuses on social identity, as does most sociological work, it is also worth relating it to the more difficult concepts involved in personal identity. Personal identity is broadly the set of identities and attributes which people hold about themselves, while social identity is broadly the set of identities which people negotiate in interaction with other people. While the two concepts are discussed as though they are analytically distinct, they are evidently inter-related, though the nature of this inter-relationship remains contested. Personal identity is often discussed in terms of the sense of continuity that is felt when we think about

ourselves. It also encompasses the idea of authenticity, the sense in which we feel that our behaviour is more or less aligned with an innate sense of who we are, how we would like to relate to the world and through social identity to other people in it.

Personal identity, understandings of the sense of self and the orientation of this self to understandings about the world form the bulk of human literature (Lyotard, 1979). There is an ideology of the self that can be seen to change through time: renaissance selves, modernist-selves, religious and philosophical selves, the existential-self and the Cartesian-self. The self can be conceptualised in an essentialist fashion, the eternal 'spirit' of religious understandings, or through Cartesian self-observation, both reflecting the subjective feeling of what (Glover, 1988) has called the 'irreducibility of the I'. There is then a tension between these ideologies of self and the personal contemporary experience of an 'authentic' self, the 'who am I' and the 'who should I be'.

Identity is always abstract, it is not an extant feature of people, there is no physical object one can point to, no set of finite, quantifiable and differentiated dimensions which can adequately circumscribe and communicate identity. Discussions which focus only on social identity often read as if this were possible, however the nature of personal identity reveals the problems with these approaches. As Nagel (1974) points out 'there is something it is like to be a bat' and regardless of the subtleties of the systems and tools used experience tells us we cannot get completely inside the personal subjective experiences of the other. Equally there is something it is like to 'be Spud', at that time when he was interviewed, which we can never fully appreciate or describe. It is this situation of 'being Spud' which informs the other dimensions which make up the social displays and the understandings that make up 'my mate Spud', or 'my son Spud'. The state of 'being Spud' exists in relation to an environment and a field of social relations in which the meaning of 'being Spud' is constructed. At the point in his life at which he was interviewed using cannabis was a mechanism in the construction of this environment in which 'being Spud' or 'being Spud's mate' was experienced.

Situated between there being ‘something it is like to be a bat’, and ‘something it is like to be Spud’ is identity, the ‘something it is like to be one bat rather than another’. It is in this area, the subjective experience of identity, that it is most contested. Not least because from a Cartesian perspective it requires some construction, or object to be *the thing that is doing the experiencing* (Scruton, 1981). Outside of philosophical thought experiments, there is not ‘something it is like to be a table’ - since we assume that a table does not have the apparatus for experiencing itself. Indeed ‘a table’ cannot know that it is a table, the table requires an external agent to experience the qualities that make it a table. In the same way there are aspects of our self and identity which we can actively experience but there are other aspects of our identity which involve another person experiencing our qualities and communicating their understanding to us. Existential philosophy stresses the limits and the difficulties of this communication and the importance of freedom and agency (Sartre, 1943).

In this sense a relationship is like a mirror, albeit an imperfect one, and it is one in which we must understand the other in order to understand the way in which they distort the image we see, in their perception and in their communication (Cooley, 1902). This is the necessity for mutual understanding in relationships and developing this level of understanding brings its own contingencies. We rely on the investments we have made in understanding the other in order to understand aspects of ourselves. If our relationships are in part ‘mirrors’ they may be distorted by contingency in relationships but equally they are distorted by the fluid mutuality inherent in the non-contingent relationship. This suggests that both contingent and non-contingent relationships offer the capacity to reflect aspects of identity (personal and social) but in different ways. Confidence and trust in the contingent relationship requires and fosters ongoing coherent and role-congruent behaviour. Evidently in many ways this contingency in fact limits the capacity for intimacy. As Giddens (1991) points out intimacy has not always been considered a necessary precondition in close spousal and familial relationships. The move towards contingent roles becoming ‘pure’ roles may in fact reflect only a short period of time where spousal and familial relationships were less contingent since increased access to resources allowed a greater degree of autonomy.

Hopefully the experience of our qualities by the other person is more involved than their experience of a table's qualities - and the science of perception suggests that this is the case, we dedicate more attention to appreciating qualities relating to other people than the qualities of tables (Gombrich, 1977). Peripheral non-contingent relationships may in fact be more valuable in terms of learning to project and negotiate identity than contingent relationships. The relationship between personal identity, 'who we think we are', and social identity 'who others think we are', 'who we think others think we are' influences how we navigate our need for others to respond to us in a way that honours our own self-perceptions, as individuals, and in the way they respond to the groups that we consider ourselves, or they consider us, to be a part of. It is such processes that form the sociology of identity and these processes that the teenagers were learning to navigate, manipulate and deal with. If the teenagers were also constructing an innate, internal, 'unified' sense of self, there was no evidence of this, but neither was it something that the study was designed to look for (Erikson, 1968). In relation to cannabis and identity there is doubtless more to consider, however such ideas will necessarily be more speculative, relying on philosophical principles, though perhaps conventional philosophy might usefully engage more with empirical data (Chalmers, 1995).

Understanding both identity and drugs use then, requires an understanding of both the individual and the society and culture around them. We cannot understand social identity in isolation from personal identity and no one theoretical framework, or model adequately frames such complexity. If there remain problems over the commensurability of paradigms within the social sciences, the problem of commensurability across disciplines is greater. However, in the case of identity there is a greater problem still. Paradigms and commensurability as they have been understood in the social sciences rest on ontological and epistemological assumptions. To bring philosophy into the debate is to stress the assumptive nature of these positions and hence come to terms with the uncertainties inherent in the fluidity of what are often framed as normative structures in the practice of science. While there remain palpable potentials in developing these understandings they require

the researcher to live with a great deal of uncertainty and confront the difficulties and limitations of what can be communicated even to a specialist audience working in a similar field (see also p 296).

6.3 - Understandings of Cannabis Use

Understandings of cannabis use in the literature focus on defining aspects, or orientations to use and the conditions which bound these definitions. Some of these understandings are well grounded in empirical data, others relate to a priori assumptions where empirical understandings of cannabis use are subordinated to theoretical or ideological viewpoints. Understandings of use which relate to predictions of theoretical frameworks have the advantage that their relationship to wider knowledge is to some extent pre-established. By contrast an inductive approach necessarily entails a more speculative and explorative orientation to wider and existing knowledge.

What was clear across the groups was that continuation of use required, and to an extent created and facilitated, social contexts where cannabis 'fitted'. This brought with it the possibility of joining other, and existing, networks constructed around the use and procurement of cannabis. While some of these contexts might conceivably continue, or come to exist without cannabis, the effects of cannabis could motivate or facilitate them. For the most instrumental (see p 206) users (type 2) there was no indication that those who made music, for instance, together while smoking cannabis would stop making music. Or that they would not have come to make music together without cannabis, but the effects of cannabis seemed to bring something extra to this activity. On the other hand, the social groups whose primary activity was using cannabis together each evening on the parks and green spaces had come together and existed only because of the shared activity of using cannabis. It appeared that most individuals, regardless of whether they used cannabis in other groups where it was secondary to the main activity, also participated in groups where cannabis itself was the main activity.

The relationship of their own and others cannabis use to wider understandings of culture, society and social roles, was related to the typology of styles of use and commitment to use. While the styles of use influenced understandings and meanings placed on the use of cannabis, within these styles of use there was further variation related to individual preferences, values, background and life expectations. While the respondents' use could be characterised as primarily recreational, to focus only on recreational use would have missed the importance of their functional use and the dynamic that existed between the two. Understanding their use involves examining both the contexts of use related in the primary data and attempting to situate these findings with concepts in the existing literature, and with wider, social and structural conditions.

6.3.1 - Functions of Cannabis Use

While the background focused on a number of key themes and movements in the social, professional and academic understandings of cannabis and other drugs use, there is a wide range of literature and concepts that have been used. The typology of use presented involved aspects related to 'why cannabis?', that is the 'functions' of use, the associated 'styles' of use, and a notion of commitment to cannabis, or to the social group. The concept of function has been linked to predicting future use (Boys et al., 1999, 2001, 2002; Boys and Marsden, 2003).

Boys et al. (2001), following Sadava (1975), use the concept of 'perceived function' to include 'personality and environmental variables' as distinguished from 'instrumental drug use' which they suggest 'does not encompass use for more subtle social or psychological purposes' (2001:458). Instrumentality is a difficult term, the word in itself suggests only that the effects should be instrumental in achieving a desired function - since the cannabis using group and their activities would not exist without the specific activity of using cannabis, cannabis is in this sense 'instrumental' to their activities. However, the word appears to be used more in the sense that the value of the function is placed squarely on the effect, with the social or psychological function being somehow secondary. The range of effects of cannabis makes it difficult to achieve this distinction. While a truck driver using

amphetamine to stay alert is clearly instrumental, a musician using cannabis to improve auditory acuity will also experience the relaxation, spatial and temporal dislocation and his listening experience will be influenced by the social environment, through set and setting (Zinberg, 1984). However, making a distinction of this kind is important in the findings, it is an important component in distinguishing the style and orientation to use in the type 2 user. We might say that a degree of instrumentality should be observed in type 2 use and further that type 2 users distinguish between their instrumental use and their social use. However, this obscures slightly that they often reported social use in instrumental terms, or vice versa. They took cannabis ‘to socialise’ in a way that they perceived as in some ways no less instrumental than, ‘coming out with this mad bass-line when I was fucked’ (Alex, p 108), was perceived to be a combination of the social (a party) and instrumental (the direct effects).

Boys et al. (2001) found, in their quantitative study of a sample of poly-drug users with no history of drug treatment, that the perceived functions served by the use of a drug predict the likelihood of future consumption. In relation to cannabis use they found the most common functions were to; ‘relax... become intoxicated... enhance activity... decrease boredom... to sleep... and to “feel better” ‘ (Boys et al., 2001:463). Across substances they found these to be some of the most common functions required of a drug which despite the different effects of the drug were attributed to the use of many different substances. They suggest this has implications for drugs education, prevention and harm minimisation, predominantly that approaches which do not take into account the underlying functions of use are likely to result only in a movement from the use of one drug to another.

This effect seemed to be confirmed at the societal level when there was a movement from normalised dance-drug use, to widespread use of cocaine and high levels of alcohol use (Measham, 2004b). The normalisation of dance-drugs use in the 1990s was followed by the criminalisation of ‘raves’ (i.e. the contemporary contexts of dance-drug use rather than just the drugs used in that setting), leading to a widespread movement to alcohol and cocaine use, which were more conducive to the

nightclub settings which the dance music culture had moved to (Measham, 2004a). Essentially this was a move from a DIY culture involving drugs use with relatively low health risks, to the relatively higher risks of a culture linked to a commercial environment which is predicated on alcohol sales and the use of stimulants to maintain social function while consuming high levels of alcohol. Ecstasy use had arguably made being visibly intoxicated more socially acceptable and decreased the stigma which had attached to drugs use in the 1980s through heroin problems and the association with AIDS.

More recently this may have led to a normalisation of high levels of alcohol use amongst teenagers (Measham, 2008). The cannabis users in the current study sampled in 1998 and 2004 were clear that cannabis served different functions to alcohol and they were not interchangeable. This study has offered both extant and underlying mechanisms which supported the teenagers' cannabis use over alcohol. Respondents stated that they avoided alcohol because of cost, aggressive behaviour and the after-effects making it unsuitable for school nights. The type and value of the social relationships which their use facilitated and maintained were specific to cannabis, its illicitity and maintaining a perceived degree of exoticism. On the basis of the data and the interpretations we can only speculate on what may have changed, though it seems likely the interpretations would extend to a similar demographic today.

Following earlier findings (Boys et al., 2000; Wibberley and Price, 2000b), Boys et al. (2001:458) conceive function in the context of rational decision making processes:

...the decision to use a drug is based on a rational appraisal process, rather than a passive reaction to the context in which the substance is available...

This being the case drug users when interviewed should be able, on some level, to understand and articulate the cost-benefit aspect of this process, that is, it relies on 'perceived function'. The approach taken in the present study follows a slightly different understanding of functions - specifically it allows for the inclu-

sion of both perceived functions but also of underlying functions that are based on empirical observation but not necessarily fully articulated by the respondents. This is provided by the interpretive dimension in the analysis, however, it puts a distance and a degree of uncertainty on the articulation of functions. The group would not have used or identified with the terms used in the analysis, they would though, I believe, if fed back to in their own terms recognise the phenomena being described (unfortunately this was not possible in this study). The late-twenties-reflectors had a greater awareness of the possible social and psychological functions played by cannabis in their teenage years, though these understandings were also coloured by an accommodation to wider life narratives.

This points to a tension in the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to this problem. In formulating structured questions, which will be applicable and meaningful to a wide range of respondents, there is a necessary move to abstractions such as 'to socialise'. In a structured questionnaire design this requires the interviewee to understand and interpret the structured measures meaning 'to socialise'. By contrast the inductive, ethnographic approach involves finding out about people in a more general way, then relying on the analysis to characterise what 'socialising' is and means to the people involved in the study. People do not routinely seem to think about themselves and their behaviour in such an instrumental fashion. They are unlikely to think 'I must develop my extended non-contingent friendship networks', rather they will find a particular activity is satisfying, find that it makes them feel good and is something they'd like to repeat in some way. That is, until it ceases to perform the functions which were providing satisfaction, the functions they require change, or the relationships change to accommodate them.

Little attention has been paid so far to the interaction of functions that though evidently linked (e.g. 'to socialise', 'to increase self-confidence'), require respondents to questionnaires to consider them independently. It is also limited in its approach to the potentially dynamic nature of functions. To take a common example, while waiting alone for friends to arrive in a bar, we might drink to feel more comfortable being alone with strangers and to give us something to do. Not wanting to be

drunk when the friends arrive, we slowly nurse a pint. When the friends do arrive, the function and pattern of our drinking changes. In other words a function may be a general function or a contextually contingent function. This is not to say that perceived function is not a useful and predictive measure but that more theoretical and empirical work would be needed before it could usefully be operationalised. The understandings of function articulated in the present study may be of use in considering, or furthering understandings of perceived function.

Findings demonstrated that the group did use cannabis in a directly functional way, that is they derived direct pleasure from the effects of the drug. There was also a secondary functionality to the effects, which were used to augment or change activities when using cannabis was not the primary activity; increased sensory acuity, perceived increases in creativity, for humour, to make time pass more quickly, or slowly. More important still was the social functionality, which the effects of the drug contributed towards but also included aspects which were not directly attributable to the effects of the drug but to the social settings, roles and rituals involved in procuring, smoking and enjoying the drug and its effects with others. For the majority in the teenage cannabis smoking group, this social functionality appeared to be the primary motivation for continued and regular use.

The analysis suggests a more useful way of using the terms instrumental and functional, would be to distinguish more clearly between functions which can be perceived and articulated by respondents, interpreted functionality, perceived instrumentality and interpreted instrumentality. Such a model would need to accommodate the relative sophistication of different users and their reflective and communicative capacity. By way of example drinking cocoa to relax at bedtime is common despite the effects of cocoa as a mild stimulant. The belief and social ritual aspect of this practice may militate against experiencing and understanding the effects of the stimulant. Here perceived and articulated instrumentality is in opposition to interpreted instrumentality and can only be understood through recourse to interpreted functionality. This leads to the further observation that in cultures which use cocoa to relax it is often very low in cocoa content. Normalisation of

the perceived function of cocoa as a relaxant has been culturally accommodated by normalising a form of the product with little active ingredient. By contrast it has been suggested that the caffeine content of service station coffee was in 2004 insufficient to significantly affect driving performance and fatigue despite drivers belief that they used caffeine instrumentally - placebo affects on driving performance were not observed (Horne and Reyner, 2007).

6.3.2 - Normalisation, Deviance and Norms

Of the major dialogues used in conceptualising drug use at the societal level, the background chapter highlighted normalisation and deviance (Becker, 1963; Parker et al., 1998). These concepts and debates revolve around how society views drug use, and in turn how the drug user perceives their own use, how society's views of drugs use impacts on the way they use, and the way users configure, present and understand their use of drugs and that of others. The teenagers considered their use to be 'normal for them', most of their home friends, and many of their school friends smoked cannabis, many also had siblings and relatives who used cannabis.

The focus on exploring a 'normal' context of use from the perspective of users offers some interesting implications for understanding the place of teenage cannabis use in relation to wider debates such as normalisation (Parker et al., 1998). The normalisation argument suggested that cannabis use and drug use more generally, have to be understood from a wider perspective of the way it fits into individuals' 'normal' life, everyday routines and social life, rather than through positioning drugs use and users within a deviant subculture (Hammersley, 2005b). The findings suggested that a more complex picture where, beyond increased availability and a lack of stigma, the teenagers were largely ambivalent about societal normalisation, what was important to them was the understanding that cannabis use was 'normal to them'. Though many recognised societal normalisation they reported mixed feelings about this and about the question of legalisation.

While they did not appear to consider cannabis as deviant, or cannabis use as a symbol of deviance, they were exposed to this understanding during their time at school and with some parents. There was a sense in which they considered both parties were obliged to act from the understanding of cannabis as deviant while neither party actually considered it to be deviant. The understanding of cannabis as deviant was maintained only in the role-bound behaviour which the authority figure was forced to act from. No party had power over the construction of deviance in this encounter, rather it was embedded in the social frameworks in operation. The move from a deviant model of drugs use to a normalised model will necessarily be protracted and complicated. However, this relationship suggests that deviance is embedded in social frameworks which it is not possible to change without compromising other key functions within these roles and relationships.

Though they considered their use of other drugs (amphetamine, LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, ecstasy) to be experimental, the teenagers did not consider their cannabis use in this way, it had become a part of their everyday lives. Neither did they consider that their cannabis use had implications for their use, or future use of other drugs. Rather they saw that other drugs had a different set of appropriate social contexts. While they considered that cannabis use was and should be 'normal for them' and appropriate to their situation, the other drugs (which some had experimented with) would not be normal, or appropriate to them as teenagers, or to their situation, hanging around on parks. The idea of ESU (experimental substance use) for them suggested a lack of sophistication in their use which they would not accept, though they did understand their use as a 'phase', an allowable period of youthful transgression which would cease. They used understandings of 'normal' not including drug use continuing into adult roles in order to bound and put limits on their use and their behaviour.

In discussing other drugs, the teenagers were less sure of appropriate contexts which limited their interest in their use. For instance although a few had tried LSD they remained unsure what situations would be appropriate to use, consequently triers and non-triers had little interest in it. Their experiments with mushrooms

appeared to have been largely unsuccessful and experimentation was limited by availability and seasonality. They had a conception of 'club drugs' (amphetamine, ecstasy and cocaine) which some had tried and felt they may use in future, these were considered 'normal' for the club context and for people in their twenties. Interestingly, while many had older siblings who continued to use cannabis and other 'safe' drugs, they did not consider continuing to use drugs into adulthood as normal, appropriate, or desirable. They appeared to characterise the continuing use of drugs into maturity as a symbol of failure and being a 'loser'. Their concept of adulthood did not include wider drug use, or cannabis use, though they recognised that the time this adulthood was achieved was to some extent fluid and circumstantial, they expected it to occur at some point in their twenties.

Much of the teenagers' conception of adulthood seemed to relate to strong views about the responsibilities of parenthood, and people being intoxicated while having children in their care. The scenario of smoking cannabis at a family party where children were present and people were drinking alcohol was raised in a focus group carried out in relation to the MMU schools study (Roy et al., 2005). While the initial impulse across the group was that smoking cannabis in this context would be wrong and unacceptable, on further discussion it revealed tensions and uncertainties between what was 'normal' and what was 'acceptable'. Many in the group used cannabis and had previously suggested it was safer and less problematic than alcohol, because it did not result in aggression. While several had reported using cannabis with siblings and other family members, it was nevertheless considered unacceptable in the family party context, while playing with 'drunk uncles' was acceptable. Some considered that in terms of the effects they had previously reported, this was not an entirely rational position, however, cannabis was nevertheless considered unsuited to such occasions.

One of the impacts of living in a society and culture in which recreational psychoactive drug use is to some extent normalised is that teenagers are cognisant of a wide range of substances prior to the appearance of these substances in their immediate environment and the opportunity to use them. The fact that cannabis use had

become normal in society, which the teenagers were aware of, did not mean that it had become normal for them. It was the appearance of cannabis in their immediate social groups, age groups and circle of friends that made cannabis something 'normal' for them to do. This process occurred in phases: cognisance, appearance in immediate environment, perception of appropriateness, initiation, progression to regular use, developing patterns of use, and could include increasing use, changes in the types of use and periods of tailing-off, or cessation. There was no clear suggestion as to whether close-friends use, or use by non-contingent friends in the smoking group had a greater impact on intention to use other substances.

Parker et al. (2002:941) suggest five main dimensions indicating normalisation:

- availability/ access
- drug trying rates
- usage rates
- accommodating attitudes to 'sensible' recreational drug use especially by non-users
- degree of cultural accommodation of illegal drug use

The groups in the current study reported that cannabis was readily available from a variety of sources, they were all or had been, through the inclusion criteria, regular users. They acknowledged commonplace cannabis use amongst many of their peers, though they believed that girls were less interested and accepting of cannabis use. The findings suggested that the particular contexts of the male teenage cannabis smoking group should be understood as a gendered context (Measham, 2002). The first three dimensions suggested are a precondition for normalisation which are largely understood to have been met in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The test for normalisation then rests on the last two dimensions of social and cultural accommodation to 'sensible' use.

The findings of the current study are consistent with the idea that there is a natural limit to normalisation rooted in the fact, as noted by Parker, that substance use tends to be naturally curtailed through entry into adult roles and responsibili-

ties (Parker, 2005). Additionally the cohorts interviewed felt that a different set of rules applied to them as teenagers, that would cease to apply as they grew up. Accommodation is thus a more difficult and contestable condition which is subject to the way we conceive of cultures and to a lesser extent societies. Perhaps most significantly this has implications for the idea of a youth culture in which drugs use is normalised as a vehicle for increasing drugs use (Forsyth et al., 1997). For the teenagers the only obvious perceptible impact of normalisation appeared to be ready availability at a price they could afford. Normalisation had resulted in a situation where cannabis, whether one chose to use it or not, was readily available in the day-to-day worlds the teenagers moved in. Normalisation for the young male teenage cannabis using group did not however, involve a high degree of connection to wider cultural norms, understandings or youth movements. In the context of cannabis they were relatively indifferent to the opinions of non-users, or accommodation in wider society.

The culture of the teenage cannabis using group involved establishing their own norms, rules and understandings about use, based on their own experiences and immediate social environment. As teenagers they did not seem to feel they had the access or resources to participate in recognised youth cultures. As they grow up, become more accustomed to use, participate in wider networks, gain more personal resources, and greater access to adult social environments, these early understandings may move towards those that would be commonly recognised and understood by other users from beyond their social groups. Their own individual experiences and the experiences of their groups could then be accommodated within this wider generational zeitgeist. That is to say, that for them cultural and societal normalisation of cannabis use is likely to be established only *ex post facto*. Their own personal experiences took primacy over mediated cultural participation and this formed the basis for their judgements about the authenticity of youth cultures which they considered as varying in their authenticity.

There appear to be two aspects to cultural adoption of a particular form of drugs use, the range of activities which inherently 'fit' with the effects of the drug and the construction of social understandings around the drug. While the meanings brought to experiences of the drug may be impacted by these background understandings, the effects can be more stable and unchanging. Increasing cocaine use over recent years for instance, could be read as a means to maintain an active social life under a culture of long working hours, or as a symbolic alignment to a conspicuous consumption and 'bling' popular culture. There is here an evident recursive relationship between use and meaning. Understandings of the 'fit' of cannabis in the group however, suggested that the interpretations were routed in the miniaturised community of the extended cannabis smoking group. The teenage cannabis users by and large believed they would cease to use cannabis in relation to achieving social roles where it would no longer be appropriate and congruous. They believed there would come a time when it would no longer 'fit' with their lives. In part this was through their identification of cannabis as positive in 'youth' and frivolous and inappropriate to adulthood. More importantly it provided them with a means of bounding and limiting their behaviour which they appeared to value.

The problems inherent in a normalisation of cannabis use are not that it normalises non-problematic use, but rather that it provides a model for accommodating drugs use, that may become harmful to health or to social function, in otherwise normal cultural routines. As the above examples make clear, health and social function can operate in competition. Drugs have in some arenas become a routine part of life, to maintain social function when a habitual, required and socially valued role is, or becomes, inherently dysfunctional. It appeared in some ways that the lack of direct instrumentality, the social conditionality inherent in the teenagers' experience of cannabis, concealed the social instrumentality. The teenagers did appear to be using cannabis indirectly as a social tool to provide a set of conditions which were amenable to identity play and learning to socially and personally negotiate fluid identities. In this case, if cannabis is being used as a tool in a time of identity transi-

tion, we should expect, given the uncertainties and transience of social roles in late modernity, that people may return to using cannabis when previously established roles are threatened or become untenable.

Normalisation of cannabis use in the male teenage friendship group should perhaps be read as a particular case, that may be different in important ways to normalisation of cannabis use in other social spheres. Nevertheless cannabis use as a response to times of transition later in life may have more features in common with this phase. Normalisation and deviance do still appear to be useful and relevant concepts in relation to cannabis use but it would seem more useful to use them in relation to particular individual dynamics, of particular social and cultural groups, than in society as a whole. While the 1990s saw an increase in drug use across society, normalisation and deviance appear to operate as a value mechanism along with power relationships and othering. Normalisation of use does not then lead to a lack of stigma around use, there is always the fear that others' knowledge of use can be used against you and may be used to limit the ways in which you are perceived or the opportunities open to you. This would seem to militate against the wider recognition of normalisation since use is only socially revealed to select groups. There remains a directional social calculus whereby a stockbroker relaxing with a spliff after work may be acceptable while a bin man using cannabis to pass a dull job is not.

6.3.3 - Norms and Behaviour

One reason the concept of normalisation has been important in the context of identity is because of its place in psychological and social psychological models (Terry et al., 1999). The question remains as to exactly what we mean by normalisation in this context, while normalisation for Parker et al. (1998) involves normalisation at the level of society, other models relate to normalisation through 'norms' in terms of the place of the drug in the everyday lives of individuals and small groups. This can alternatively be thought of as representing the views represented in the central belt of a normal distribution of a particular demographic. Normalisation at the societal level remains contested (Hammersley, 2005b), this form of normalisation

would ostensibly involve a reduction in the stigma of use and an increase in the number of social situations in which smoking cannabis is acceptable, along with a change toward availability through ‘normal’ social contacts, removing, or masking the need to procure through otherwise criminal routes.

Potentially one of the most interesting aspects of the normalisation argument relates to the place of normative influences in influential psychological theories. The theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) models, are widely used models in health behaviour outlined by Ajzen (1991). TPB relates behaviour to attitudes and offers a variety of mechanisms and boundary conditions. Conner and McMillan (1999) considered the interaction between existing dimensions and some potential extensions to the theory in relation to cannabis use. The dimensions they explore include:

- Attitude towards behaviour (personal evaluations/ beliefs about likely outcome)
- Subjective norms (normative beliefs, social pressure to perform)
- Injunctive norms - pressure from others
- Descriptive norms - perceived engagement in activity by others
- Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), locus of control, power (added to TRA to form TPB)

Connor and McMillan emphasise that the model is emergent and has been significantly adapted and expanded upon since its introduction to account for application to novel areas, and for differences between expected results and outcomes in empirical studies of particular areas. Most notably, they report subjective norms in the original model suggested a weak relationship to intentions. However, this did not account for Leitners’ (1993) findings, included in their review, that respondents considered peer pressure to be an important cause of drug use. This may be an artefact of the research design, or of unrecorded priming of the students through media, or prior health and social education. However, it is also interesting in light of the analysis in the current study.

TPB is configured to outline and understand the cognitive processes resulting in deciding to use, rather than the social processes in which use takes place. The findings in the present study suggested that the outcomes of a behaviour, in this case cannabis use, should be understood through its relationship to a nexus of other concurrent social behaviours, performances and displays, management of identity within 'in', and with 'out' groups, social network development, and so on. Additionally in relation to behaviours which had at first sight little salience to the immediate social situation (of participation in the cannabis using group) but related to what we might call longer-term projects, identity play, learning to manage status and social and group norm development and management. The conditions of volition, agency and intention involved in these long-term projects asks questions about the scope of theories of reasoned action.

The danger with this view is that it returns us to a domain of subconscious drives and urges, or externalised social pressures which deprive the individual of agency in relation to aspects of their own behaviour. The centrality of norms in TPB demonstrates a recognition of the social contingency of individual behaviour. The social dynamics around cannabis use suggested in the current study provide a way of thinking about motivations which do not rest on immediate rational agency, without devolving agency to a third party, or a hidden intention. Rather, the analysis and interpretation suggest that the limits of an individual to interpret and rationalise their own behaviour lie in the difficulty of distinguishing and communicating the nuances of dynamic social activities, in terms of the kind of dimensions available in a structured research questionnaire.

The interpretation and analysis suggested ways in which the value of activities and behaviours that are not obviously particularly pleasurable, or positive, is difficult to ascertain by the individual. This is not a lack of agency, rather the teenagers did experience cannabis as pleasurable, but also derived many other social and developmental benefits which they were either not directly aware of, or found difficult to articulate, but which nevertheless added to, and were experienced as, part of the pleasure of the group cannabis smoking experience. The social rules of the group

(and of fluid non-contingent groups in general) explicitly deny or conceal status hierarchies, stressing the freedom of the individual to hold and express different beliefs without negative sanction from the group. Paradoxically however, this tacit suspension of status outcomes within the confines of the group, appeared to be configured so as to provide an open learning environment for the developmental task of learning to manage and manipulate status claims and threats.

There is an explicit political and religious ideology of relationships, which stresses the importance of strong, trusting, supportive, committed and ongoing relationships as a cornerstone linking the individual to family, community and society. An interesting observation is that the values at play in social settings understood as contingent are evidently often different to the values operating in non-contingent settings. Secondly, the status games played out in the teenage cannabis smoking group, necessarily involve a suspension of convention, ideals and beliefs, as a part of the 'game'. The non-contingent nature of the group means that core deeply held beliefs are not expressed and operationalised within these setting and roles, in much the same way that some pubs and drinking clubs hold the rule 'no politics'. To play status games requires a suspension, or negotiation of status external to the game and that each party embraces loss of status as a feature and possibility in good grace. The game involves and produces a social levelling, which would be meaningless if status differences in the contingent everyday world did not exist. It is a game where both parties win, since acceptance of status failure within the 'socialising world' can be turned to a reading of greater external status, conferring confidence in the strength of values, beliefs and behaviours in the contingent 'everyday world'.

One example which makes this clear was in the descriptions of managing 'whiteys' - the whitey involved an explicit and extended loss of status and competence which had then to be regained. Everybody had whiteys, particularly when learning to use, they described an intention to look after those having a whitey, and sometimes did with close friends or naive participants, but the majority activity was 'taking the piss', 'messing with them', and 'messing with their head'. The teenagers' descriptions of whiteys were highly animated, often accompanied with a rye smile or laughing,

whiteys were considered 'funny' - essentially they marked the point where a bravura performance of cannabis competence fell precipitously into incompetence. Articulating your position as a type 2, or type 3 smoker were effective strategies for dealing with this status loss. Adoption and projection of the identity of a social smoker, or a sophisticate demonstrated that a different set of rules applied to you, which related to greater status external to the game. Equally type 1 smokers got a status boost from their competent performance within the game, allowed by their greater capacity to consume. Evidently, if type 1 users could not consume greater quantities, they may come to reconfigure or re-articulate their position as a social user, or with sufficient cultural capital as a sophisticate.

This was just one example of the type of incessant banter and status play that made up much of the social interaction observed in both the school and field environments. The need for concealment of the purpose, points towards some limitations of methodologies which rely on self-disclosure, or offer limited space for reflection. While there was an active engagement in status games they were nevertheless regarded as either juvenile (quite literally puerile), or a guilty pleasure. Ethnography relies on the principle that the interviewee is the expert, in relation to interviewing teenagers this indicates taking their ideas and opinions seriously, respecting them and relating to them as an equal, that is tacitly asking them to approach the encounter in an adult fashion. This is a reflective position which nevertheless leaves room for them to articulate their understandings as a teenager.

To be treated as an equal whose opinions were valid by somebody older than them seemed to be to many, a novel, or less than usual experience which they enjoyed. It gave them an opportunity to display their growing competence in dealing with the world as an adult - often this could be considerably at odds with observations of an individual's behaviour with their peers. Their decisions about revealing to the interviewer that they participated in or enjoyed juvenile status games seemed to be related to their perception of their success in conveying their competence in relating to the interviewer as an adult. Once this competence had been achieved they felt secure that admitting to essentially juvenile pleasures would not result in negative

evaluations by the interviewer, or undermine positive evaluations of their performance in the essentially 'adult' transaction. In other words it is worth considering that the research interview in itself, in common with all social encounters, involves status transactions.

The stress placed on status here may seem at odds with many readings of the 'fluid', 'postmodern', 'value-free' ideals of 'modern' conceptions of social relationships. We more often view status through the lens of symbols: cars, houses, jobs, the symbols of acquired status, rather than as a motivating factor in the micro-politics of teenage social interactions. In learning to manipulate status in these small group settings, the teenagers are able to play these parts in non-contingent relationships without threatening important contingent roles in everyday life. This was the release and the freedom of the cannabis smoking group - since they did not intend, or rely on a continuing relationship. Interestingly the adult reflectors had continued to stay in some contact over many years, suggesting that these relationships, which the teenagers valued for their lack of contingency, may nevertheless become enduring. This pointed toward a different type of contingency, although the late-twenties-reflectors no longer spent a great deal of time with one another, their experience of a shared youth became a source of value. The type, degree of, or value of contingency had perhaps changed.

This offers one possible explanation as to why these are almost exclusively male groups. The male teenage social group may be an arena for learning to manage and manipulate status, and to learn strategies for dealing with differential status. Identities and their associated symbols are then an adaptation to differential status. They offer a mechanism to take control over status, and by codifying status within different 'games', or arenas of transaction, to level out, or conceal the affect of differential status on social relationships. The strategies developed for the display and articulation of status in the limited but 'safe' context of the male teenage friendship group may be a preparation for its articulation in adult arenas of sexual competition. By learning to manipulate and encode status in differential value systems through manipulation of identity (self-positioning) and related narra-

tives (the unfolding of meanings) they learn to manipulate their own and others evaluations of competence in order to maintain perceptions of their own status. Projection of high status and social competence in managing status are recognised as important components in sexual attraction. Men have to be able not only to display this status, but with differential value systems, to articulate which systems they are projecting this value in.

6.3.4 - Social Learning

The case studies demonstrated that the teenagers' first use of cannabis was often with siblings, wider family members, or with close friends. For the majority however, the primary context within which further experimentation and learning to use cannabis occurred was a wider teenage social group which coalesced around the activity of smoking cannabis. While the groups reported using cannabis as a pastime, almost a hobby, the use of psychoactive substances, not least alcohol, differs in important ways from what would usually be regarded as hobbies; sport, cultural activities, and so on. Cannabis has direct effects on cognition, perception, experience and memory (Brown, 1998). The immediate effects and experience of cannabis emerge through the interaction of the 'setting', the social group, the site and context of use, and the individuals 'set', their mood, feelings and perceptions of the setting (Zinberg, 1984). Both these contextual components, the nuances of the effects, and the different characteristics of different strains of cannabis, require that the experience of cannabis is a process of experimentation and learning (Becker, 1953). While choosing to use the term 'social learning' it is not clear that Zinberg, or Becker, intended to align themselves with social learning theories in psychology, rather they appear to be suggesting merely a form of learning which takes place in the ebb and flow of social relationships. This is an individualised co-constructed knowledge of the meaning of the activity of using cannabis, in a particular social network, which contextualises the experience. The transfer of knowledge of, for example, smoking techniques, or aspects of cultural ephemera around cannabis use is a subordinate feature in this type of social learning. It is given meaning

only through the value which is conferred on it, within the particular contexts and understandings which are generated in the activities of the individual and the group.

Hammersley (2005a) questioned the efficacy of social learning theories in a society in which cannabis use is normalised, since they would require the knowledge to remain in some way 'hidden'. For the individuals interviewed learning to use cannabis was characteristically experiential rather than sapiential - in particular, work with the focus groups revealed they were relatively uninterested in learning 'facts' about drug use. Their cannabis knowledge and their understandings of their own use acted as a store of 'drugs knowledge' a social knowledge that was subject to an underlying value system. Objective drug 'facts', that were known to everybody were of little social value, by contrast the experiential, subjective, personal, esoteric, or 'hidden' knowledge and understandings, were valued components in social transactions within the group. The uncertainties and ambiguities inherent in this kind of knowledge allowed for the expression of individuality and status claims, and the articulation of personal values. Notwithstanding their apparent cultural naivety, it was a naivety that they all to a degree shared. The type of knowledge expressed had symbolic, transactional and status components, they could articulate, align, identify or differentiate themselves within particular traditions of knowledge.

As we have seen the cannabis smoking group and the process of learning to use cannabis involves the invention and social learning of rules and their progressive transgression as the initiate becomes an experienced user. Mitigating the risks, and avoiding the negative effects of cannabis provides a reason and rationale for the invention of rules, rituals and roles. The direct effects of cannabis, however, producing the tendency to make creative leaps between contexts, then provides a foil, the humour of moving between contexts, and an ironic sense of the relativism inherent in rule-based-systems. These performative aspects of cannabis use were also seen in the preparation and use of cannabis. Role competence could be observed in both; there was an aesthetic sensibility in preparing joints and bongs,

and in navigating the experience of cannabis. Competence was also construed in terms of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour while stoned. There was a distinct awareness of the authenticity of such behaviour.

It could be argued that the techniques of smoking, the rules around procurement, and so on, are so common that it seems they must involve a wider social learning element rooted in common, dominant cultural memes. While memes provide a way of thinking about cultural movements and social changes at the macro level it was clear that the teenagers did not appear to experience or understand their cannabis use, and that of those around them, in this way. The teenagers could maintain the position that cannabis was not normalised, while simultaneously believing that the majority of people they knew of their age were cannabis users. Heidegger (1927) describes a relationship between ‘equipment’, the basic tools and materials that we use in everyday life, which become ‘ready-to-hand’ through their regular and skilled use and their embedding in everyday activities. Cannabis can be equipment for the teenagers, only in as much as it is ready-to-hand, a routine part of their daily lives. Equally they are cannabis smokers only in so far as cannabis remains for them ready-to-hand, although their skill in using cannabis, as equipment may remain with them for a time. Additionally they can be cannabis smokers when they are not actively stoned, but they cannot be cannabis smokers when cannabis is no longer ready-to-hand, a routine part of their life-world. A thorough exposition of this perspective is beyond the scope of this study, it is to some extent articulated in Bourdieu’s *habitus* (1972), it provides a way of squaring the apparent inconsistencies in the teenagers reports of the relationship between individual experience, what is ‘normal’, and the production of communities and cultures at different scales.

This very basic, first principles, view of the production of culture seems to chime most closely with the primary data. The teenagers learned techniques and how to experience being stoned from their interaction with the group, peers and siblings. While it appears to an observer that they are dipping into some cultural reservoir, they experience the practice of procuring, preparing, smoking cannabis and being high as distinctive and personal. The research demonstrates the limitations of

thinking about culture and learning as an accessible reservoir and points towards conceptions of culture which can accommodate the experiences and perceptions related. The teenagers believed in, and experienced, their rules, their behaviours and the formation of their groups as an ad hoc, DIY assemblage, based on their personal experiences, opinions and decisions, and the relationships between group members.

For many in the groups they emphasised that access to physical and social resources (time, money, access to public social places, transport, etc.), or more often a lack of resources, were central to the way they lived their lives and important in the choice to use cannabis. They constructed their lives, and asserted their identities using the limited social, cultural and physical resources available to them. This, a principal finding, can be stated in terms of identity as bricolage - it is personally and socially constructed, negotiated, and reflected using the ideas, objects, spaces and people which are to hand. To understand the use of cannabis we must understand the way that it fits into these wider constructions. For the teenagers interviewed resources were limited across many dimensions. Both the effects of cannabis and the social contexts of use made it a potent and valued resource in this bricolage of identity and activity. This ad hoc, DIY assemblage through which the teenagers construct their groups, cultures and understandings of their identity and place in life during their time as a teenager was vital in maintaining a sense that their experience was unique and authentic. This appeared to be particularly important to them in the face of widespread commercial appropriation of 'youth culture', often explicitly marketed to non-youth markets.

To understand the meanings that cannabis holds at the individual level we must understand the groups in which these meanings are constructed and negotiated. The findings revealed that the most salient aspects in constructing the meanings of cannabis use for those interviewed was the teenage social cannabis smoking group. Furthermore across all three types of user identified, the activity of constructing the social and personal meanings around cannabis use was the most valued aspect of their use. The novelty inherent in the exoticism of cannabis for them, if not

for wider society, provided an opportunity to practice the social construction of meaning in an environment where they could take an active part in co-construction of these meanings. The variety of effect, and the social contingency of cannabis effects, made the cannabis smoking group particularly suited to providing them with this opportunity. This was in no small part supported by the illicit and societal disapproval of use.

The analysis has stressed the importance of cannabis in generating and maintaining non-contingent relationships and the importance of non-contingent relationships for identity development and transition. Perhaps equally important may be that cannabis use provides a non-contingent activity. For the majority of the teenagers, time and resources were controlled by external conditions, the expectations of: parents, family, schools and society. They were required to invest the majority of their time in pursuit of distant and uncertain goals and felt little control over success and eventual reward. Many of their other hobbies involved organised activities and sports, often competitive, which they valued but also saw as an extension of the contingent adult world. While creative pursuits could be seen as non-contingent, many hoped that they may continue to use these skills in their professional lives and they involved contingency through their investment in increasing their aptitude. Against this background of explicitly goal oriented activity, drinking and smoking cannabis socially were seen as non-contingent activities. Use of cannabis in activities where contingency was ambiguous (e.g. smoking while making music), or otherwise contingent (e.g. to make work seem to pass more quickly), could be used to mask the instrumentality of use, or to bring out the feeling that they were socialising and working at the same time.

This suggests that cannabis use can also be usefully considered through the ideas of Bourdieu, in particular the concept of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1972). Some of the many concepts collected under habitus appear to be more clearly articulated elsewhere, for instance in Heidegger's (1927) terms around the concepts of 'equipment' and 'readiness-to-hand'. However, Heidegger's terms are more complex and habitus has come to provide a reasonable shorthand through which these ideas and concepts

are routinely communicated in the social sciences. Habitus locates experience in the everyday life worlds of the person, but also in the mind and body through which that person interacts with the world. In combining Heidegger's ideas with those of Merleau-Ponty (1945), Bourdieu's concept of habitus emphasises that the body and mind must be considered as both the source of experience and as a resource in the broadest sense. This brings in a third concept which is useful in conceptualising cannabis use. Cannabis is a tool which has direct and immediate effects on the mind and body (Brown, 1998), this relationship is usefully encompassed in the concept of prosthesis. Prosthesis in this context refers to the capacity of a technology (in this case cannabis) to extend the capabilities of the social and material body (Lury, 1998; Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

6.3.5 - Cannabis as Prosthesis

The understandings expressed by the *late twenties reflectors* brought out a particular contrast in understanding between a 'modern' instrumental approach to drugs and their effects, and a quasi-spiritual orientation with shamanistic or holistic associations, to the idea of altered experience. These understandings could both be held, at the same time, by the same person. This was brought into relief through the larger polydrug using repertoire that the late-twenties reflectors had developed in their early twenties. For instance using amphetamine to keep awake, while using cannabis to soften the side effects, to produce a reflective state and introduce a feeling of relaxation and wellbeing.

The findings suggested that the male teenage cannabis smoking group was a distinct and transitory phenomenon, but was nevertheless the arena where many first learned to use cannabis and manage its effects. The background made clear that there is not a direct relationship leading from cannabis use to other drug use, or necessarily continuing cannabis use into adulthood. As an intoxicant, the effects of cannabis are more complex than alcohol, caffeine, or tobacco, and it may provide an introduction to a wider understanding of the potentials of intoxication. Many respondents mentioned that the effects of cannabis had allowed them to appreciate activities which they would otherwise have found mundane, or outside their cultural

ambit. For the type 2 users it was important that they confined their cultural claims to a repertoire which could be accepted by the other users as authentic and appropriate to avoid being labelled pretentious. This was epitomised in Alex's description of listening to Jazz-FM, 'Stoned and only stoned we listen to that.' (p 107). This highlights the importance of understanding these statements through multiple lenses. It is at once a statement that the effects of cannabis can open users up to particular experiences, and a means of socially legitimising cultural experiences which they considered to be beyond their appropriate cultural ambit as a teenager. Cannabis is here functioning as both social and biological prosthesis. Its effects on auditory acuity, temporal perception and memory may extend Alex's capacity to enjoy Jazz, but equally as social tool, 'being-stoned' provides him with the social latitude to enjoy and explore this activity with his friends without the charge of pretentiousness. Equally this experience relies on technological prosthesis since the teenagers would not have access to Jazz music without the radio. It seems that it is in the very nature of our intimate relationship with tools that they become background (Heidegger, 1927). It is only through intimate acquaintance with their use that we come to experience pleasure in using them and able to fully exploit them across a range of systems.

The concept of prosthesis provides a useful way of thinking about certain tools and practices and their relationship to the body, perception, and lived experience. While the idea of a prosthetic limb for instance, is to compensate for a deficiency compared to 'normal' function, we can also think about prosthesis as an extension of normal function, for example, a bicycle, or a car allows us to travel longer distances in shorter times than is possible on foot. These are forms of technological prosthesis, often facility is an important dimension in prosthesis, the idea of bike and rider becoming one. So if transportation is one form of technological prosthesis, others might be communications technology, the written word allowed for the transmission of culture in a new way, freeing communication from the need for temporal and spatial proximity. Prosthesis may be immaterial as well as material, for instance methodological, conceptual and linguistic tools can also be thought of from the perspective of prosthesis - extending our routine capabilities. The allure of the concept of prosthesis is that based on a particularly human proclivity, tool use,

it extends Heidegger's concept of the tool (or equipment) to include our experience of not only the body but also the mind as tools. In doing so it locates the drug, the user, their environment, experience, intention, understanding and meaning making, all within a common framework. Further thinking about this framework may well reveal interesting insights into the problems of both normalisation, and function in drugs use.

Both licit and illicit drugs can be thought of as a form of prosthesis; antibiotics augment and compensate for the limits of the immune system, just as caffeine allows us to maintain concentration for longer periods. While licit drugs tend to be used to maintain normal function, illicit drugs more often extend function. In many ways this understanding frames the current legal position with regard to drugs use, compensation for illness or incapacity is allowable but augmentation of otherwise normal function is abuse. Stimulants such as amphetamine have been used by generations of teenagers to dance all night, and by truck drivers and pilots to drive for extended periods. In the 1990s ecstasy allowed people to feel strong emotional connections with large groups of strangers. The same could be said of a concert, a church, or a football match, this is a form of social and environmental prosthesis. Other technologies allow us to see the world differently, the telescope and the microscope allowed people to see the natural world in a different way and led to the development of new world views to accommodate these new perspectives. The camera has been one of the most potent of these perceptual prosthesis allowing people to see themselves from outside and their changing appearance over time, challenging people's views of themselves (Lury, 1998). We can also think in terms of intellectual prosthesis where the development of new concepts and metaphors allows us to communicate large and difficult ideas succinctly.

Seen through the lens of prosthesis then, cannabis potentially operates on many levels: social, cultural, perceptual, temporal, aesthetic, and so on. The direct effects of cannabis involve temporal dislocation, time appears to move more quickly, or more slowly and experienced users appear to have a degree of control over this facility, allowing them to use cannabis to make work or school pass more quickly,

or their social time to stretch out for longer. Other direct effects involve perceptual acuity, making music appear more vivid, and contributing to a sense of wonder at the natural world. It could also involve intellectual or creative prosthesis, allowing the user to jump more easily between dislocated contexts and move ideas between contexts (discussed p 233).

For the teenagers a more important form of prosthesis was in combining and learning to combine these different aspects and effects and modulate these effects socially. This allowed them to see the boring, routine and mundane in a slightly different way; it brought novelty. The key to thinking about prosthesis as a concept lies in readiness-to-hand, i.e. the technology becoming so embedded in life, and the way we live life, that its use feels second nature. Secondly, an important activity or range of activities become unavailable without use of the technology. Finally, the technology may eventually become felt to be a part or extension of the body and the self. The downsides of this are the experiences described in relation to recovery from drugs of addiction, where drugs become entangled with identity (Koski-Jännes, 2002; McIntosh and McKeganey, 2000).

These different aspects of prosthesis then should be read as axial, from the halting progress of an old lady driving to the shops, reliant on the car for basic mobility, to the teenagers practicing handbrake turns, learning the sensation of the limits of grip through the steering wheel, and feeding the power through the slip of the clutch. The relationship between man and tools is fundamental to the way we experience and interact with the social and material worlds we inhabit. Cannabis, no less than the car, is experienced as a technology, a tool, equipment. This reveals the relationship of the teenagers to risk, risk was not intrinsic to their motivation to use, all tool use involves risk, the more potent the tool, the higher the degree of risk which is acceptable to the user in its use. In learning to use a tool, risks are mitigated through rules; the experienced use of a tool involves arriving at a point at which risks are managed as second nature in the way the tool is used. Somebody experienced in the use of a hammer will not experience hammering through risk. The concept of risk will cease to be part of the experience of hammering unless

the hammer or the context in which it is used changes. Accordingly, the concept of risk was alien to the teenagers understanding of their everyday use of cannabis. If they wished to gain excitement or novelty in their cannabis use by experiencing it as risky they had to extend or alter their context of use, smoking more, with different people, in different places. The example of being stoned in the shopping centre (SG) reminds us that risk and novelty is nevertheless rapidly accommodated into the mundane.

Prosthesis has become more and more important as a concept since the set of skills it describes are fundamental to dealing with a globalised world, where need is satisfied at ever increasing distance. Capacity to use prosthesis, including technological, social and intellectual prosthesis confers important advantages. Prosthesis extends locus of control, and the perception of locus of control, however the actual degree of control becomes more uncertain, and contingent on access to the technology, leading to uncertainty over where to direct attention and investment. Drugs use, this suggests, will increasingly be understood and contextualised by users in terms of prosthesis, as both a primitive and a cosmopolitan tool. This is evident in so called 'smart drugs' where there is a blurring of boundaries between medical use, repairing impairments to understandings of normal function, and use for enhancement.

Both social and instrumental drugs use may increasingly come to be understood in this context in the same way that community and culture have become linked to routine prosthetic use. This may fundamentally alter considerations of risk and benefit in the use of drugs. In the previous example of cocaine use it suggests that individuals and groups may come to legitimate particular types of drugs use in order to mitigate limitations conferred by other aspects of their lifestyles. As suggested in this study, users orientation to moral questions of use are framed within these wider issues, rather than through those of political questions of criminality or religious ideas about intoxication. This understanding hinges on

understanding drugs use as legitimate in relation to wider role contingency. It also highlights that there is in both drugs (and other tool use) and relationships, a fine line between contingency and dependency.

6.3.6 - Cannabis Creativity and Flow

Anecdotal evidence of the use of drugs and particularly cannabis in the creative industries is widespread, as we have seen the association has been made, not only culturally, but by personal experimentation, in those in the sample engaged in cultural pursuits. What is less immediately obvious is that the activity referred to as, 'having a laugh', 'getting the giggles' and so on can be understood as a form of creativity. Koestler (1964) defined three overlapping categories of creativity, 'Humour, Discovery and Art', for Koestler the logical process followed in each is identical, the difference being the 'emotional climate'. Koestler further argues that 'all patterns of creativity are trivalent', which to paraphrase suggests that the category is ultimately dependent on what he variously refers to as 'frames of reference', 'associative contexts', 'types of logic', 'codes of behaviour', 'universes of discourse', or what Goffman (1959) would have termed audience.

Koestler differentiates the 'code' from the 'matrix', the code being the set of rules, for say a game of chess, and the matrix being the net of possible moves from moment to moment in a particular chess game. The route through the matrix is therefore the domain of habit, strategy, innovation and so on. For Koestler (1964:51) it is 'The sudden bisociation of an idea or event with two habitually incompatible matrices' that produces humour. The comedian Simon Pegg, when interviewed on the BBC radio show *Chain Reaction* (2006), described the process of making such a categorical joke by reading the question for one category on a trivial pursuits card and answering with the answer on the same card from a different category. This describes quite well the sort of dissociative humour observed in cannabis smokers.

This explanation also makes sense of the commonalities and differences in the activity of cannabis use by diverse social and cultural groups. If cannabis is serving to facilitate jumping from one matrix, or set of understandings to another, its

effects (facilitating jumps between matrixes) are just as applicable to a group whose matrixes serve as a juvenile status game, to a group where the matrixes are more sophisticated. The effects of cannabis are not then inherently juvenile, the humour involved could equally be experienced by say a group of classics professors, slyly jumping between their knowledge of Plato's Republic, to send up politician, or comment on a TV reality show. The content of the initial matrix and the matrix which is jumped to are independent from the effect of cannabis which merely facilitates the creative leap between more dissociated matrixes. The limits of cannabis use in this context would be in the tendency to uncritically make large, oblique, or absurd leaps and the ability of the audience or the other party to follow.

This can also suggest some of the uses of cannabis in making music. For example an improvising musician can choose from a variety of different systems in which to make decisions about which notes he will play. In brief he can think; vertically (in terms of chords), or horizontally (in terms of melody), or in terms of voices (melody moving through chords), he can think in terms of the root signature of the piece as a whole, the root of the section he's working through, or the root of the preceding tension and his intended resolution. These decisions will usually be taken in an intuitive manner, which is to say that the underlying logic can be later analysed, but in the moment of creation the choice of note will be experienced as a gut reaction to the circumstance. The focus of the performer/creator must be on the visceral experience of the music and 'being there', not on the theoretical frameworks which underpin music. Interestingly in this instance, neither the musician or the audience, need to have an appreciation of the matrixes which are in play and the decisions made impact each matrix of musical meaning, regardless of which matrix their choice is most salient in. The movement between matrixes is fluid, emergent and ultimately impossible to pin down to one system of meaning.

There appear to be a number of aspects relating to reported effects of cannabis at play in both creativity, and in performance activities. One such perspective involves the experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), which interestingly has been related to a feeling of the awareness of self dissolving, or being otherwise bracketed

during peak performance states, including sport and music. The tendency to move easily between matrixes, the temporal dislocation (which can be thought of as an aspect of flow), and a tendency to concentrate on minutiae may facilitate performance. The movement between frames of reference can also be experienced perceptually. At the boundary between getting high and hallucinating lies effects such as synaesthesia, the tendency to experience senses through alternate sensory modalities - for example experiencing smells as colours (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 2001). Some cannabis users reported a similar tendency, describing experiencing music through shapes, colours, textures and so on. This is a further extension of the idea of cannabis facilitating a movement between different frameworks.

Some of these effects may suggest reasons why cannabis use facilitated relationships with the characteristics of 'pure relationships' (Giddens, 1991). I am not suggesting that cannabis increases empathy, rather that in facilitating leaps between frameworks it may foster a sense of openness to another's position. Cannabis is not unique in this capacity, sharing experience of any kind, sharing meals, a walk, a football game; all involve a mutual shift to a framework with shared components. The experience of sharing cannabis however involves sharing a particularly large jump, in perception and styles of thought. The unique characteristics of 'drug set and setting' (Zinberg, 1984) mean that this may in fact produce greater differences in the experience than it does similarities. While other shared activities are bounded by an understanding of social convention, cannabis use was in the context of the teenage cannabis smoking group initially exotic. The teenagers initially lacked a common framework and set of social conventions to bound their behaviour. It seems that for many (particularly in the absence of functions, the type 3 user) once this initial exoticism had been lost and common and stable frameworks established, the value of the group and of smoking cannabis diminished.

These examples demonstrate that the effects that cannabis is valued for can, and regularly are, experienced without the use of cannabis. The teenagers considered that cannabis use would become irrelevant to them largely on the basis of their social expectations and their consideration and understandings of adult roles and

responsibilities. However, cannabis as prosthesis suggests a second limit on their use. Once somebody has learnt to use the effects of cannabis both instrumentally and socially, there may be a point where there is no longer a need to rely on cannabis in order to attain them. There is a point at which ‘Stoned and only stoned we listen to that.’ (Alex, p 107) ceases to be the case and cannabis is no longer necessary to open up a new realm of experience. Similarly, as people learn that they can open themselves up to new experiences which are outside their existing and immediate culture and community, there is no longer a need to rely on cannabis to facilitate access to novel experiences. At this point the effects of cannabis, the gross perceptual attenuation and distortion, may come to detract from the experience itself. It seems that gradually, that which is initially part of the cannabis world, finds its place in the everyday ‘unstoned’ world. This suggests that while cannabis use may increase over teenage years as the range of functions to which it is put increases, its efficacy in these functions and the range of functions to which it is put, may well diminish over time. This is a potential limitation on instrumental aspects of use; it suggests that continued use of cannabis into adulthood is likely to be rooted in social and psychosocial rather than instrumental functions related to performing activities. While instrumental use is perhaps intrinsically self-limiting, the value of social use, or use in identity transition is bounded by social norms and processes of normalisation.

6.4 - Orienting the research to wider theory

This project set out to explore the meanings understandings and experiences of a group of young cannabis users and to use the findings and interpretations developed through this small scale qualitative study, to understand the relationships between identity and cannabis use that emerged through reference to existing theory. By better understanding the way that cannabis fitted into the lives of ‘normal’, non-problematic users we can better tailor policy approaches to normal use. Improving understanding of ‘normal’ use may in turn offer better understandings of the nature and aetiologies of more problematic use. This programme was slightly unconventional in that it examined existing theories for their ‘fit’ with aspects of

the data and the authors interpretations by bringing these into the iterative process of constant comparison. Rather than examining the data from a single theoretical standpoint it shows that a richer interpretation can be gleaned through the application of a number of different lenses, each appropriate to the nature of the issues raised by the interviewees and the different scales and systems they operate within (Ritzer, 1975). The following section will explore these findings and interpretations from the perspective of some of these different theoretical systems and explore some of the precedents, problems, potentials and rationale for such an approach. The subsequent section will go on to explore the problems, limitations, strengths and potentials of the approach and the implications and potentials for further work in this area. With reference to wider theoretical and methodological literature this section goes on to argue that rather than reading the methods employed as in any way radical it is representative of many contemporary undercurrents in applied and basic research and can be seen as part of a longstanding tradition of applied and praxis research.

This position is consistent with wider views that the rationale for methodological individualism is inevitable and well founded but must also be understood and accommodated within contextual fields and structures which may go beyond 'rational action' perspectives (Münch, 1983). It also recognises that knowledge must be understood through both ontology but also in the structural conditions of the field, the university and the place of knowledge in wider dialogues, not just in the philosophy of science (Giddens, 1984). We can read the dominant literature as a series of group and individual identity claims aimed at individuation and differential positioning of disciplines, sub-disciplines and scholars. Many of the distinguishing issues are important but should be considered as rooted in ongoing unresolved (or unsatisfactorily resolved) philosophical problems; dualism, anti-essentialism, reification, empiricism, and so on. The adoption of fixed positions in the social science literature and the uses to which they have been put may in some circumstances be seen as a de facto attempt to deal with information overload. By reference to Khun (1962) these fixed positions can be used to project an image of coherence and progress to public and policymakers who are not ready, willing, or able to grapple with more refined, plural and contingent understand-

ings. Particularly as scientists are being asked to communicate their research to the public there is a danger that we lose sight of the more refined understandings which are necessary for good science. The construction of these disciplinary and paradigmatic identities is then, like the teenagers, characteristic of the *bricoleur*, more often than the *engineur* (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). In a Heideggerian sense, these strategies and rationales have been adopted from that which is 'ready to hand', and becoming 'background' we cease to be fully aware of them, they become part of the habituated technology of social science, rather than a considered truth. These assumptions only come into question when we attempt to fit these tools to new, or different, empirical problems. The development of refined and specialised tools, however, should not change the fundamentals and first principles orientation of good science and systematic enquiry which underlie these methods across both inductive and positivist approaches.

The findings and discussion have used concepts from across a number of distinct but interconnected areas of social science. Most relevant have perhaps been Giddens' ideas and to an extent some similar, if perhaps conceptually broader ideas in Bourdieu. However, both Giddens and Bourdieu are characterised by a pluralism, drawing on a wide range of traditions in the human and social sciences. Both Giddens and Bourdieu emphasise a methodological holism, and attempt to reconcile structure and agency (Elliot, 2009). Mead and the symbolic interactionist tradition were foundationally important in many of the perspectives which were developed in the thesis. In drawing on the tradition of role theory it involves characteristics of social theories of action and Parsons' role theory. It relates also to traditions of action research and the influence of Kurt Lewin's inductive problem solving and field theory. Additionally it relates, through the teenagers own interpretations and experience of structure, to ongoing currents in critical theory, particularly in Foucault's wider orientations to ideas around formal and informal mechanisms of power and control and the perspective of intellectual traditions as a toolbox for exploring the dynamics between contemporary and historical, social and structural influences. The project also draws on phenomenology, though primarily the philosophical tradition rather than the social scientific project of phenomenology. The importance of an embodied perspective relates to Merleau-Ponty (1945) and that of

understanding regular cannabis use as becoming background, a routine aspect of a wider repertoire of personal and social technologies. Such technologies involve a recursive relationship between the subjective, objective and intersubjective, within which cannabis involved for the teenagers a socio-material conception of culture which rests again on Heidegger's ideas (1927). In common with much sociologically oriented work it borrows liberally, in passing, from anthropological perspectives, particularly in Lévi Strauss's (1962) concept of *bricolage* and the related Heideggerian conception of tools, culture and 'readiness to hand' (Heidegger, 1927).

One of the most prominent characteristics of the data was that the teenage cannabis using group was a liminal assemblage, it was considered by the users to be a time limited group and activity rooted in limitations in access and belonging to adult worlds and activities. It was considered to be a leisure activity, a play space (Measham, 2004a) and many of the conventional understandings of rational and goal directed behaviour appeared to be in some form of suspension, structured with reference to the 'space' co-created in the group and wider social structures. Much of the value of the group, its activity and the value the participants got from it rested on the capacity of cannabis, as an intoxicant to legitimise this suspension. While this produced a suspension from larger structural concerns and goals, the 'play space' and the 'game' of using cannabis itself involved creating and transgressing rules. The activities within the group contributed to a social learning process, providing the teenagers with a starting point and proving ground for developing potentially valuable tools and strategies for navigating, negotiating and mobilising identity, status claims and resource claims in a diverse and uncertain adult world.

While consciously goal-directed behaviour was to some extent suspended, many of the activities of the group and the value attached to it, could be considered as obliquely contributing to wider identity projects. For some traditions this presents a problem, for which I don't pretend to offer any solution, other than to suggest that its source relates to the wider ongoing 'hard' problems involved in the nature of conscious experience and its relationship to learning (Chalmers, 1995). It is this

feature of the thesis, that identity must itself be considered ontologically, which makes it most difficult to locate within any one of the traditional paradigms (Guba, 1990). There were at once rational actions and planned behaviours as well as spontaneity, creativity and group and structural influences which did not necessarily come under the conscious control, or awareness of the individual participants. Some of these influences are instantiated in the wider behaviours of the group, others relate to wider social processes over which the group have little influence or awareness but nevertheless impact on their lives. At this wider level, we can see certain defined characteristics of globalisation and late modernity in the radical uncertainty and agentic ambivalence of the younger cohorts. There is a sustained sense in which they are uncertain if macro-social processes over which they have little control may have more impact on their lives than their own actions and investments in education and qualifications. Inside their awareness but beyond their control are what they regard as generational unfairnesses in access to the benefits of conforming to social norms and expectations, in particular being unable to meet the cost of motoring, or housing, on the wages available to younger people. These they see as denying them access to traditional adult roles.

At the interpersonal level, aspects of social learning processes appeared manifest, though beyond their immediate awareness. The 'going-shop' ritual was for instance a heuristic learnt and adopted through rational choice as a means of limiting intake for less experienced users, whilst maintaining value and a degree of status within the group. The implicit lessons for the individual though, involve learning a strategy for status maintenance by moving between the initial frame of the juvenile status game, of consuming large amounts of cannabis, to another wider frame. While the 'going-shop' heuristic has value only directly in the context of the cannabis using group, the wider heuristics for managing identity and status by shifting 'game' has value beyond the immediate situation. This brings in a second problem, can the teenagers know somehow that what they are learning has wider applicability. Where does the conscious rationale for valuing this behaviour lie and why is it time limited? Secondly, is this distinctively gendered and if so why? These questions relate back to the interplay of structure, agency and control at different scales - the central focus and foundation of social theory.

There is a well recognised split between canonical established social theory and the theories generated in the course of applied work. The degree to which a subject concerned with capturing the transience and subtleties of contemporary life can achieve coherent and enduring theory, is questionable. It seems rather that different types of knowledge should be acknowledged which are bound by different criteria and have different degrees and conditions for validity. This perspective should not be read as 'all types of knowledge are equal' but that knowledge claims should be tempered by a consideration of application, scope (Walker and Cohen, 1985) and utility (Sandelowski, 1997). The sections that follow discuss the emerging framework relating identity to 'normal' cannabis use in the teenage group, interrogating it through three broad paradigms or movements in the social sciences, symbolic interactionist, action theoretical and social theoretical. These distinctions should not be seen as hard-and-fast since the movements draw on each other, and as Cerulo (1997) suggests in relation to debates on identity, they represent a general move from concern with the micro/meso level of individuals in interaction, to a greater concern with the influence of macro level social structures. However, they also share a central concern with understanding the interaction of structure and agency and the later perspectives attempt to bring together all levels, for instance through the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984; Vandenberghe, 1999). In addition these debates introduce a further question, to what extent have the structures involved and the nature of agency changed over time? How relevant are these data and interpretations to the situation as of writing (in 2011) and how relevant does earlier work in the drugs field remain?

While there are relatively few contemporary frameworks directly addressing identity in non-problematic drug use in a normalised context, there are several models involving problematic drug use and identity, and many wider models of identity, identity development and adolescence. Additionally many of the issues raised by the teenagers and the interpretations built on them relate to wider well supported findings in the drugs literature. Many of the connections between the importance of identity for the teenagers and that of identity in the addictions literature relate to the shared characteristic of transition. For the teenagers that is transition to the adult world, for those with problems of addiction it is transition between an

established ‘addict identity’ and some kind of ‘post-addict’ identity (Koski-Jännes, 2002). While there are similarities between these positions - some of which I will argue become more resonant under the uncertainties of the conditions of late modernity - there are also important and manifest differences in the nature of these transitions. Many of the most important differences coming out of the thesis relate to the difference in the nature of agency in the liminal suspension of adolescence as compared to those of addiction. For the teenagers the state of ‘being a young male teenager’ to some extent will end regardless of what they do - they will cease to be a teenager and their teenage behaviours will become in their view, and their imagined view of the adult world, increasingly less tenable as they move into their twenties. For those with existing drug problems their ongoing stigmatised state is defined through different parameters. This said there may be more shared dimensions than we might initially imagine.

6.4.1 - Adolescence, Drugs and Transitions in the literature

Longitudinal research designs are in many ways best placed to provide data on the sequences and potential causal mechanisms underlying the transitions to adulthood and their relationship to cannabis use. The relationship between the type of findings available through a time-limited in depth qualitative approach such as that taken in the current study and the longitudinal mixed, and survey methods used in the development of Parker et al. (1998) normalisation and Boys (1999; 2001; 2002) associated work was explored in the previous section (p 206). The lack of a longitudinal element to the current study is one of its greater limitations, relying as it does on a different group reflecting on their younger use during a different time period. This said many longitudinal designs rest largely on quantitative and survey approaches which are unlikely to capture many of the dimensions arising herein (possible implications for integrating findings into quantitative designs is explored p 288).

There is a suggestion in some longitudinal designs that they are picking up changes in the structural conditions impacting the transition to adulthood. As Hartnagel (1996) notes the majority of longitudinal studies have focused on the consequences

of adolescent drug on the course of transition to adult identities which are to a degree stable. Hartnagel's longitudinal study failed to note a change to stable non-drug-using adult identities, which he suggests might be attributable to an extended timeframe in the transition to adult roles, rooted in economic conditions, a poor jobs market, extended student-hood and so on. The expectation of an extended unchosen adolescence was a feature in the present study and has arguably become a widespread and global phenomenon. I have suggested that read in retrospect Erikson's (1968) ideas of stable adult identities and identity achieved states appear nostalgic, involving underlying values rooted in 1950s America. Accordingly, the experience of the *late twenties reflectors* was not by and large a movement to identity-achieved states but a phased accommodation to ongoing and extended uncertainty (Elliott, 2002).

The similar experiences of all three cohorts in the current study with respect to continued uncertainty over core identities extending through their twenties suggests that further consideration of changes in the structural conditions of entry to adulthood is needed. While it is acknowledged that work on identity transitions is limited, most still focuses on the Ericksonian tradition (Arnett, 2005). For Arnett this leads to the conclusion that identity exploration now takes place in young adulthood, rather than adolescence. Again, Arnett highlights that adolescents do want to achieve adult markers such as marriage, home-owning and having children and suggests this is accomplished by age thirty or so. This Arnett suggests, may represent an extended period of being 'self-focused' and therefore not subject to conventional social control mechanisms. Influential in these views of identity transitions is Schwartz's neo-Ericksonian identity status model, rooted in models developed by Marcia (Schwartz et al., 2005). Though it is considered to have great potential, there remain however, a range of important issues for the identity status model to overcome (Van Hoof, 1999). Schwartz et al. (2005) suggest a need to move from longitudinal studies of macro-level identity, measuring longitudinal fluctuations over a period of months to measuring micro-level daily fluctuations. This observation is rooted in ideas that identity exploration involves a suspension of commitments to a given identity while alternatives are explored. Schwartz suggests that large micro-level fluctuations in identity and self-concept clarity may

be risk factors for drug and tobacco use and that increasing uncertainties of adolescence may be contributing to an increase in depressive symptoms and low wellbeing amongst teenagers. Schwartz also recognises that there is a methodological limit on the use of regular, routine survey approaches, such that the very regularity of assessment may be increasing reflexivity in the subjects.

While the dimensions involved in the forgoing work do appear to be converging on some similar issues to those raised in the current study, there does remain it seems a commitment to achieving identity statuses. The work in the current study suggests that a slightly more radical orientation to suspension may be required. Instead of understanding activities during the suspension within the Ericksonian paradigm of identity achievement, it may point to the need to develop models for alternative constructions of identity during these often extended periods of suspension from core roles. It seems likely that such liminal identities need not necessarily share the same dimensions as enduring identity achievements rooted in roles with widespread social recognition. As Giddens (1991) suggests the uncertainties of late modernity involve potential changes in the construction of identities across the life course, not just in adolescence.

While Giddens' (1991) 'pure-relationships' may be read as in many ways a positive adaptation, more problematic adaptations seem inherently possible. Rather than the source of meaning residing in achieved statuses, the ongoing uncertainty of these statuses may suggest a recourse to constructing meaning in different ways. Arnett's (2005) view suggested that adolescence can be read as a period of being self-focused and not subject to conventional social control mechanisms. The data suggested that the control mechanisms relating to achieving stable adult identities did impact on the teenagers, but that continuing uncertainty over role achievement may lead to a loss of their impact over time. The length of the suspension involved may then lead to these norms becoming less potent, as the teenagers and young adults investments in these norms fail to pay off. Additionally the data suggested that while in the suspended state of 'being a teenager' many alternative rules and structures internal to local teenage cultures were in operation.

The question remains as to whether we can consider identity achievement as a motive force in goal directed behaviour. The current project suggested that the teenage cannabis smoking friendship group could be considered from this standpoint but only in relation to acquiring and testing skills required for longer term identity projects. This suggests it can only be read as goal directed if seen in terms of its value for social learning. Bandura's (1999a) social cognitive theory provides one such perspective, which embeds agency within social processes giving rise to human agency, group agency and proxy agency (Bandura, 1999b).

Much recent research in drug use has stressed rational and reasoned action and decision making processes and understanding drugs use as a choice (Petraitis et al., 1995). While this in large part may be read as a reaction to the literature of 'addiction' and 'will' and the framing of addiction as mental illness it is also more subtle than this. While cessation might involve a decision, the experiences related by the teenagers to use, or to buy cannabis, on any given night or occasion, were not framed by them as decisions. One impact of normalisation would then seem to be, that teenagers would make a 'game' of the slight uncertainties in supply. This attitude was expressed, particularly amongst type 3 users, saying that they would have some 'if it was about'. The decision instead seemed to be directed by the wish to socialise and the characteristics of the cannabis smoking group made it the most readily and routinely available assemblage. The active motivation was not to use cannabis, rather cannabis was, as they reported, 'just something to do'. This further suggests that the lack of 'things to do' for teenagers was rooted in wider social processes such as the commodification of leisure. It seems that in such circumstances, access to leisure has itself come to be modelled as a reward for work, rather than a human need. Since work, and money legitimises leisure, the absence of money and work for the teenagers dictates that their leisure takes alternative forms outside of these structures.

The foregoing arguments point towards the need to acknowledge drugs use in terms of wider sociological, political and philosophical issues and changes in modern society. While earlier literature stressed deviance, the inherent dysfunction

of the individual, teenage rebellion, the teenagers were very willing to conform to wider social norms. They found however, that in an extended externally driven marginalisation, conformity to these norms brought little hope of commensurate reward. While the teenagers continued to value these social norms, it should be unsurprising that the alternative frameworks they created to provide a background for contemporary performative identities, exist outside of these norms. This is very much then, not a commitment to alternative social movements, rather it is an accommodation to an extended unchosen marginalisation from 'normal' social processes in the adult world. In this it relates to much wider ongoing social, philosophical and political issues. It could be read as an extended failure of reciprocity between the social structures of modernity, the state and young people. Rather than failure of an extant 'social contract' this appears to be a failure of political society to bother making any kind of political contract with young people, rather hoping for the best that some form of socially inherited inherent self-interest will lead them to conformity and pro-social behaviour.

This wider situation in which the problems of both 'normal' drug use, and addiction are framed must then be read through the lens of critical theory. The roots of this kind of issue go back much further than the constitution of the modern institution of 'the teenager'. The arguments in this tradition can be related to Rousseau's ideas of the 'social contract', and through the ideas of 'alienation' in Marx, Durkheim's ideas of 'anomie', Sartre's 'existential angst' and much of Nietzsche's corpus. Ultimately there is very little space to do these arguments justice in the current context, however they will be briefly explored in as much as they relate to the construction of individual meaning. In these arguments it is primarily the conditions of work and the place of the self in modernity which institute a lack of meaning in life. Rather than existing in a continual state of meaninglessness, it should be unsurprising that people respond by instituting the construction of transitory social structures in which to collaborate in the construction of meaning, no matter how ephemeral that meaning may be. In a society which does not appear to value them, the teenagers found alternative mechanisms for the production of value. However, remaining awareness of the contingency and ephemerality of the valuation processes within these structures, binds their expectations within the domain

of 'play', rather than the concrete structures of family, work and access to material goods and existential needs. We can then read the issues facing the teenagers and their responses to them, as part of a much wider issue in human development. Taken on anthropological timeframes, politics can be seen as an accommodation to the need to allocate access to existential goods following human settlement to agrarian modes of life. Increasing population density, increasing technologies of ownership at a distance and reduction in the need for human labor, leads to an ever greater marginalisation of those who are not able to articulate and legitimise their basic needs, through transacting their labor and more latterly through mobilising social and personal identities in the pursuit of resource claims (Castells, 1997).

While the 'personal is political' is a view traditionally identified with feminist identity politics, it is then perhaps no less appropriate here (Cerulo, 1997). One interpretation of the data and analysis, is that 'normalised' cannabis use should be read as one of a range of adaptations, where identity has been increasingly abstracted from the routine everyday practices involved in the satisfaction of existential needs. In bringing in concepts relating to feminism it interesting to observe that the identities most of the teenagers aspire to appear to relate to traditional masculine identities of 'breadwinner'. The dislocation of basic existential resources inherent in traditional gender role identities may then impact genders in different ways. In early modern societies resources were intimately related to labour, in recent years pressures of globalisation have led to a further dislocation whereby the inability of basic wages to meet needs has been taken up by redistributive welfare systems. This leads to a dynamic whereby resources at the societal level are accessed via mobilisation of identities through legitimation processes.

While identity mobilisation in pursuit of resource allocation has always been a feature of smaller co-present social groups, its routine large scale operation at the societal level appears relatively new, this previously being open primarily to elites. This increasing need to perform identity through bureaucratic structures and social movements can have a recursive element such that participation involves accommodation to emerging performative group norms which appear inherently stigmatising

and widely problematic at both the individual and social level (Beresford, 2001). It appears that in addition to traditional 'strong' work and familial roles, and 'weak' social ties, we must also consider the impact of obligatory legitimisation roles. It does not appear likely that these roles and identities function in the same way or relate in the same way to close personal identity and difficult concepts such as authenticity. The following sections will discuss how in theorising identity across a diversifying field, we need to draw on a similarly diverse set of theories. These 'new' identities routinely co-exist with the 'old' rather than replacing them. The strategies for identity production in these different types of identity are thus related, but different, and I would suggest increasingly difficult to navigate at the individual level. The problem of exactly how we do this, and how it goes wrong, remains a central 'hard' problem for science and philosophy (Chalmers, 1995).

It seems axiomatic that alternative mechanisms for the production and performance of identity outside of the 'strong' identities of work and family role must be an enduring feature of human societies. While identity statuses focus on the roles, activities and requirements of childrearing, large sectors of society at any given time are not directly involved in these processes and activities. Even for those who are, they also participate in these wider social processes. The construction of meaning and identity cannot then rest entirely on these structures. It seems likely that quantitative approaches focus on these issues since they are politically and morally normative processes which are more easily captured than the much more diverse and personalised possibilities for the construction of identity on wider dimensions and axes. The following sections will explore further some possibilities for the nature of these dimensions through the relationships between this studies findings and interpretations, and some major paradigms in the social sciences. It will suggest that we cannot regard the process of these wider identity and meaning constructions through the more concrete traditional role identities, but that we cannot regard them either without recourse to roles in their function as containers of identity and meaning. It suggests we must understand Giddens' (1991) non-contingent roles and identities as just one of a large range of models for identity construction which exist alongside, not instead of more traditional roles.

The teenage cannabis smoking group can be read as just one of a potential range of 'loose' structures for personal meaning making with associated roles and identities. This makes clear that the potentialities of identities are not entirely 'fluid' and amorphous, but are shaped by their container, which is itself socio-materially constructed. That is to say, the container for identities may be socially constructed, such as a role, but is also enabled, constrained and limited by common physical, material and biopsychosocial properties. For the teenagers the cannabis smoking group was a vehicle which allowed them to take an active part in constructing meaning and in that process construct and perform aspects of themselves. These were not enduring identities rather they are constitutively transient - since their very function rests on them being open and ephemeral. While the cannabis smoking teenage friendship group is a very particular vehicle for this activity, the need to take an active part in the construction of identity through group activities which negotiate the meaning of the 'self in the world' is a more general human need.

6.4.2 - The symbolic interactionist tradition

As discussed previously (p 39) much of the influential work in sociologically derived identity theory stems from the symbolic interactionist perspective which following Mead and Cooley informed the development of Goffman, Becker and the Chicago school. Later social constructivism can be seen as growing out of this tradition (Luckmann and Berger, 1991). Many of the ideas in this earlier strand of symbolic interactionism were useful in describing and interpreting the data. Despite suggesting that we need to consider identity from a more diverse and ephemeral viewpoint, roles remain important providing a common language between social actors and in setting a marker for social expectations. Goffman's role theory invokes a relationship between performative identities and biographical identities through the concept of role performance. This locates role performance within a nexus of expectations built on wider social expectations of appropriate role behaviour and personal exposure to past performance by the individual actor (Goffman, 1959). Increasing diversity in role understandings does not negate this dynamic but rests upon it. The view suggested in this thesis is rooted in the interactionist perspective that identities must be enacted and have a performative aspect to be

current. The use by the *late twenties reflectors*, of their past performative identities as a biographical repertoire, for interpreting and projecting aspects of identity in current relationships, emphasises the value of biographical identities in enacting contemporary relationships. In Goffman's (1959) terms, if the actor has sufficient knowledge of his audience then invoking past identity performance itself can take on a symbolic function.

Roles then should be viewed not just as a container for projecting, or transacting valued self-attributes, but as a container for wider socially established understandings about conventional role contents. Much of this earlier work is sufficiently widely framed to encompass these wider interpretations of the nature, functions and functioning of social roles. Later work on identity informed by the symbolic interactionist, however, involves more refined understandings of social roles which make these interpretations potentially more problematic for the current thesis. In many of these later theories involving roles, the self is an internalisation of these symbols and socially codified interpretations. Such a view does not accord easily with the perspective seen in this study in which roles and expectations were routinely 'gamed', playing on conventional understandings and developing mechanisms through which to mitigate, level, accommodate and actively revel in the humour of status loss.

While the teenagers experienced stigma and uncertainty over core identities as debilitating, one of their key mechanisms for dealing with such issues was to make a game of identity statuses, codified within the shared assumptions and activities of the cannabis smoking group (Goffman, 1969). Neither were the findings particularly consistent with views about coherence and congruence in role performance, which is common in the later symbolic interactionist tradition. The teenagers seemed untroubled by inconsistencies between roles, they could be an A-grade student whilst simultaneously playing the group clown in the cannabis smoking group. Rather than seeking consistency above all, it seemed that the separation between roles allowed them to balance the nature of one role against another. Regardless of any objective articulation of an 'authentic' sense of self, such gaming

of social role expectations can be read as both protective of, and producing core valued attributes. The nature of this orientation to this core identity, whether it is entirely socially constructed over time or involves individualised differences in reflexive processes which are never fully socially activated is a question which is beyond this thesis. However, I believe we may have to look more widely for potential containers of identity than just the social role perspective.

Identity control theory (ICT) is a current theoretical model rooted in the symbolic interactionist tradition which has addressed the issue of drugs use in addiction (Burke, 2005; Burke, 2007). In the following passage Burke (2007:2202) outlines a conventional understanding of the relationship between identities and roles in symbolic interactionist traditions:

Central to all of these theories, including the symbolic interaction perspective, is the idea that behavior is premised on a named and classified world and that people in society name each other and themselves in terms of the positions they occupy. Further, these positional labels or names and the expectations attached to them become internalized as the identities that make up the self. These self labels thus define persons in terms of positions in society and these positions carry the shared behavioural expectations. Further, these positions, conventionally labeled roles and groups, are relational in the sense that they tie individuals together. For example, with respect to roles, father is tied to son or daughter; with respect to groups, the in-group is related to the out-group and in-group members are related to other in-group members. This is reflective of William James notion that people have as many selves as they have relationships to others (Meltzer, 1975). Thus, through their identities, people are intimately tied to the social structure.

The current project suggested that whilst on one level people do have as many selves as they do relationships, this view needs to be tempered by the observation that people seem to develop common heuristics and strategies for navigating and negotiating the transaction of identities in social relationships, and that authenticity

and congruence are often bracketed in relationships that are transient, or low in salience. Burke (2007:2202) himself emphasises a more dynamic process, contingent on structure, which is significantly more conducive to the perspective outlined in the current thesis:

The social structure, in this view, is not fixed or static. Fluidity of the structure of social relations is conceptually brought about by introducing Turner's concept of role-making (Turner, 1962), which takes place situationally as persons interact and negotiate common meanings that may reshape, reinterpret, and otherwise change the situation. However, this is variable. Some structures (open) are more open to role-making, negotiation, and change than others (closed). In the more open structures, names and classes as well as possibilities for interaction may be modified through negotiation and interaction. In closed structures such modifications are made only with difficulty.

Burke's is an ongoing programme of research which has been much refined over time in light of research results. Whilst rooted in quantifiable measures and jargon such as; the identity standard, error, comparator, discrepancy, and so on the programme is highly interpretive in its orientation to findings. In discussing and orienting his findings Burke makes use of much wider concepts common to the current study. There is a focus on resources and their symbolic capacity and an orientation to the Chicago schools' notions of careers and projects. The career carries an expectation of continuity (even in the modern sense in which the expectation is of multiple careers there is an expectation of skills being carried over), whereas a project, or an identity project is a time limited activity with a more or less direct orientation toward a goal. The teenagers cannabis use can be usefully conceived in these terms. If we consider what the individuals get out of participation in the group, we can view it from the perspective of each individuals' wider identity projects. It also suggests a potential avenue for some synthesis between Burke's ideas and Bandura's (1999b) conceptualisations of human, group, and proxy agency.

Burke's arguments and interpretation are broadly compelling and much is consistent with the dimensions and issues emerging from the inductive approach taken herein. Methodologically and philosophically, however, there remain numerous difficulties. Firstly, to what extent are quantitative models actually capturing what they are intended to? Secondly, to what extent are these measures consistent over time and different samples? Thirdly, are there dimensions which they do not, or cannot, capture? The inductive approach in the current study has led to an emphasis on the increasing diversity of available modes for constructing identity, and an increasing emphasis on more transitory and ephemeral modes and structures. This implies that some dimensions in quantitative models and measures may be more subject to change than others. Following Giddens (1994) it was suggested that outside of core identities, rather than accommodating them within the same frameworks and hierarchies of salience, we may have responded by developing a wider range of heuristics (in the common sense of rules of thumb, rather than a technical sense) with which to navigate and potentiate identities in interaction. This in no way negates symbolic interactionist perspectives, and positivist models and theories, but suggests that to advance them we may need to return to a more open orientation with a greater degree of dialogue between positivist and inductive perspectives.

6.4.3 - Social Action and Action Theory

In much contemporary work 'action research' has become a shorthand for a particular form of 'participatory action research' which often emphasise ideas of empowerment rooted in Lewin's (1946) paper on minority problems. However, particularly in psychological and organizational literature, 'action theory' and 'action research' relate to a much wider tradition drawing on Lewin's field theory and basic problem solving perspective (Chaiklin, 2011). While Parsons' 'theory of social action' in some ways might be thought of more properly as a social theoretical perspective, it follows more naturally from the discussion of symbolic interactionism above and relates to Lewin in its concern with agents and systems. Likewise Lewin's fields theory leads more naturally into the later social theory of Bourdieu and Giddens. The term 'action' is sometimes purposively used as a distinction

meaning activity which acts on, or in, the world. It therefore has a relation to the authors positioning on realism and the ontology, epistemology and methodology of this orientation accordingly varies, sometimes significantly.

In explaining cannabis use in terms of normal social processes the thesis highlights that for many, perhaps the majority, the uncertainties of modern existence make identity achievements transitory, uncertain and contingent. The traditional role theory, which highlights identity achievement and continuity, remained highly relevant and these traditional roles appeared to present an ideal and an expectation, which informed the thinking and behaviours of the teenagers. Belief that they would in time achieve 'stable' adult roles appeared in some way protective. If users do come to associate cannabis use with the inability to achieve legitimate and valued social roles, then cannabis use itself may become symbolic of belonging to a counter-culture, providing alternative forms of legitimacy. Furthermore, this dynamic may embed the user in a cycle in which the fact of their cannabis use is mobilised socially to absolve them of routine social obligations, either within the family, society, or in the world of work. There is here also, a clear relationship to existing concepts in the health and wellbeing literature, relating roles to social structure. It suggests that Parsons' (1951) sick role has some relevance for understanding the social pressures that can construct and maintain a dependent relationship to cannabis, in the absence of normal physical mechanisms associated with addiction.

Parsons' theory of social action, while considered distinct from social interactionist perspectives shares many attributes and concerns though it differs in its axioms and their derivations. A major practical difference lies in agency, and the relative weight placed on the influence of social structures and culture in Parsons, while interactionist perspectives ascribe a greater influence to micro-sociological factors (Turner, 1974). Turner suggests that in terms of the theory developed, action and interaction theories have more in common than a rigid distinction may suggest, but that they diverge primarily in their different orientations to theory building. Both traditions draw substantially on Weber's *Verstehen* in carrying out research,

they diverge somewhat in Parsons' emphasis on 'systems imperatives' as an analytic tool. Despite some fundamental differences in ontology, where Parsons elaborates a Kantian approach (Münch, 1981;1982) which is significantly more involved than the interactionists roots in William James (Meltzer, 1975), Turner (1974:292) concludes that both methods offer distinctive perspectives, which need not necessarily be incompatible:

Both strategies potentially offer a great deal to a theory of social organization, since the action theoretic strategy can offer insights into emergent phenomena arising out of "unit acts" or "joint acts." Conversely, the interactionist strategy can provide clues as to what kinds of symbolic transactions occur at different levels of social organization.

The concern of Parsons to decisively locate the philosophical underpinnings of his approach addresses some core and enduring issues in sociology. His location of the theory of action is situated in Kant's transcendentalism, against Hulme's radical empiricism and Cartesian rationalism, emphasising 'the mutual interaction of theory and experience' (Münch,1981:715). The Kantian problematizing of the 'a priori' and categorisation as against visceral experience, emphasises that categorisation is imposed 'from above' in the pursuit of 'universal validity' (Münch, 1981:717). By invoking Kant's moral philosophy, Parsons intends to counter problematic aspects of Hobbes' political utilitarianism in the constitution of societies. It is from here that Parsons moves to define 'voluntaristic action' (Münch, 1981:722):

...social order is only possible as long as the actors voluntarily consent and bind themselves to a common normative frame of reference... human action must be understood as the result of an interpenetration of means-end rationality and a normative limitation on the free play of such rationality.

Evidently for Parsons' while understanding and visceral experience are important, they only impact on his project in as much as they produce action - manifest behaviours which act on, or in the objective world. Abstract concepts and systems are

here constituted by negotiated 'buy-in' to group and social norms which produce social order. The construction of cannabis as 'normal' within the social group for the teenagers was built on an understanding that they would, at some point, achieve conventional 'adult' roles where cannabis use would cease to be 'normal for them'. There is here an inherent accommodation of the wider social norms, characteristic of Parsons' theory. While bounding many aspects of their behaviour and understandings, social norms are held, to a degree, in suspension within the confines of the cannabis using group when they are engaged in smoking cannabis.

For Parsons then social action is directed primarily at understanding macro-social phenomena. By contrast, Lewin's action theory is directed primarily by small group processes, which are distinguished by 'fields', the operation of which may differ according to their nature, constitution and purpose. While there was some influence of macro-social phenomena in the use of cannabis by the teenagers, their experiences were situated, and they actively bound their use to the small group context of the friendship group, distinguishing between the use of their group and that of others. They had limited awareness of larger social processes, beyond nascent ideas of how they may impact on their imagined futures. The primary fields of their lives were family, school, structured activity groups (sport clubs etc.), their wider friendship and social networks and the subset which constituted the cannabis using group. Also relevant was a more diffuse and problematic field which might be called 'imagined futures'. Living with a strong focus on the future is a feature of contemporary risk dialogues and the reflexive constitution of selves (Beck et al., 1994; Beck, 1996) which will be explored below (p 265). The scope of Parsons' project dictates that much contemporary theory invokes, explicitly or implicitly, aspects of Parsons' social action theory, though again the exact relationship is often unclear and it has been argued that this represents an unpinning of sociological practice from philosophical underpinnings (Münch, 1981).

Again, working in the context of addiction rather than ‘normal’ use Graham et al. (2008) explored contextual action theory, which draws on the action research tradition (Valach and Young, 2002). Graham et al. (2008:124) characterise this new action theory in the following passage:

Contextual action theory offers an integrative conceptualization of how communication, internal processes (i.e., cognitions and emotions), manifest behaviors, and social meaning together constitute intentional action and importantly, joint action processes over time.

Graham’s contextual action theory can be seen as an emerging, integrative theory, that attempts to bring together aspects of the sometimes disparate strands of theory emerging from different disciplines within the addictions. Key to the process and method is a hierarchical understanding of goals, projects and career (Graham et al., 2008:124):

Action theory consists of three temporal action constructs that illustrate the ongoing relationship between goal-directed actions over time. Action consists of specific goal-directed behaviours that occur in contiguous time. The concept of project refers to groups of actions that have a common goal, and occur intermittently over a mid-term length of time. A project can become a complex intentional enterprise carried out by a changing group of people over a mid-range amount of time especially when a particular goal cannot be achieved by simple actions.

Graham’s project is distinctively social-psychological, while resting on qualitative methods which inductively assess and extend an a priori analytical framework, it implicitly integrates concepts which relate to sociological discourses and suggests a potential perspective for integration of neurobiological and biopsychosocial understandings. Despite ongoing research there appear to be no widely recognised, identifiable neurobiological reinforcement mechanisms operating in cannabis use which cannot be attributed to otherwise normal processes. The relationship to the current work is then limited to the biopsychosocial understandings and social processes.

Taken from a life-project perspective, the experiences and understandings of the teenagers are distinguished from corresponding processes reported in addiction, by the nature and constitution of their liminality. For the teenagers it is their stage in the life course which bounds their use and understandings of use. It is a time-limited project which is relatively low in their overall hierarchy of projects and will they believe fall in priority as they become able to take a more active part in the adult world. For those with continuing drug problems, the fact of their ongoing use, social stigma and the practices, networks and socially situated self-understandings, can bind them to the project of drugs use. The continued relocation of resources from other life projects, to the drug project in Graham's (2008:128) case study suggests a centrality of the project of drugs use in the dynamic social construction of her self understanding:

Rosie's addiction process was simultaneously self-defining and constructed by her relationships. Identity here refers to a mental representation of self-as-object that involves ongoing evaluations, emotional states and motives.

This suggests an affective dimension, which is largely absent in the male teenagers understandings of their use and an internalisation of ongoing negative evaluations by others, characteristic of Goffman's (1969) stigma. The management of negative self-evaluations in the teenage cannabis users (for instance in Gary's incident with the police, school and parents p 112) draws on the wider fields in which cannabis is not a feature of their lives and through comparison with more aberrant others. Though only 23, Rosie has much less access to the 'youthful transgression' resource mobilised by Gary. Again this suggests that we should view resources from a wider perspective, as including learnt social symbolic artefacts and heuristics for navigating and negotiating identity in social fields. This issue of the place of immaterial resources does not currently accord well with theories of action in wider fields, such as economics, but has been approached to an extent by Bourdieu's 'social capital' (Münch, 1983). This appears to relate in part to ongoing difficulties in situating these 'soft' valuation processes in empirically measurable frameworks.

The perspective outlined by Graham, like Burke (2005), builds on Bandura's (1999b) social cognitive theory and the approach taken to agency. In the context of addiction, Bandura (1999a:214) emphasises the centrality of a conceptualisation of agency common to both addiction and normal social processes:

Perceived self-efficacy constitutes a key factor in human agency because it operates on motivation and action not only in its own right, but through its impact on other determinants as well. Efficacy beliefs determine the goal challenges people set for themselves, how much effort they enlist in the endeavour, their staying power in the face of difficulties, and how formidable they perceive the impediments to be... people are both producers and products of their life conditions.

Both Graham and Bandura point to 'natural recovery processes' in the addictions (Carballo et al., 2007) as suggesting addiction can be seen as a failure of normal self-regulatory mechanisms by contrast to self-managed change, which rests on efficacy beliefs. Efficacy beliefs here stand in contrast to the dominant dialogues of risk which characterise the biomedical approach to treatment. In a parallel with Parsons' 'sick role', Bandura (1999a:215) suggests that, 'We are more heavily invested in intricate theories for failure than in theories for success.' Failure of drug treatment then rests as much on structurally situated efficacy beliefs as on the perceived self-efficacy of individuals. Bandura suggests that effective recovery rests on access to an effective battery of self-regulatory strategies for dealing with cognitive cue responses. This suggests a need for complex interventions addressing wider psychosocial issues faced by addicts, rather than a focus on neurobiological drug cravings. Similarly Bandura suggests that this rests on a similar reconceptualisation of drugs problems based on changing beliefs about the possibility of change at the macro-social level.

While the teenagers held reasonably high expectations of self-efficacy in relation to their cannabis use they had much lower expectations of agency in relation to entry to adult roles. This rested not on their cannabis use but on their uncertainty over reward in continued investment in education. Bandura's (1999b) wider theory

emphasises that self-efficacy is not entirely domain specific, rather efficacy beliefs are built on experiences and understandings from multiple domains. For some of the teenagers, notably those from more 'middle class' families, the background expectations of parents, schools and friends effectively shored up their reaction to uncertainties. For those without this support it could result in an ambivalence and fatalism. Gavin (p 127) for instance when asked about his future plans described with frustration his ambivalence over alternative careers following his being unable to pursue a longstanding vocational commitment to joining the navy. He had been entered by his school for a lower tier maths paper which would not allow him to get the grade he needed to meet recruitment criteria. He reported that when asking for a chance to be entered in the higher paper the school advised him this would not be possible due to teaching constraints. The apparent failure of the school to support Gavin in his chosen career, or perhaps to offer more realistic alternatives, appears unfortunately indicative of a wider ambivalence to the entry to adulthood of large sectors of the youth population. In understanding the roots and consequences of this position, Parsons provides an interesting perspective through his critique of Hobbesian utilitarianism (Münch, 1981):

The utilitarian dilemma consists in the fact that within the system there is no motivation for the actors to try to alter their self-destructive situation. The most rational strategy is still the acquisition of superior power; the acceptance of a normative order requires the confidence that others too will stick to the norms. This in turn requires that everyone treat adherence to the norms not as one end among others, but as a higher end which is never submitted to the conditions of utility calculation.

As has been emphasised the teenagers want access to conventional adult systems and networks, and are willing to conform and invest in them. They are not breaking with perceived social order and norms by choice, so much as they find themselves, at this time, having no place within it and no roadmap for acquiring a place within it. Conformity appears to offer few benefits and leaves them feeling 'a bit of a mug',

the fact of using cannabis can here become a symbol and legitimation of their place in a differently constituted network of meaning, in which their relative lack of status in normative societal frameworks can be reclaimed and recontextualised.

A feature which cuts across much of the foregoing work relates to the interconnection of arguments across scales and disciplines which are often discussed as though they were in some way independent. Likewise the dichotomising of inductive and deductive approaches to empirical data and the development and nature of theory is not nearly so clear cut as it may first appear. As Turner (1974) suggests, if we accept that Parsons' social action theory and Mead's symbolic interactionism are foundationally distinct and consequently frame their findings in different ways, the implications and interpretations they bring to their findings and the fields which they study, are frequently highly consistent with those of the alternate approach. Both these approaches do, however, invoke a substantive relationship between their ontological foundations and their methods of inquiry. As discussed in the introduction (p 23), Lewin's action research perspective offers an interesting alternative framing to more instrumental sociological conventions relating method to theory. These earlier action research approaches accord quite well with the actual processes carried out in the course of the research herein.

Parsons' orientation to theory was based on Kant's epistemology and moral philosophy in pursuit of deriving the inherent laws of different social systems at the macro-level (Münch, 1981). Lewin's action research by contrast focuses initially on small groups and a more pragmatic approach relating theory to practice. Sandelands (1990:250) suggests that 'Unlike ordinary theories which refer *to* persons, action theories are *of* persons.' Although this distinction is neat, it does not appear to fully accord with Lewin's (1946:36-37) position, which seems rather to include both these types of theories:

It is important to understand clearly that social research concerns itself with two rather different types of questions, namely the study of general laws of group life and the diagnosis of a specific situation... For any field of action both types of scientific research are needed.

For Lewin, both these orientations are characteristically pragmatic and empirical and relate to wider strategic goals. Particular emphasis is placed on fact finding and reconnaissance (Lewin, 1946:37):

Planning starts usually with something like a general idea. For one reason or another it seems desirable to reach a certain objective. Exactly how to circumscribe this objective, and how to reach it is frequently not too clear. The first step then is to examine the idea carefully in the light of the means available. Frequently more fact-finding about the situation is required. If this first period of planning is successful, two items emerge: namely, an “over-all plan” of how to reach the objective and secondly, a decision in regard to the first step of action. Usually this planning has also somewhat modified the original idea.

In a passage redolent of the drugs policy debates of the late twentieth century (Nutt, 2009; Stimson, 2000), Lewin (1946:38) invokes the metaphor of steering a boat to describe the actions of a group attempting to address problems:

In the field of intergroup relations all too frequently action is based on observations made ‘within the boat’ and too seldom based on objective criteria in regard to the relations of the movement of the boat to the objective to be reached.

Lewin (1946:38) goes on to locate the role of the university in this dynamic:

We need reconnaissance to show us whether we move in the right direction and with what speed we move. Socially, it does not suffice that university organizations produce new scientific insight. It will be necessary to install fact-finding procedures, social eyes and ears, right into social action bodies.

Lewin (1946:43) also concerns himself with the relationship between control over decision-making and control over research. In particular, balancing the power of decision makers who:

Somehow or other ... all seem to be possessed by the fear that they could not do what they want to do if they, and others, would really know the facts

Lewin also emphasises the dangers of allowing a perception of a 'social science technocracy'. While Parsons locates moral action within his Kantian underpinnings, Lewin (1946:44), anticipating a later strand of arguments characterised by Foucault, emphasises the ethical issues for the researcher who controls access to science: 'Science gives more freedom and power to both the doctor and the murdered, to democracy and fascism.' In studying minority groups therefore Lewin (1946:44) emphasises reciprocity:

Intergroup relations is a two-way affair. This means that to improve relations between groups both of the interacting groups have to be studied... It is also true of course that intergroup relations cannot be solved without altering certain aspects of conduct and sentiment of the minority group... One of the most severe obstacles in the way of improvement seems to be the notorious lack of confidence and self-esteem of most minority groups.

This suggests that it is not enough to understand the perspective of drugs users, we must also study public and political understandings of drugs use and bring the respective actors to some degree of accommodation. For Lewin, in the pursuit of science adequate to addressing problems we must lower the certainty of 'self-esteem', what he calls the 100%, in the dominant population and empower the minority group to fully express their experiences and issues. This minority/ dominant group positioning is evidently not wholly appropriate to the issue of teenage cannabis users in that the users do not configure their use as a permanent state. However, we can consider the state of 'being a teenager' is an inherently marginalised situation and locate male teenage cannabis users within this wider nexus.

The group in this context is further marginalised by its members ambivalence over their group status, they recognise that acquiring access to resources, social position and status involves becoming one of the dominant group. Cannabis use is then a feature of their lives mobilised from their marginalised status, rather than being the root of this marginalisation. Their cannabis use in this phase of life continues only as long as their wider perceptions continue to emphasise their marginalisation. For it to continue requires its accommodation within a different set of meanings. As discussed previously, the policy and legislation relating to cannabis use may primarily have served to make it a more potent and widely recognised symbol for legitimising the actions and ‘social spaces’ of otherwise marginalised groups. However, the instrumental use of type 2 users, does not fit entirely with this dynamic and their alternative legitimisation system, in which cannabis use is legitimised as a tool in a creative technology.

Lewin (1946:43) also highlighted the dangers for the social scientist becoming involved in ‘intergroup relations’: ‘We know today better than ever before that they are potentially dynamite.’ This resonates strongly with the potential difficulties faced by drugs researchers, their work can inevitably be framed by some policy-makers as irresponsible advocacy of dangerous and antisocial activity. Alternatively it can be framed by drugs users as a mere tool of powerful institutions, legitimising a heavy-handed approach to managing an activity which the users themselves often see as mobilised from their pre-existing marginalisation. This emphasises the difficult dynamic with regard to power in which researchers are currently placed. Political intervention through criminalisation can be framed by the minority group as the exercise of state sanctioned ‘hard power’ against the group (Russell, 1938). The use of research techniques aimed specifically at control, regulation, cessation of use, ‘nudging’ and so on can then be framed as the exercise of ‘soft power’. If a ‘normal’ drug user sees their use as a feature of their marginalisation, this may more deeply embed the symbolic capacity of the drug use as a signal to fellows and others of their feelings of marginalisation. This can in turn provide a forum to legitimise both their marginalised status and their drug use. The wider marginalisation thus legitimises the use of cannabis as an alternative source of belonging.

Here we hit a potentially potent and interesting principle linking theories of late modernity to general increases in the use of drugs. Increasing diversity on many levels produces increasing uncertainty over shared social meanings. This may undermine the sense of belonging to a group embodying a particular set of meanings, or concomitantly, it may increase the degree to which group membership requires ‘you live to your label’ (Edge and Rogers, 2005:21). The need for increasingly pluralist understandings in addressing intergroup problems is not dictated by the ‘value free’ tendencies of a scientific research community, rather it is inherent in adapting research principles to the social conditions of late modernity. Furthermore, many of the technologies of late modernity are inherently self-reflexive (Beck, 1996). Reflexivity has been emphasised over the course of the social sciences, though less routinely invoked than falsification it is also a key principle in Popper’s wider philosophy (Stokes, 1997). The reflexive nature of society gains particular emphasis in Giddens’ (1984) structuration and wider debates about contemporary social life.

6.4.4 - Later Social Theoretical Perspectives: structuration, risk, uncertainty, complexity

In common with much of the work cited above and always implicit in the study of drugs use, this thesis has rested on describing the interplay between structural issues and individual factors which is characteristic of social theory. Much of the way in which identity came to be understood and interpreted relates to Giddens’ (1991) work on ‘the transformation of intimacy’ which is rooted in the wider ideas of structuration (Giddens, 1984). Giddens’ structuration is a strategy which aims to rethink the assumed macro and micro perspectives and traditional dichotomies such as structure and agency. The extent to which this is new, or is alternatively a corrective to earlier sloppy application of otherwise sound ideas is debatable. However it is characterised, Giddens’ work seems to chime with the interpretations emerging in this project, my personal experience, wider knowledge and experiences in the field. That said I would not particularly self-identify as a structurationist, or frame the current thesis as such, I would rather see this as a ‘best fit’ model which was converged upon through emersion in the empirical data. While much other contemporary social theory may provide interesting further perspectives on

the data, the findings of the thesis seem to be most adequately framed through the structuralist perspective, through Giddens' theories and associated work, such as that of Beck (1994).

As an approach to theory which is integrative within its own boundaries structuration encompasses theory from many of the earlier phases of social research and locates them within the sphere of contemporary modernity. Giddens' contributions are wide-ranging, for the purposes of this thesis I will not discuss the political dimensions but will instead focus on structuration, the impact of modernity on new ways of thinking about and constructing identity and the associated concept of the 'risk society'. This leads to a possible association linking Heideggerian concepts which designate culture as a socio-material field and society as a cultural form. Giddens invokes a principle of duality in agency and structure whereby agency produces structures, while structures simultaneously enable agency, through a more or less recursive system, in which the operative structures change to accommodate this action. There is then no 'chicken and egg problem' rather they form a self-perpetuating integrated system of differing levels of concreteness depending on their nature, purpose, derivation, actors and their relationship to other systems. This perspective can be useful in understanding a number of issues raised by the research. In particular it points towards an answer to the issue of the 'learning process' in coming to use cannabis (Becker, 1953). It suggests a mechanism whereby the reproduction of common understandings about cannabis and the way to use it between different groups, in different places, at different times, need not be primarily a process of communication between groups. Instead it may be that shared rituals and understandings are a product of the nature of cannabis itself, the need it fulfils in the group and its place in the particular dynamic construction of social meaning going on within the group. This in turn suggests that in understanding the cannabis use of individuals and different groups we need to look at the different place of cannabis and differences in the mechanisms involved in the construction of meaning by different individuals in different groups.

Giddens (1984) distinguishes between structures on three analytic domains:

- structures of signification
- structures of legitimation
- structures of domination

These intersecting domains can, to an extent, be seen to resolve in the traditional systems of symbolic interactionism, social action and critical theory. Structuration thus provides a wider framework which can accommodate the principal dimensions of the data and interpretations. If we consider these domains, for a moment just inside the cannabis using group, from these three perspectives, we can see it simultaneously involves elements of all three. As an arena for the co-production of group and personal meanings it operates in the domain of signification. In its function of providing a ‘play-space’ or social bubble which designates that a different set of norms and values to the wider adult world are in operation, it is in the domain of legitimation. In its status games and identity play, it recreates and models some of the more brutish aspects of status in adult social life in microcosm. Simultaneously the goofy abnormal behaviours are legitimised by the fact of the cannabis use, reducing the social risk. No domain can then be taken in isolation, and behaviour can be mobilised or read from different domains than that in which it originates.

As is evident in the above, it is a characteristic of structuration theory that these domains provide not only for a dynamic for the production of meaning, action and structure within the group but link it inextricably to wider social structures (Giddens, 1984). This leads Beck to argue that the logical limit to these structures is under current technological and cultural conditions global (Beck, 1996). Beck’s work extends Giddens’ theories by taking reflexivity into domains involving the socio-material nature of human experience. Evidently cannabis is a material; the interaction of cannabis with the mind and body, the geographical situatedness of a co-present activity and the spaces in which cannabis is used were emphasised as an important aspect of the cannabis experience. Both the current thesis and my wider work point toward the need to acknowledge that we cannot study the social in

isolation from the material world. In moving from the social to the socio-material Beck (1996:7) points to the need for a further paradigmatic accommodation, again accomplished through a form of reflexivity:

Is it really true that realism and constructivism, in their approaches to world risk society and their ways of explaining it, are in every respect mutually exclusive? This is the case only as long as both sides are assumed to play naively. For just as there is a belief that nature and reality simply exist as such, so too is there a belief in pure constructivism that is nothing but constructivist. As long as we remain at this level, we fail to recognise the interpretive content of reflexive realism, and hence its potential role in strategies of power. Such a reflexive realism does delve into the sources which make of 'reality constructs' a 'reality' for the first time; it investigates how self-evidence is produced, how questions are curtailed, how alternative interpretations are shut up in black boxes and so on.

Another important and relevant strand of theory growing out of structuration, globalisation and technological change, involves a new understanding of risk. While the arguments originated in the academic domain, the following excerpt, is quoted at length from a media interview with Giddens in 2000. It expresses the origins of the changing nature of risk rooted in uncertainty and living with an eye always to the future, which was a key characteristic of the teenagers understandings of their lives and consequently the place of cannabis in them (Giddens, 2000:online):

What's happened in our lifetime is a transformation from one type of risk environment to another. You know, the notion of risk didn't always exist; it was invented essentially in the late Middle Ages. Many traditional cultures, so far as we know, don't have a concept of risk at all, the reason being that things are either a result of the will of God, or the result of hazard, or the result of the kind of influence which through ritual you put on the world. Or they just happen that way.

It's only when you have a future-oriented world that you need the notion of risk, because the notion of risk is a confrontation with the future, essentially. It's about future time and the management of future time. What's happening now is that we live in the most future-oriented society that has ever existed. Therefore, the notion of risk for us infects more or less everything, including personal things, like the decision to get married, say. The decision to get married, where it's an institutional decision, a kind of transition in life, was a pretty straightforward thing in the past because you knew what you were doing. Now there's a certain sense in which you don't know what you're doing because the nature of marriage and relationships is changing. You have an open environment. You are involved in a kind of risk universe there.

In many situations you can't use traditional methods of calculating risk, because you don't know in advance what the risk actually is...

What we have to deal with is a very, very interesting thing, which is very crucial to scientific innovation, which is exploring the edge between the positive and negative sides of risk. You obviously need risk; no one lives a life without actively embracing risk. Science is about boldness, is about innovation. And the question for all of us is how you find an appropriate balance between these two, especially when you don't know in advance what the consequences of scientific innovation will be. It's a very, very interesting world in which to live. These two sides of risk, until recently, have never been brought together, because you've got lots of discussions of financial risk, where risk is essentially a positive wealth generating thing. There is also much discussion of ecological and health risk, where risk is essentially a negative thing - things you want to avoid. These things are coming together in the real world, and we have to bring them together in the way in which we think about them. A lot of business, a lot of government, a lot of the management of technology is essentially about the sophistication of risk management.

For Giddens then, risk is wide-ranging, permeating contemporary life, however it also emphasises the timescales involved in the emergence of this new risk and the depth of modernity. The will of God argument relates back to Nietzsche (1885), and is implicit in Beck's, Giddens' and Lash's thinking, 'levelling' and 'the superman' remain highly relevant through the action of communications, technology, institutions and more fluid structures (Beck et al., 1994). Giddens makes a useful distinction between risk and hazard, and the experience, understanding and orientation to risk as individualised and group strategies and understandings. Clearly the constitution of risk, perceived risk, hazard and so on is important in framing and understanding both the perspectives of the cannabis users and responses and interventions to cannabis use. As discussed the teenagers did not configure their understandings of cannabis through risk, though the rules they developed were geared toward managing risks these were primarily the risks to status, 'whiteys' whilst unpleasant were not experienced in terms of hazard. Overall they considered the hazard element of cannabis to be relatively low compared to other activities, particularly drinking. Some did consider cannabis as a potential risk to future prosperity but this was subsumed by their general uncertainties and their vague sense of disenfranchisement. With so much of their lives geared towards investing current and future resources in uncertain prospects for what seemed to them a distant point in the future, the immediacy of cannabis - as pleasure now - makes a good deal of sense. Cannabis, as pleasure now, seemed to be configured for them as a balance and reward for their investment in the future and conformity in other areas of their lives. Giddens' and Beck's theory of a 'new risk' has entered the drugs literature and much wider thought, but it appears relatively under-developed in a field where risk is much used in the positivist literature (Seddon et al., 2008). The 'new risk' idea is however perhaps the most difficult to accommodate within conventional understandings of risk and is one of the most widely critiqued aspects of theory emerging from structuration (Burns and Machado, 2010).

Much of Giddens' thinking, and also that of Lewin and Mead involves an open axiomatic style where a relatively simple but wide-ranging general principle is stated and its wider relevance explored. By contrast other thinkers such as Bourdieu and Parsons are detailed and expansive, exploring and attempting to pin down the

wider implications of their ideas. The former approach is consistent with Foucault's notion of theory as a broad toolbox, whereas the latter is more consistent with the principle of theory as the world revealed through a particular lens common in sociology. The former aims for adaptive heuristics, while the latter aims for a complete account which can be tested and built upon. While both have their uses the approach followed here accords very much with the toolbox principle. Giddens developed a theory of 'third way' politics in response to the problems and potentials of globalisation, however a wider conception of politics is implicit in the concept of reflexive modernisation which speaks both to the findings and interpretations of this study and provides a connection back to critical theory (Beck et al., 1994). Following Popper (1957), the issue of historicism and consequently the bases of critical theory as an appropriate mode of enquiry for social research has been much debated, however structuration offers a new accommodation which appears to better situate both Poppers' slightly limited views and the more subtle approaches developed in much critical theory.

Reflexive modernisation does not imply only that all structures are in constant flux, rather it suggests that different degrees of concreteness/ viscosity/ fluidity apply in different social systems/ structures/ institutions, over time. Lewin's force field analysis provides a way of thinking about the different structural and agentic forces which act to produce different structures and tells us something about the conditions which govern their stability over different situations and combinations of characteristics. The continuing use of cannabis in relatively similar ways by the three different cohorts over time suggests that either some of the forces involved in this behaviour remain relatively constant, or that the characteristics of using cannabis in male teenage friendship groups are appropriate responses to a wide range of social conditions. There is insufficient space to explore this herein but it may provide an interesting avenue for further work.

As a young child both our existential and ontological needs are satisfied primarily through the family, augmented by structural systems. Globalisation in modern societies dictates that many existential needs are increasingly satisfied at a distance

via extended social networks. Our access to resources which fulfil our physiological needs becomes rooted in our ability to mobilise identities which legitimise our value to others in an extended social system. Hence identity while becoming more uncertain, transient and contingent has nevertheless become a much more potent force in satisfying not only our personal, ontological and social needs for meaning, but our physiological needs as well. Taken in this context we can see the value for identity development inherent in the cannabis using social group and its relation to procurement in hidden, difficult and potentially dangerous social networks. Cannabis use, in large part by dint of its illicit status can be seen as a late form of play. Political theorists have long recognised the value of identity in 'soft power' - while early playground games and the physical brawls and bullying of early teenage years are an expression of 'hard power' the expression of 'soft power' is inherently the ability to negotiate and articulate identity in an extended social group. Further, the sense of authenticity and agency involves the skills and opportunities to participate in co-constructing the group. Conventional understandings of cannabis as a symbol in consumer societies fail to capture the participatory nature of the construction of meaning in cannabis smoking groups.

The cannabis using group was characterised by the open and accommodating structure implicit in the social and physical space of use. The low level of generalised trust (Lindström, 2004) was a key strategic component allowing the group to accommodate the diverse values of its members. The earlier passage from the interview with Giddens (2000) emphasised that risk is not always negatively experienced, likewise, permanence and stability, while valued in many domains should not be our core means of understanding value in identity and relationships. The typology suggested that for it to fulfil its function the group must be diverse and non-contingent - it was about learning to navigate social arenas beyond friendships - not about forming new 'enduring' friendships.

Classical social theoretical perspectives do remain a key source in the analysis presented above, as do earlier philosophical works. While there has been a great deal of change over the twentieth century many of the conditions discussed in

earlier theory remain highly relevant. For instance, fluid 'postmodern' roles have been added to our background repertoire but traditional roles continue to provide archetypes, ideals and sources of heuristics for navigating the modern world (Giddens, 1976). The access to technologies which has changed the life experience of the more affluent rests on access to resources, networks and markets. The differential patterning of access and utilisation of higher order technologies results not only in greater inequality but in a greater diversity of social structures and access to the production of personal meaning and belonging within these different spheres. While for the teenagers fluid roles had taken on much greater saliency than in traditional accounts of emerging adulthood (Erikson, 1968), they continued to value traditional roles as idealised forms from which to structure longer term projects and investments. While there was a need for unstructured creative participation there was a concomitant need, or perhaps just desire, for more permanent, structured, secure roles which would provide some degree of surety in long term personal investments. The situation they described appeared to them to be the worst of all possible worlds in this regard. They experienced huge risk and uncertainty in long term personal projects whilst having to accommodate to seemingly unreasonable and irrationally rigid structures in their day-to-day lives, which did not allow for authentic personal engagement, expression, growth, or development. Meanwhile the adult world appeared to continue to set up more and more boundaries and conditions which legitimated continuing to deny the teenagers access to it.

The continuing relevance of these earlier social theoretical models can be illustrated by considering the current circumstances of access to housing for the HG and SG age cohorts (as of writing age ~29 and ~23 respectively). Giddens' (1993) transformation of intimacy implicitly rested on an equalisation of access to the financial resources required to supply basic material needs experienced by couples emerging in the 1990s. This financial equalisation allowed the relationship to be freed to a degree from the constraints of mutual material dependency. For Giddens this in turn allows a greater degree of freedom in the construction of the emotional realm of the relationship. However, the emergence of these kind of relationships did not necessarily change the existing models of spousal relationships for everybody. It appears for many the ideal form presented by Giddens was recognised but ulti-

mately re-transacted within couples. By entering into a renewed state of mutual financial dependence a couple could leverage their greater combined resources to investment in future profit. Because of idiosyncrasies in the UK tax system - and since in the late twentieth century in the UK access to business opportunities, or financial market investments has increasingly been held by an elite - these investments took the form of investments in housing. Simultaneously demographic factors, in the form of changes in birth rate and old age mortality had an influence. Later death of parents meant they inherited in middle age, once their children were adults. Rather than investing inheritances in childcare, as the previous generation had done, they invested again in property. Meanwhile the financial and democratic systems, necessarily geared to servicing this majority, adapted to protect these investments. Over time these adaptations became untenable, the overall effect is experienced internationally, producing a reversal whereby two professional wages no longer guarantee access to the property market. For today's couples though the ideal form of the pure relationship presented in Giddens does not appear to have disappeared so much as mutated. Providing an alternative framework for intimacy, it continues to influence the nature of relationships, behaviours and future plans, while the resource aspects of traditional gender roles remain in suspension.

The reaction of Giddens' original generation to this dynamic has been piecemeal, individualised, value-laden, and to a degree has resulted in a re-orientation and renewed impact of traditional class differences in the strategies adopted. One impact appears to be a renewed focus on tax avoidance and a renewed legitimisation of participation in the grey economy. The tipping points of stability in these multiple interconnected systems foster innovative strategies and a phase in which agency and action takes a greater role. Action then both sustains structures and rebalances them and there is a relationship between the perceived structural stability, the inputs necessary, and group and individualised strategies, both through aware rational-agents and through less conscious and indirect forces. This argument emphasises that we cannot hope to solve complex problems involving multiple competing domains, across multiple systems using only reductionist methodologies. If we attempt to do so the result will be at best good science with an interpretative sphere too limited to adequately address the problem at hand. Neither

can we rely only on inductive methods when attempting to integrate work across these scales. The arguments herein are just one of many areas which suggest we must get better at research which acknowledges complexity. This will require both positivist and interpretivist approaches to work better together and vastly improved methods for interpretive and deductive synthesis of a plurality of knowledge across different domains.

Examining the dynamic presented above, which is of course highly simplified, emphasises that we cannot separate the structural from agency, action and their part in the constitution of that structure. Any sufficient explanation must not only take in multiple scales, multiple structures but the interplay of structure and agency. It must also account for not only reflexivity, rational strategies, group, individual and non-human agency but the idiosyncrasies fostered by creative strategies unleashed in dynamic responses to enduring uncertainty. To expect this of any one intellectual tradition has always been untenable, this only becomes more so when we consider the increasing interconnection, diversity and concomitant innovation, leading to not only a greater number of systems but an increasing interrelation of systems. The *Verstehen* principle of constraining our analysis to the perceptions of the group will not alone provide sufficient data, neither will the positivist alternative of a priori categorical demarcation of the assumed systems in play. As we saw with the cannabis users, the individuals actions are enabled and constrained by the nature and impact of structures of which they may be concurrently aware, later become aware, or never become aware. The choice over which structures to bring to bear in constructing the meaning of themselves or the situation remains, as Goffman (1959) suggested, a product of audience, intent, skill, power and complicity. They are at once *engineer* and *bricoleur* making use of a sophisticated toolkit derived from knowledge and experience but on the basis of availability within the currently articulated system. This toolkit is grounded not only in repetition of learned habits, but by combining, extending and innovating, sometimes systematically, more often in a capricious way, which in itself constitutes learning (Strauss, 1952). Their habits, successes, failures and learning styles are informed by and come to constitute the form of culture which Heidegger (1927) calls 'readiness to hand'. Their choice of tools, systems, modes and strategies both communicates

who they are to others and to themselves, and recursively makes them who they are, have been and may become. It is like the 'chicken and egg problem' then, a problem that only exists through a reductive frame of reference which fails to account for the constant dynamic evolution of subject and environment which brings the analytic snapshot into being. In the social sciences, in quantitative work as much as in qualitative, and just as in quantum physics, the very act measurement changes the system, in uncertain and unpredictable ways.

This suggests that a definitive answer to the macro-micro, structure-agency problem in sociology is not possible - rather it is contextually defined by the nature of the systems in play, the negotiation of the actors over the appropriate system in which to play and the intrinsic dynamism and flexibility, or rigidity and permanence, of the structures in operation. Furthermore, it in turn influences and constrains systems in which there is no clear directional expression of agency. The systems thinking of the past century is pertinent to many problems but it does not account for the more ephemeral self-generated structures in which individuals live. These ephemeral structures, brought into being through routine interaction over time may often be purposively oriented towards transience, impermanence and uncertainty - such is the nature of a system designed not for permanence but for the dynamic accommodation and distribution of needs and dependencies. By focusing on what can readily be measured, we ultimately fail to account for what may be most important. There may or may not be proxy dimensions which give us access to these unquantifiable structures. We can measure relative network size, network depth, interaction times and frequencies, all of which are potentially valid and important indicators. They cannot however tell us the valuation placed by an individual on an individual element at a given time and the systems through which that evaluation or encounter are evaluated. As suggested with reference to jazz performance, the choice of systems is rarely experienced as a conscious decision, rather it is a creative accommodation to a context experienced in the moment. This is then a problem not only of function, or of reflexivity, but of conscious experience which brings it into the domain of the hard problems of consciousness and learning (Chalmers, 1995).

The cannabis using teenagers interviewed here, it has been emphasised, constructed their understandings of the worlds they inhabited naively on the basis of that which was available to them. The teenage cannabis smoking group was a social space, predicated on the activity of coming together to use cannabis, in which for a time they could suspend their interaction with the complex contingent adult world and assume some power over co-constructing meaning within this avowedly limited frame. The adult reflectors retrospectively accommodated their earlier activity within a wider experience and knowledge base. The stories they told, their attributions and understandings were not accommodated or informed by any one particular rational system. Some understandings could involve or relate to sophisticated academic concepts as well as more mundane or eclectic ideas and frameworks, including superstitious and spiritual, or religious understandings. Their choice of framework was sometimes rational, sometimes capricious, or guided by humour and irony. It seems no co-incidence that some of the guiding ideas of modern thinking: Nietzsche's levelling, death of god, superman; Marx's alienation; Durkheim's anomie; Lyotard's meta-narrative of suffering, all involve the loss of, or the construction of meaning. While some institutions may have become dehumanised, or dehumanising, we also live in a time of supportive emotional structures, participatory movements and so on (Giddens, 1991). The commonalities between these systems and concepts lie in the human need and capacity for the creation of personal meaning, in a dynamic nexus of reflexive and performative acts and the structures which inform, constrain, enable and are produced, changed and reproduced by them. They can involve both ephemeral and more enduring structures, the more long lasting appear to involve socio-material constructions, these structures are both containers and themselves contained. We cannot, however, accommodate identity through action and structure alone, it rests also explicitly on the capacity for reflection. If technology has impacted our capacity for action, it has played a far greater role in changing the nature, potential and extent of individual and group reflection.

A popular strand of thought in identities stresses consumption, ownership and display - a socio-material semiotics of identity - these ideas relate to concepts of a consumer society, which increasingly it is suggested, is a way in which individuals

construct themselves and others. The data here suggests that this may have been overplayed, and may be neither more important, nor more influential than the socio-material construction of meaning in earlier craft cultures. The teenagers actively co-opted elements of consumer cultures into their own DIY aesthetic, partly through naivety, partly bricolage, partly crafted. Cannabis fitted into this co-constructed system of meaning within the group, more than with externally derived interpretations. The many commonalities across groups then should be approached through innovation, diffusion, and production rather than focusing on consumption. In some ways the social space of cannabis use can be seen as part of wider set of processes around the reclamation of agency and the production of a sense of personal authenticity in the production of meaning. Ritzer's 'globalisation of nothing' posits that the impact of widespread consumer culture involves a leveling process which strips the consumer artefact of its originating cultural qualities replacing them with an impoverished group reading articulated through the wider semiotics of contemporary consumer culture (Ritzer, 2003). The teenagers in the home group, and particularly the type 2 users, understood and projected their own cannabis use through a largely self-imposed DIY ethic. They were comparatively uninterested in off-the-shelf understandings of drugs use, focusing instead on the experiential knowledge of those around them. Their capacity to adapt and create wider meanings around cannabis use in the group was a source of value. Constructing and demonstrating their skill and personalised aesthetic judgements in the sophistication of the way they used and the situation they used in, can all be read as an articulation of their wider skills in cultural production, participation and communication. These are not cultures hidebound by corporately derived brand identities, by contrast they are the kind of sources which corporate brands draw upon, appropriate, extract and package in constructing 'authenticity' in their advertising.

6.4.5 - A typology of commitment

The typology of commitment was developed inductively as a means of capturing the unfolding of the teenagers relationship to cannabis and the cannabis using group in time. Its primary function was to provide a way into the wider and more diffuse

and diverse arguments about individual differences and similarities in the relationship between cannabis and identity. It is a relative typology based on the individuals role in the group under consideration and although their personal proclivities had an influence on positioning within the group and the framework, it appeared that individuals could to some extent move between types over time, or in different groups. Type 1 users appeared to have a proclivity for a ‘wheeler-dealer’ type of mentality where they enjoyed the social value others placed on them through their activities in making cannabis available and facilitating the group. Type 2 users were frequently ‘creative’ types who were most active in creating and negotiating the wider meanings and aesthetic principles of use. Type 3 users primarily valued the social activity of cannabis use, which was chosen pragmatically amongst limited available social outlets. Each type involved differing levels and styles of commitment on the following principal dimensions:

- commitment to the direct effects of cannabis
- commitment to the cannabis smoking group
- commitment to the skills and aesthetics developed in using cannabis
- commitment to the social identity of cannabis user (in particular social fields)
- commitment to wider activities (music, film, and so on) where cannabis was used
- commitment to the groups in which wider activities were engaged in
- commitment to ‘having been a teenage cannabis user’ in biographical identities (adult reflectors)

Equally commitment to each of these dimensions was limited in light of wider ongoing personal projects. The overall commitment to cannabis was low in the context of wider life projects, but higher in the suspended liminal structure which constituted the cannabis using teenage friendship group. Likewise commitment to the group as a whole was low, with long term commitment to individual friendship dyads more important, though these closer relationships were held to a degree in

suspension whilst in the wider group as discussed previously. The role of intoxication in the groups relationship to cannabis appeared to lie in providing a suspension, legitimising and signalling a different set of social rules was in operation.

Commitment can also involve the concept of investment, it was noted earlier that the teenagers invest large amounts of their time in an activity to which they express low levels of overall commitment and which poses risks for life projects to which they have higher levels of commitment. While these long term projects required ongoing commitment, their circumstances often dictated gross uncertainty over reward and long time periods. This focus on uncertain long term goals as a way of structuring activity and meaning dictated that while they could construct a self biographically through future imaginings this did not provide an active arena in which to construct what it meant to 'be them now'. To develop an authentic meaning of 'being a teenager' often involved subverting the dominant cultural forms through which youth is sold to the 'no longer young' amongst the bundles of other commodified attributes attached to mundane consumer goods. Since the meaning derived from their longer term commitments was distant, uncertain and intangible and they experienced a lack of power over meanings in consumer culture, the privileging of some form of DIY culture would seem inevitable. Participation in the cannabis using group was one way to achieve this.

The nostalgia of the adult reflectors for their teenage cannabis using years was not one of wholehearted enjoyment - it had not been 'the best time of their lives' but it had been the arena in which for a time they constructed personal meaning outside of the institutional structures over which they had little control and their sense of self-value was constantly probed and deconstructed by others. As John Lennon (1980), in his advice to his son observed 'life is what happens while you're busy making other plans', the cannabis using group merely provided a place to 'be now'. It seemed it was in the long term and uncertain nature of the commitments in their wider lives that the need for this proxy arose. This is what seemed to differentiate most the experience of problematic use as project, or career described in the wider addictions literature, with the limitations the teenagers placed on their own use. A

further type of commitment in the *late twenties reflectors* was noted and could be perhaps seen as a nascent characteristic of the younger groups. The *late twenties reflectors* at times transacted their prior teenage cannabis use as a role symbol in contemporary social relationships and encounters. The adult reflectors commitment to having been a cannabis user in adolescence formed part of a biographical sequence which identified them firstly with having been actively 'of a generation', and as a performance of their questioning of institutionalised values. This period of suspension seemed to allow them a bracketed value/ contingency free reference point from which they constructed, adopted, or adapted to wider institutionalised, societal, or work based roles or values, as either they developed a material stake in society, or the level of prior investment in these roles made active performance of roles which were not consistent with their core roles less appealing.

Ericksonian and neo-Ericksonian research often focuses on incompatible and inconsistent role contents as a source of tension for the individual (Stryker, 2001). Commitment in this line of theory influenced social theory through Goffman (1959; 1969) and relates to trust through the need to maintain consistency in performance across social roles. Later conceptions in Giddens (1991) suggest living with continuing uncertainty leads to greater contingencies on the value and nature of any particular role. Uncertainty and risk means individuals must adapt to change by reflecting on their investment across different roles and consequently commitment to any particular role, or way of performing that role. This research has suggested that traditional notions of commitment to roles increasingly only become relevant to individuals once sufficient commitment has been made for inconsistencies to present a risk to these investments and may nevertheless continue to be subject to structures of active suspension. It appears strong roles need not always prominently feature authenticity. While individuals fought to find authenticity in some areas of their lives, their appeared to be a tacit pact amongst informants that so long as they were allowed time for recreation, it need not necessarily be through their labour. Likewise, whilst symbolic interactionism stressed that we have 'as many identities as we have relationships' this research suggested that while true in a sense, on a practical level it is not the most useful way to think about identity. Individuals relied on dynamic and emergent strategies and heuristics for

negotiating and mobilising identity which were often dependent on the needs of the relationship or transaction at hand. Authenticity and congruence were only important to them in a relatively small number of relationships. However, these were not just core relationships involving long term commitment, peripheral transient non-contingent social relationships provided a valuable resource for constructing and maintaining authenticity.

Both in strong contingent roles in which our behaviour is to many extents institutionally bound and in broader social encounters, people appeared to transact on the basis of a broad but reasonably coherent set of heuristic biographical devices. Identity in these transactions provided a short-hand for social value and surety of investment. In these transactional relationships there appears little room for extended identity play, though identity and status appear to be routinely ‘gamed’, often in a knowing way. It seems that features of Giddens’ (1991) non-contingent roles are frequently used in otherwise transactional relationships as a means by which to put the other party at ease. It is not always clear that this is effective. The emergence after Giddens’ (1984) of a ‘new risk’ suggests the emergence of new forms of, and relationships to, identity and commitment. These forms will create, inform and react to new types of social networks, structures and institutions. Understanding the relationship between emerging forms of identity and the structures in which they are mobilised and action enabled or constrained, will require further conceptual work. This will necessarily involve an increased commitment to inductive, interpretive work in the field to capture the more transient nature of these dynamic structures. These ephemeral structures will nevertheless interact with more stable structures and institutions which are more amenable to quantitative work.

6.5 - Implications for further research

This project was explorative in nature, aiming primarily to understand cannabis and cannabis use from the perspective of non-problematic teenage cannabis users - who were in the contexts studied overwhelmingly male. The scope of the research was necessarily limited in part by its purpose and the nature of the research ques-

tion, in part by the nature of the data collected. The research focused on the use of cannabis in predominantly or exclusively male teenage friendship groups at a particular point in the life course, who tended to meet to smoke cannabis outdoors. This particular context was identified by the teenagers as being particularly suited to cannabis use and was the main context they used in. The teenagers identified that other mixed gender and often more adult social contexts such as clubs and bars were distinctly different contexts, which were generally less well suited to cannabis use. Nevertheless, most of the teenagers assumed they would continue to use cannabis and possibly other drugs once the teenage friendship group became less important to them. Most, however, considered it likely they would cease to use at some point in early adulthood. The awareness and expectation that the context of the teenage friendship group would cease to be relevant to them was an important part of the context and the personal and social rules they developed which formed the context of their use. There was then, within the otherwise limited scope of the study, an observed relationship to many common and ‘normal’ social and individual processes.

While the analysis followed an inductive grounded approach, the findings and interpretations converged on rule-making, social learning and meaning making at the personal and social level as constitutive processes linking identity construction to cannabis use. This was not identity construction in the Ericksonian sense of acquiring stable and consistent recognised adult roles. Rather the focus was on learning to create, articulate, manage, maintain and mobilise identity within the dynamic context of the small teenage friendship group. Much of the activity of the group centred on ‘gaming’ identity and status claims and learning to manage and endure threats to identity and status. The gendering of this context then may suggest that women and girls use, experience, manage and construct identity and status in different ways to men which makes the distinctively puerile context of the male teenage cannabis using friendship group less relevant or appealing. The mixed gender contexts of the teenagers, while often located in the same outdoor spaces, more often focused on alcohol use, which was understood by the teenagers as better fitting the circumstances. Seemingly, while the male teenage friendship group existed to learn to ‘game’ status in a non-contingent context, the mixed

groups provided a context where status loss and goofy behaviour was consequential, requiring control and the establishment of alternative social rules and strategies.

Ericksonian concepts of stability and congruence remained important ideals for the teenagers and longstanding institutionalised social roles were highly valued. The teenagers were however, cognisant that their lives would involve long periods of uncertainty and the roles they achieved would equally be hard won and less certain than those of the past. Much of this uncertainty related to social role acquisition, however, much also rested on access to the material and immaterial resources and tools involved in achieving and maintaining these roles. Structuration (Giddens, 1984) can provide a suitable framework in which to situate the findings while accommodating the wider and earlier theoretical frames which were valuable in considering different aspects of the data and interpretation. As a pluralist framework structuration provides a useful orientation to this earlier work, however the research also suggests more work is needed to locate structuration in a wider socio-material context, which can more fully account for the physical world in the construction and reproduction of meaning, agency and structure. This agenda is being advanced through a number of fields, influential contributions include Beck's (1996) orientation to 'nature' and Ritzer's (2003) work on globalised consumer society and the stripping of the complex layers of meaning from the physical world. While new research is important in this agenda older work remains highly relevant, Nietzsche's 'levelling', Weber's 'iron cage of rationality', Marx's 'alienation', and Durkheim's 'anomie' all involve contexts, mechanisms and process which strip people of meaning in their lives. Many dominant discourses have focused on consumer, individualist and material culture as an impoverished replacement for meaning. This research has suggested by contrast that drugs use is just one alternative vehicle for the production of meaning, amongst many others. These transient and ephemeral social contexts for the production of meaning permeate human culture but can be by nature difficult to observe with conventional positivist methods. They are however influenced by wider structures and institutions which can be studied and articulated by positivist research.

While the scope of the data was limited to male teenage cannabis use with particular individuals, in particular groups, at particular times and geographic localities, the underlying processes, mechanisms and drivers around their cannabis use related to normal social processes. Many of these features may be relevant to any small group setting involving regular co-present, unstructured activity. The group was configured (by accident or design) to provide the freedom to directly participate in the creation of the meaning of the activity. This appeared to be the greatest source of value they derived from the group and the activity. The wider experiences and understandings of the group pointed to a possible relationship between their limited social status and their capacity to participate in meaning making activity on an equal footing in the institutionalised roles and environments of the adult world. This related to a need to begin to participate in developing meanings and social structures outside their immediate family and close friends. These social structures were by the nature of their intention, design and internally negotiated rules ephemeral and the relationships within them limited in trust and depth.

The findings, interpretations and discussion suggest a number of potentials and implications for future research. A recent article reviewing the limits of the evidence base on cannabis use highlighted the lack of common classifications for understanding cannabis use and users (Temple et al., 2010). The paper sparked a range of debate and commentary, though tellingly little call for qualitative work. The current study, and grounded qualitative work generally can be particularly useful in developing and interrogating the basis of classes and their dimensions and exploring the potential interplay of dimensions, classes and categories. Further, such work can inform the interpretation that is brought to quantitative results. It seems that popular assumptions of data requirements for evidence based medicine remain quantitative despite an increased accommodation to qualitative methods for instance in the recent inclusion of qualitative synthesis methods in Cochrane Reviews (Higgins and Green, 2011). However, qualitative research is undoubtedly in a difficult position with regard to substance misuse, for example while it remains part of the agenda of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), explicit focus on qualitative research appears to have diminished from a high point around 10 years ago (Fountain, 2000; Fountain and

Griffiths, 2000). While emphasising that qualitative approaches should be seen as a compliment to quantitative approaches (Fountain, 2000), the role of challenging quantitative work can be contentious when quantitative evidence is itself limited (Temple et al., 2010). The view represented in the present study, in both the data and the interpretation, is well represented by Rhodes' summary (in Fountain, 2000:30), which despite some limited movement in the intervening years remains relevant and apposite:

To deny the differences between inductive and deductive designs, as well as their respective links with qualitative and quantitative methods in contemporary drugs research, is also to underplay the additional role of qualitative research in challenging common-sense interpretations of drug use, often unwittingly reinforced and reproduced by positivist paradigms. In the absence of qualitative research, there is a danger of perpetuating understandings of drug use which are devoid of relevance or meaning for participants. This, in turn, can encourage the formation of policy or the development of interventions which are inappropriate or ineffective, and, at worst, counterproductive. Qualitative research is a prerequisite for understanding and responding to drug use.

In part the focus on positivist methods reflects political dimensions in substance misuse research (Collins, 2011; Werb et al., 2010), though it also represents a long-standing positivist entrenchment amongst certain sectors of the research community. Statistical methods are the de facto approach of the statesman (or *Statista*) and positivist research is better placed to make demands on public expenditure, national and international policy-making. Additionally, emergent technologies, such as brain imaging studies involve high expenditure and the required skills involve a great deal of personal investment on the part of the investigators (Leshner, 1997; 2003). Along with these issues, even if there is funding and will for greater use of qualitative methods, the conventions of contemporary research governance and ethics procedures are configured in ways which make ethnographic work on drugs use difficult, particularly given the legal background (Coomber, 2002).

Hammersley (2005a), argued for a greater emphasis on theory aimed at understanding use, before more correlational work would be of value. Both empirical data and the interpretations built on them have potential implications for future quantitative work in this area. For example, the data revealed that the teenagers cannabis use was highly contingent, on the money they had, access to cannabis and to people to smoke cannabis with. The fact that sharing was central to the activity meant they were uncertain of how much they had actually consumed. While 'commitment' was a useful interpretive concept in understanding the data, it is less likely to be directly useful in self-reports. However, it suggests that reports of 'intention to use' (for instance in the theory of planned behavior) are difficult to interpret over both the short and long-term given the multiple contingencies at play. The focus on peripheral social relationships, suggests a social network approach to understanding cannabis use is likely to be of value. However, the dynamism revealed in use also suggests that qualitative approaches should be applied, through mixed methods designs, to interrogating the salience of the resulting data (McCall and Simmons, 1966).

These potentially practical examples which may benefit quantitative designs and the collection and interpretation of the resulting data do not require any prior accommodation to differences of ontology and epistemology. These issues are longstanding, for instance Rhodes, writing with an eye to the place of qualitative research in the wider evidence base, for the EMCDDA highlighted the following roles for qualitative drugs research (in Fountain, 2000:23-29):

- Reaching and researching hidden populations
- Understanding the experience and meaning of drug use
- Understanding the social contexts of drug use
- Informing quantitative research
- Complementing and questioning quantitative research
- Developing effective intervention and policy responses

In the context of quantitative work the samples in the two young cohorts of the current study may have been picked up in schools surveys, the adult reflectors may have been picked up in wider social surveys such as the British Crime Survey. While such surveys involve large samples they nevertheless involve relatively small numbers of drug users. The more fine grained findings of the current study have a number of implications which may be useful in designing and interpreting survey research:

- Amongst the younger cohorts, particularly those using cannabis outdoors, use in terms of both regularity and quantity was highly seasonal. With good weather in the summer months more cannabis was smoked, by more people (particularly type 3 users), more regularly.
- This seasonality was also influenced by school holidays, cessation or reduction over exams and having more to spend on cannabis through access to casual work.
- The implications of this seasonality include that schools surveys are unlikely to pick up the periods of heaviest use over the summer months and the time window in which a sample is taken is an important consideration when making comparisons across and within any given sample.

As noted in the findings, a number of variables affected individuals reporting of weekly spend and this aspect of the data often underwent significant revision over the course of an interview. As well as the impact of seasonality, availability of casual work, or amount of ‘pocketmoney’, there were many individual and contextual differences involved in estimating weekly spend and estimating actual amounts used. This varied to a degree by the typology, with type 1 users being the most unsure of how much they actually used. For type 1 users the activities of dealing, or ‘sorting’ (Parker et al., 1998) cannabis meant they usually smoked and shared their ‘profits’ and were highly uncertain of how much they actually consumed themselves. In the case of Spud dealing several ounces of cannabis in a week, frequently in £5 or £10 bags, which provided a good profit margin, this ‘spare’ cannabis could be considerable. In Spuds ‘sorting’ he would give ‘good

deals' to friends and favoured customers, and exact weights only to those he felt no particular connection with. Consequently, those closest to type 1 users may use considerably more than their spend, even when accurately reported, may suggest. Even if we control for seasonality and confounding factors in self-presentation as 'heroic user' or 'moderate and sensible user' and take estimates of quantities used to reflect an honest and considered estimate there are wide variations in individuals knowledge of and ability to estimate how much they actually use. The dynamics of just this one aspect of cannabis use demonstrably involve many dimensions across multiple systems. To control for the range of possible confounders in quantitative research will be highly challenging, particular in terms of size and coherence of samples.

6.6 - A reflection on the PhD as a Journey

The methods and analysis in this project were driven by the nature of the problem at hand. While they do not entirely fit with more instrumental and pedagogically oriented models of inquiry the methods are far from unprecedented and are pragmatically driven from sound, well-recognised principles, both systematic and creative. The analysis converged on structuration as an existing framework which best accommodates the data and findings, accordingly many of the methodological issues, though they initially emerged independently, have been previously discussed by Giddens (1976; 1984) and others. Likewise, as many of the issues which structuration was designed to address are longstanding, the methodological issues involve enduring problems in philosophy and the social sciences. Lewin's original action research principles (Chaiklin, 2011) provided a useful framework from which to consider both the inductive nature of the research project and the ongoing issue of social responses to drugs use.

As discussed earlier (p 25) if we want to understand why little progress has been made at the level of drugs policy in tackling manifest drugs problems we may need to look no further than the research inputs in the policy development cycle. When policy is developed without reference to data, and without understanding the views of key stakeholders, it should not be surprising that little progress has

been made (Lewin, 1946). While we remain unable to ‘take the politics out of health’, the prospect of ‘taking the politics out of politics’ seems unlikely. Weber’s ‘iron cage’ metaphor describes how bureaucratic processes tend to self-replicate at different scales and the way that positivist methods inadvertently mould themselves to reinforce these forms and categories (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). While this manifestly does occur, it should not deter us from harnessing appropriate positivist methods in improving our understanding of drugs use. ‘All use is abuse’ (Booth-Davies, 1992) cannot hold when routine survey data reveals that drugs use without the problems of addiction is overwhelmingly the norm (Smith and Flatley, 2011). To properly understand dysfunctional use we must understand how people use drugs in an otherwise functional manner. Furthermore if we recognise that drugs use as a social phenomena is in constant flux and an adequate response will require ongoing research and monitoring, it follows that we should make use of all the data collected in a considered and systematic fashion, allowing hypotheses to emerge from empirical data, rather than defining problems through a priori conventions. While positivist methods have a special place through their internal validity and use in the business of state, it should be more widely recognised that they are always subject to interpretation in both design and findings. If we allow that interpretation to be narrowly drawn by a priori interests rather than exploring its relationship to the wider interpretations of stakeholders there is unlikely to be significant progress in addressing complex social problems.

The methods used in this project emerged from a pragmatic inductive application of known and available methods. They were as such imperfect, difficult and complex when compared to more instrumental designs. The depth and breadth of information, available, accessible and relevant, has expanded over the past century. In an inductive cycle where theory and practice act upon one another there appears to be an inevitable dynamic between the researcher as *bricoleur*, making use of that which is at hand, and as *engineur*, refining both theory and method to the specific application to a particular problem (Strauss, 1952). As the programme progressed more sophisticated understandings of the methods and their place in contemporary understandings of social research emerged. While consideration of the methods and findings from the standpoint of action research and structuration theory

emerged only post hoc, many of the issues faced in this project have been comprehensively discussed over the history of these disciplines and the deeper history of philosophy. The issues raised below emerged primarily through the project itself and concatenated experience of the author (Stebbins, 2006). However, many of the issues (perhaps unsurprisingly, as the theory later converged on structuration as the most appropriate existing framework) converged circuitously on those which had informed Giddens' work (1976; 1984), where they are more comprehensively addressed. Likewise, there is across the social sciences an ongoing and emergent methodological literature which contributes to researching this diverse field within an inherently and necessarily pluralist approach. The experience, findings and interpretations of the current study emphasised that we need to embrace a wide range of methods, from the inductive to the instrumental as appropriate, in addressing the problem at hand. The cycle of empirical research, interpretation and reflexivity is well described in the action research tradition. There appears across much of the applied health literature moves towards this perspective though it is inevitably constrained by some of the practical, structural and strategic issues which pertain to the academic and political spheres.

One approach in the applied disciplines is to view theory from a pragmatic utilitarian standpoint; theory should be 'of use' (Curry et al., 2008). Instead of working from epistemological assumptions, a priori or a posteriori, we can work through empiricism and reflexivity, with an eye to that which is 'of use' from the standpoint of action and intervention, to drive and refine further theoretical development. To take one example, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been shown to be effective in the treatment of a wide range of conditions, though many professionals and academics appear sceptical of the theories that underpin the technique. Since the technique has proven its efficacy what remains is to find alternative explanations for why the technique works. Even if better explanations can be found, it may nevertheless prove to be the case that the most effective way of training therapists is through the original formulation. This demonstrates that there is a tension between utility and truth - we as end users do not need to understand how electricity works in order to switch a light on. In an information economy absolute truths

and knowledge, even when they are available, are often subordinate to the heuristic devices we use in our day-to-day lives. More often we are looking for the minimum amount of information necessary to drive effective action in a given context.

This raises the issue that truth is not directly related to utility; at one extreme, we routinely use forms of knowledge for which truth is not the absolute condition for its value. Theological knowledge for instance may still be relevant for an atheist in helping them to understand religious believers and the impact of religious belief in society. In other areas such as pedagogy, truth remains important but we choose to teach models which we know to be limited since they will serve their purposes better than the absolute truth. We still teach most school children to think of electrons moving in orbits, only later do they come to think of orbits as probability spaces and later still to other more refined conceptions of the relationship of space to atoms. Each level of understanding is appropriate to a particular system level, and each step through systems involves increasing complexity and sophistication. Utility is in some ways here a proxy for truth. Regardless of the possibility of absolute empirical knowledge, it is not necessarily a particularly useful form of knowledge in its raw form. In order for knowledge to be useful, we must be able to communicate it. The type of theory we're often looking for is theory as a model, a way of drawing attention to the most salient features of a phenomenon. The analogy with models suggests that different models encompassing different scales (which may or may not be wholly consistent) can provide equally valid and useful ways of thinking about, or communicating concepts and phenomena.

In the current research climate it is increasingly difficult for any single researcher working alone to develop and articulate theory in a way that can make claims on an established field of knowledge. Rather the would be theorist now requires a team of people with a shared vision to collaborate over time and develop and articulate the ideas of the group with reference to its particular niche in a large and ever moving field. The development of normalization process theory (NPT) (May et al., 2007) provides an interesting case study of this kind of approach in a health context. This model of theory building is both involved and specific, making use of qualitative,

quantitative, mixed methods and sophisticated approaches to review and synthesis to bring them together. It highlights the time and work involved in developing such theory, necessitating long-term involvement of a team of experienced specialists. While earlier theorists often worked independently in a limited field, their work stood on scarcity, utility and its explanatory and communicative capacity. In a saturated and mature research field the criteria for adequacy and quality in theory, particularly in relation to canonical totems such as identity are necessarily high and suggest a move toward involved approaches such as that suggested by May. Similarly the need for synthesis between disciplines dictates greater transparency and more complete articulation of concepts than might be appropriate when communicating with a specialist audience in one's own field.

The process used by May et al. is pragmatic and emergent rather than idealistic, it accommodates the practicalities of working in contemporary academia, for example timely publication, with the more involved and longer term activity of building theory. While it does not use the term concatenation (Stebbins, 2006) the approach suggests appropriate boundaries for concatenation by careful consideration of the scope and range of theory at each stage in its development which in turn suggests appropriate methodology for future steps. May et al. (2007) describe a process involving:

1. Developing empirical generalisations
2. Building an applied theoretical model
3. Refining and testing:
 - i) accurate description
 - ii) systematic explanation
 - iii) knowledge claims
 - iv) road-testing
4. Making a formal 'middle-range' theory

This approach introduces a secondary problem of adequacy of communication between the specialists within the group. Essentially however, by splitting a large problem (communication between sole researcher and audience) into smaller

chunks (communication within the team, communication with wider audiences) the overall problem becomes one of research management. Whether such a new and involved paradigm is achievable in a particular field is thus an operational question of funding, continuity and developing expert teams.

The knowledge claims that can be made in the context of a PhD thesis while always slim have in this context further diminished as academic disciplines have matured. However, the PhD thesis also offers a rare opportunity to develop work in depth, in areas which offer limited opportunities for funded research, or exploratory work involved in developing early stages of theory. The impact of Parker's (1998) normalisation thesis as a nodal point in drugs research was not so much in its power or utility as in the fact that it offered a theoretical perspective on a visible phenomenon that was empirically grounded and meticulously developed. By contrast in much drugs research, theoretical orientations are speculative and when not central to the study can often seem grafted on to empirical work. This reflects not the limitations of expertise within the field but rather the exigencies of funding cycles and research priorities which are by and large small scale, short term and politically reactive. If there have been limited opportunities for long-term, involved research collaborations in the drugs field we can perhaps turn it into a different kind of problem, as well as embracing concatenation and aggregation of data we can view it as a problem of synthesis and thus of hermeneutics (Noblit and Hare, 1988).

In this observation lies I think the key and in time perhaps a direction for the answer to unravelling the continued difficulties of identity and to the bounds of our potential to understand these problems through any particular tool. There is increasing need to develop some way of synthesising, or otherwise accommodating, sociological, psychological and wider inter and intra-disciplinary findings and understandings. This inevitably involves some form of return to the difficult (we might say adolescent) phase in the splitting of these disciplines from wider philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the course of this study it became clear that the problems of developing coherent theories which are rooted in capturing and understanding complex, ephemeral social phenomena are complicated further by the difficulties of adequately communicating both the range of the primary data collected but also complex theoretical ideas. While cannabis use may have appeared as a stable ‘answer’, we should not assume it is always answering the same ‘question’. There is at once a need to use well known concepts to communicate theoretical ideas and the difficulty of negotiating the baggage and woolliness which those terms have generated through their ongoing use. Ultimately this can only ever be achieved imperfectly, accommodating to the need for communication can distort the initial overarching vision which the researcher gains through long-term and intimate immersion in the data.

In the methods chapter I used the metaphor of sculpture, materials and materiality to discuss the process of qualitative analysis and the development of interpretations. Reflecting on writing the chapters that followed revealed a dichotomy inherent in this modelling process. We can never adequately communicate the full experience of ‘being there’, engaging with the people that our research is about. There are limitations in recording, media, and in communication. However, the idea of modelling hints at the benefits of this process, it serves to direct attention to the most salient aspects of the work. The choice of what to model, to convey structure, or surface (or elements of both through cut-aways and sections) is the problem - what to communicate. Nevertheless, initially the construction of a model is often more about a learning process than an exercise in communication. This learning process involves constructing many more models, going through many more iterations than it is ultimately possible to communicate. The construction of the final model, the model that is to be sent out into the world, involves constructing a model which can, with its references, referents and background be assumed to be understood in some degree by its eventual audience. In this final phase, the purity, simplicity and elegance of the initial models, for all their scrappiness and impermanence are subsumed by the communicative imperative and their adaptation to fit the expected precedents of such communications.

The initial working models have the advantage of an audience of one, they only had to communicate to me and in that they served their purpose. Their purity, elegance and simplicity are a function of the symmetry between creator and audience and some make less sense to me now as the years have past and some of that symmetry is lost. It is this progression of models that form the missing link between data and interpretation but they are by their nature transient and impermanent. Some represent the many different directions this study could have taken, as yet unfulfilled potentials, relatively few have made their way into this final document, and perhaps more than should have done. Another aspect of this dichotomy is that in the communicative phase of research we are forced to frame our work in concepts that are sufficiently well known that we can expect an audience to recognise them. This brings with it its own problems, the concepts we use are of necessity so widely used that their scope, meaning and operation are distorted by their ubiquity.

Qualitative research has a limited, difficult but otherwise well prescribed role in relation to postpositivist theory building, although its value is often overlooked. Traditional positivist research is avowedly instrumental in nature, it is based on the systematic application of methodological principles built on ontological and epistemological assumptions born out of the natural sciences and the philosophy of logical positivism. Popper (1959) emphasises that the natural sciences are built on deductive logic and highlights the logical absurdities that arise from the chaining of inductive and deductive reasoning. Popper offers an alternative to this chaining by extending the principles of deductive reasoning, introducing the hypothetico-deductive principle of falsification.

Traditional positivist approaches are considered to be realist - that is they assume a 'real' objective world which can be sufficiently apprehended by human observers. Postpositivist approaches while acknowledging a 'real' objective world also acknowledge a degree of difficulty in apprehending this objective world. Many of these issues rely on what we consider to be the proper objects of 'normal science' (Khun, 1962). Popper's own position (1978:151) is enigmatic:

I am a realist regarding the physical world 1. Similarly, I am a realist regarding world 2, the world of experiences. And I am a realist regarding world 3 — the world 3 that consists of abstract objects, such as languages; scientific conjectures or theories; and works of art.

This can be read in a number of ways but it admits of a valid subjective world of conscious experience and a limitation in the movement between worlds. The positivist position as outlined in the social sciences appears to be something of caricature, a straw man built on the miss-application of the philosophy, history and understanding of science (Walker, 2010). Neither Popper, nor Khun appear to suggest that scientific knowledge (or ‘normal science’ in Khun’s terms) is always to be privileged over other forms of knowledge. Given these precepts, the pluralist position of Feyerabend’s (1975) ‘against method’ appears significantly less radical.

Within Feyerabend’s pragmatism any given strategy that can advance understanding is valid and science cannot be reduced to dogmatic instrumentalism. This is not, however, seen to be an outright rejection of empiricism - rather it is a reclaiming of the need for empirical observation and a recognition of the need for honest assessment of the scope and conditions of observations and interpretations (Townsend, 1970). This should not then be read as a relativist position (all knowledge is equal), but a pluralist position suggesting that the value of particular forms of knowledge is subject to its value on a given dimension, or dimensions, for a particular person, or group, at a particular time, in a given context and culture.

The processes of valuation inherent in Popper’s wider philosophy were continued through both Feyerabend and Soros, who came to concern themselves in different ways with valuation. Soros following Popper (1957) and Nagel (1961) developed a theory of social and economic reflexivity, which describes the conditions of self referential systems in which one, or multiple (usually human) actors adapt their behaviour on the basis of their interpretations of available observations, thus changing the valuation of commodities and subsequently the operation of the system itself (Umpleby, 2007). These arguments passed back into the sociology via the risk dialogue emerging after Giddens’ structuration theory (Beck et al., 1994).

The principle of reflexivity plays a key role in contemporary resolutions of the problem of structure and agency in social theoretical frameworks such as Giddens' (1984) structuration and in Bourdieu's (1979) theories of distinction. Interestingly many of the arguments developed independently in the process of this project inadvertently reproduced various components of Giddens' (1976) methodological work. It is also interesting that in the intervening period mainstream social science methodology has continued to give them little attention. This appears to relate more to pedagogical imperatives than to research practice and they appear to be routinely acknowledged amongst research practitioners, who in their teaching nevertheless continue to operate inside of the more limited paradigmatic frameworks. Reflexivity has come also to be regarded as a core component of methodology in 'science and technology studies' and 'actor network theory' (ANT). Here, perhaps again highlighting the inherent problems of instrumentalist tendencies in the social sciences, its value has since been questioned (Knuuttila, 2002; Latour, 1996). If the poverty of methodological instrumentalism is so well founded, why then does it remain a core feature of mainstream, we might say 'normal social science'? Perhaps the answer lies also in the growing need for strategies to deal with the problem of information overload in the social sciences over the late twentieth century.

From the preceding discussion it should be clear that this thesis does not proceed from an anti-positivist stance, rather it rests on a respect for and valuing of good positivist science which of necessity acknowledges the limits and nature of measurement and the fuzziness, contestation and contingency in creating categories, and particularly the category of 'normal science'. Accordingly, I argue that to be a good positivist researcher requires an ongoing engagement with philosophy, an acknowledgement of the limits of 'normal science' and a concomitant respect for the appropriate, rigorous and systematic investigation of those areas which are not immediately, practically or intrinsically amenable to 'normal science'. Positivists' reticence to engage with qualitative research is perhaps well founded, since theory in inductive traditions is itself difficult and contested, as much within the field as beyond. Methodological instrumentalism however, can serve as a short-hand for value in the context of academic study. It was not then by choice that this study strayed from the conventional path. It was rather a systematic attempt to under-

stand and interpret empirical observations of young cannabis users by adopting and adapting the tools which could best collect, analyse, interpret and communicate these data. A process which necessitates a degree of exploration, experimentation and emergence. This process led inexorably towards questioning the limits of methodological assumptions underlying conventional contemporary 'off the shelf' approaches to social research.

At root this perhaps rests on an inevitable recursive property in the conceptualisation of identity. Conventional methodology rests on making persuasive arguments linking ontology (what can be known) to epistemology (how something can come to be known). Exploring the concepts of and around identity involves an understanding and questioning of the nature of 'being' and of 'knowing' and the nature of awareness. The problem of how we experience ourselves (personal identity), and the world around us (including social identities) is a part of the wider 'hard' problem of conscious 'experience' (Chalmers, 1995). Chalmers suggests that while many problems of consciousness (cognition, intentional states and so on) are amenable to science, the hard problems involving the reflexive nature of subject states, or qualia, appear less so. An adequate systematic exploration of the nature and experience of identity as it relates to the use of psychoactive substances by teenagers who's understanding of themselves is actively changing, may then involve accepting and accounting for a degree of uncertainty over the ontological assumptions on which any methodologies of 'normal science' are necessarily based. Though some find this ontological suspension and the resulting pluralism uncomfortable it is nevertheless commonplace and ontological surety seems both philosophically and scientifically much more difficult to justify.

The study of subjective experience has a long history as the principal concern of both *Verstehende Soziologie* and phenomenological approaches to philosophy and social research. In common with other inductive approaches phenomenology in particular as a project is questioned because of the centrality of essentialism in its methods and underlying principles (Cerulo, 1997). The scope of these anti-essentialist arguments in relation to wider inductive approaches is debatable, however in

relation to the classical phenomenology following Husserl they appear well founded. In particular, the principle method of analysis in Husserl and in phenomenology as a social research tradition, phenomenological reduction, is avowedly essentialist. While I value many of the insights of the phenomenological tradition, most notably its focus on the mundane, and the understanding of culture in Heidegger's 'ready to hand', this study was not in its design or inception a phenomenology.

In addition to these theoretical issues, this project also faced practical difficulties in the relative lack of empirically grounded qualitative data on the experiences of cannabis users and in the concomitant lack of a grounded theoretical tradition associated with cannabis use. This is distorted further by the fact that while there is very little contemporary qualitative work, internationally or in the UK, Becker's (1953; 1963) highly influential work on cannabis stands as an archetype of both theory, theory building and methods (Hammersley, 2011). The political dimensions in the drugs dialogue, the legal issues around drugs, the hidden nature of use, stigma around use and vulnerability of users, as well as the social and psychological complexities presented by psychoactive substances present significant challenges for research and research governance. However, in pragmatically addressing these challenges drugs research has often been at the forefront in developing new and creative methods and confronting structural issues of funding and dissemination. Nevertheless any cursory analysis of the drugs journals reveals the limitations of a priori agenda setting on the nature of both drugs research and scientific enquiry, in the focus on policy, treatment, recovery and the manifest aspects of drugs problems, such as addiction and health issues. Basic research into 'non-problematic', 'normal', or 'normalised' drug use is very much the exception rather than the norm, regardless of the longstanding ubiquity of intoxicants in human cultures.

Recent debates in information systems theory have focused on the concept of appropriate 'reference disciplines' for the developing field (Baskerville and Myers, 2002). The issue of appropriate reference disciplines is a debate which appears long overdue in health sciences research where earlier de facto adoption of the available disciplines may be limiting growth. Here and in the passing of decontextualised

snippets of philosophy into the methodological assumptions, it becomes evident that bricolage has been an active principle in the development of the bounds of disciplinary knowledge. As Khun himself acknowledged the 'normal science' paradigm may not be the most appropriate to many domains of social research (Walker, 2010).

There is a growing recognition that knowledge claims, particularly in relation to complex emergent social phenomena often addressed by qualitative work, cannot be specified in advance. As discussed, it is also difficult to specify in advance the domains and systems within which the knowledge needed to approach a particular practical problem lies. There is then an increasing need to develop a wider range of methods sufficient to the task of capturing and analysing the growing dynamic and emergent complexities of social life and their implications for health. This has significant implications for the methodological instrumentalism implicit in, for instance, Strauss's approach to grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Lomborg and Kirkevold, 2003). If we are to engage sufficiently with complexity, emergence and dynamism, our methods must similarly embrace induction in the research process. Validity, scope, utility and interest do not necessarily follow from the rigid application of process. Rather we need to embrace the emergent, inductive nature which grounded theory was built on, inherent in *Verstehende Soziologie* and the ethnographic tradition. We must also recognise the value of reflection, introspection, discussion and judicious application of appropriate aspects of methodological and theoretical canons in sociology and wider disciplines. If traditional grounded theory relied on emergence from the data and the bracketing of a priori hypotheses, current social research appears to be moving to a phase which acknowledges the need for flexibility and emergence in methods, data collection, analysis and theory building. These are not however new ideas, rather it seems there is a cyclical aspect to research methods and they are facts we must relearn and reconstitute from time to time.

As appears to be increasingly the case with many health researchers, my biography and intellectual background involves some slightly oblique cognate disciplines. I came to social research, having originally studied engineering and architecture, working as an interviewer and research administrator to supplement my then erratic income as a musician and guitar teacher. Over time this became something of a research apprenticeship, working with the drugs research team at MMU, health professionals and other researchers from across the health disciplines. As an architecture student I had made close studies of the way that people interacted with and related to the built environment and the way it enabled and constrained different forms of interaction. Drawing on this assemblage of cultural studies, philosophy and wider social science approaches informs my thinking about both methods and theory.

In the course of preparing and reviewing this thesis I have become increasingly aware of the range of issues which dictated the course that the project was to take. Moreover I have become more aware of the number of other researchers in the applied disciplines who have confronted and written on these issues. This has led to an observation of what appears to be a common cycle in the development of methodological principles in inductive approaches to research. Pedagogy requires formalisation of principles while applied research frequently involves bending or breaching these formal rules and procedures in order to come to a sincere interpretation of the empirical data at hand. Far more qualitative inductive researchers than I had previously been aware of turn to metaphors of creative, artistic processes, particularly in explaining their methods of analysis. Agar (1997), following Goffman invokes the metaphor of film editing in the comparative method. There should nevertheless be limits, for instance Eisner (1981) conceives of inductive research as an artistic pursuit, in opposition to hypothetico-inductive research. While some of Eisner's reflections on the importance of form and the use of poetic description (Atkinson, 1989) are useful, the contention that positivist work aims at truth while inductive work aims at meaning is less useful.

In his later work Agar (1999; 2001; 2003) adopted aspects of complexity theory to understand drugs markets, generating and interpreting qualitative data with reference to a mathematically rooted theory. While complexity theory has been used in a number of health fields and it appears promising, it has also met with many problems and limited success to date, being regarded by many with scepticism (Patton, 1999). It seems likely that the dichotomising of positivist and inductive, qualitative and quantitative will in future again be more widely acknowledged as short sighted, though conservative pressures to maintain disciplinary and methodological purity will likely remain too. While specialisation and diversification of methods means that as scientists it becomes progressively more difficult to remain literate across all forms of research, the complexity of the problems we encounter will inevitably lead to a greater accommodation of pluralist approaches in the applied disciplines. A much wider problem concerns how the research community can usefully communicate these ever more refined understandings to a public whose scientific literacy is accordingly piecemeal and diverse, and how the nature of this communication impacts the development of science and of society.

Social researchers in earlier generations, notably in the present context Goffman, were able to articulate complex and concise theories. Partly since they were not bound by the strictures of validity, to dedicate text towards demonstrating the grounding of their theory in primary data. Secondly since working largely before Kuhn (1962) there was little requirement to articulate the theory in terms of its place in an intellectual ziggurat. Goffman was able to clearly develop his arguments, using primary data only in its 'poetic' capacity to communicate and articulate his theoretical structure (Atkinson, 1989). The ideas that Goffman developed around identity are still some of the most resonant when applied to contemporary primary data but his approach leaves us unable to judge the quality and rigour in the terms that are required of contemporary applied social research (Blaxter, 1996).

Evidently any potential for synthesis lies to an extent in the possibility of locating understandings about each discipline in question from the perspective of the other. This underlies one of the reasons why the 'direction of travel' of concepts and find-

ings may tend to be from psychology to sociology and more widely from inherently positivist to inherently pluralist. Intriguingly this move to developing a pluralist multi-model perspective is inherent in the most positivistic disciplines; mathematics and philosophy share a possible answer in Gödel's incompleteness theorems. Gödel's theorems relate to number theory and to Russell's paradox in logical positivism (Hofstadter, 1989). Simply stated these theories rest on mathematical proofs suggesting that there are always limits in the capacity of any internally consistent system such that no such system can contain a proof for all the axioms (basic truths) which are true and can otherwise be validly represented within that system. Secondly, it points out that no such formal system is capable of containing internally a proof of its own validity. There must always then ultimately be a move beyond any one formal system.

Traditional logical positivism rested on the idea that the universe can be expressed and understood through number and mathematics. This may or may not be true, but ultimately rests on the question of classification - what class of things are we enumerating. Complexity presents a problem because the nature of any given class and its place within any wider system may be subject to change at different rates. Any formal system can also be thought of as simply a modelling device. Number and mathematics are a set of modelling devices with a particular characteristic - the potential for proof within their wider axiomatic frameworks. Natural language and the communicative arts do not share this characteristic, they are nevertheless a modelling system which we all participate in co-creating, in which we routinely operate. In this system we tend to underestimate the sophistication of our participation and understanding. This is not an argument for relativism, or against method, rather it is a way of suggesting that we need to give some thought to the limits of positivism and of disciplinary systems, that in the end all, including science, still rests philosophy (Feyerabend, 1975).

There is a distinctively modern misconception that philosophy involves reasoning from a lack of evidence. For me this study made clear the importance of primary qualitative work as a foundation and touchstone in the development of wider

knowledge. Ethnography aims at description, communication, exploration and understanding, its outputs are conceptual tools used to advance these aims. Theory aims to refine such tools, increasing their capacity to describe and explain phenomena. Taken in this light, bricolage may be no less appropriate for describing the ad hoc nature and assemblage of identity than for thinking about the validity of negotiating multiple potentially incommensurable perspectives from across disciplines. This study has suggested that in large part the motivation to use drugs is intimately bound up with the place of drugs in the production of meaning in the lives of individuals and groups. Further progress in this area then rests on: adapting to the limitations of each particular model, increasing the utilisation and acceptability of mixed-methods approaches, improving the tools for conceptual synthesis, but most importantly increasing commitment to high quality qualitative work aimed at understanding how drugs users understand and experience their own use. As the discussion has emphasised the growing diversity, complexity and dynamism of social structures rooted in technological change, innovation and globalisation, necessitates the use of inductive and deductive methods in ever more creative and dynamic ways if we are to adequately respond to social problems.

In his biographical account of a lifetime of involvement in qualitative and ethnographic research into drugs use, Agar (2002:257) wryly observed, 'If you want to influence policy, take a policy expert to lunch.' Over the time I have been involved in this study, quantitative and qualitative researchers alike continue to have little direct influence on national policy around drugs use in the UK (Nutt, 2009; Stimson, 2000). However, influence on policy is not the only means, and often not the most important means by which research informs practice. Again, it was not through conscious a priori engagement but through a process of inductive convergence and constant comparison with the empirical data and the wider literature that I came on reflection to reconsider this project, in its aims and its methods, in light of Agars' conclusions (2002:257):

Qualitative approaches have specific roles to play in the substance field, many of them the focused face-to-face investigations of a specific group that most people think of when they think of this research tradition. But I think that those traditional limits sell us short. Qualitative is about creative use of available material as well as if not more about newly gathered data from particular individuals. We are less in need of new data and more in need of new ideas to tackle the great unanswered question of the drug field - why and how does dependency happen among the people that it does, and what kinds of policies and interventions make sense that are both humane and effective?

Like Becker (1998), while acknowledging the potential for the qualitative researcher in approaching 'consilient' research which aims to bring together the disparate strands of existing work, Agar counsils the aspiring researcher against such a course, suggesting both the institutionalised and ephemeral structures of academia militate against success in this regard. Against the chaotic dynamic complexity of modern globalised societies it seems both academic and politician can become role bound by profession, clinging to and thereby recreating the structures and institutions which lack the dynamism to deal with the looser, spontaneous action through ephemeral social structures which increasingly underlies much of life.

7: Conclusions

The recognition in the 1990s that cannabis use particularly amongst teenagers had to some extent been normalised gave rise to the need to consider how cannabis use fitted in with the lives of normal teenagers whose use was characteristically non-problematic (Parker et al., 2002). Following initial data collection with one extended social group of male teenage cannabis users, identity emerged as a framework for understanding the relationship between the everyday lives of the teenagers and the meanings they attached to their cannabis use. Subsequent data collection, using the same open semi-structured interview approach suggested that similar principles were applicable to wider groups of teenage males and reasonably consistent over time. This said, the groups interviewed were all almost exclusively white, male, growing up in relatively low-crime areas in the suburbs of Manchester, they were not affluent, though neither were they deprived. Given that non-problematic use is the norm in relation to cannabis, understanding the relationships between cannabis use and identity development is useful in itself. It may also suggest concepts which could be useful in understanding other identity transitions including recovery from problematic drug use (Koski-Jännes, 2002; McIntosh and McKeganey, 2000).

The data and the analysis focused on understanding non-problematic use as a particular feature of the social life of the teenagers. The meanings they brought to their use were socially constructed within the experiences and communication practices of their immediate social groups. While there was an intrinsic functional element rooted in the effects of the drug, however, much of what they valued in using cannabis focused on its functions in the social construction of meaning within the group. The kind of relationships that cannabis use facilitated had valuable attributes in the context of identity experimentation and development. While cannabis using groups were not unique in their capacity to provide these relationships, they seemed to be a particularly effective choice amongst the limited options that were available to the teenagers.

The analysis suggested three different types, or styles of use and user, involving different social and instrumental functions. While instrumental use was an important moderator, social functions predominated in understanding use within the group, which was the primary context of use. Type 2 users (sophisticates) styles of use were predicated on an appreciation of more instrumental types of use, however their involvement with the teenage cannabis smoking group focused on the social, rather than the instrumental. The teenagers particularly emphasised the value they placed on the non-contingency of cannabis use - they did not need to use cannabis, they chose it. This freedom, a feeling that they were in control of their choice to use, was fundamental to the way they experienced their use and the things they got out of it. They felt that much of their time was spent in meeting the expectations of parents, teachers, employers and social obligations, by contrast their time spent smoking cannabis was their own.

The findings suggested that cannabis use was not understood by the teenagers as a risk behaviour, as deviant or rebellious, their meanings were constructed with reference to other members of their social circles rather than with reference to wider society. The analysis highlighted the ways in which particular features of the group supported identity experimentation in a time of transition. Many understandings of teenage cannabis use have focused on the use, or the effects of cannabis as representative of (or somehow mitigating for) the difficulties of young people. The teenagers in this study did not seem to consider themselves troubled, they had their problems, but they appeared to consider these problems to be a natural and understandable consequence of their position in life. They came across as a well-balanced and generally happy group who enjoyed themselves and their lives. Similarly, they understood their cannabis use and that of their friends as a largely positive, pleasurable recreation.

Cannabis use as an activity facilitated and maintained a particular kind of social group with characteristics which were valued in the context of being a teenager but which they felt would decrease in value as they moved beyond the teenage world. This construction allowed them to bound their use in their own minds, setting up

the expectation that they would in time reduce their use, eventually ceasing to use as they entered into adult roles. They recognised that achievement of these roles was difficult and uncertain and this was a principal source of any anxiety they expressed. They experienced the contingency of their future on uncertain investments as a source of stress and pressure. Cannabis provided a ‘time out’ from these pressures and a set of non-contingent relationships which seemed to be important in learning to socially assert, maintain and explore identity. These non-contingent time-limited friendships and activities provided a set of fluid, open proxy roles in which they could play with nascent aspects of their identities. These nascent identities involved articulating aspects of themselves which would be difficult, risky, or sometimes impossible to articulate in their existing contingent social roles.

For the teenagers much of their attraction to cannabis as an activity seemed to be the potential it brought for experimenting with strategies and their capacity to influence, negotiate and construct social meaning and by association status in a small group setting. The male teenage cannabis smoking social group was understood by its members to be a transitory phenomenon, in the parental vernacular ‘a phase’. The roles it offered or conferred were equally transitory and were specific to the circumstance. While some might bypass cannabis at this age and in this setting, those that entered into it derived many benefits secondary to the pleasure taken in the direct effects of the drug. For some, these social effects might be secondary to the pleasure derived from using it, for the majority however, the pleasure derived from using cannabis appeared to be secondary to the social benefits. Few smoked cannabis on their own, and much of what was considered pleasurable was necessarily social. The findings suggested that for the majority their primary motivation was not to use cannabis, rather their motivation was to spend time with a social group with particular characteristics. These characteristics appeared to be fostered or facilitated through activities related to the use of cannabis.

The decision to use cannabis; the quantities of cannabis smoked, the regularity of use, who cannabis is smoked with and when, were important considerations for the respondents. All users set personal and social limits on their use. Equally most

users routinely or occasionally transgressed their own boundaries. Cannabis use could be a means of both constructing and breaking through social barriers and part of the appeal of cannabis was disinhibition and transgression. The group were thus involved in constructing and breaking both social and personal rules. It was felt that alcohol led to a greater degree of disinhibition than cannabis but the expectations derived from a background social knowledge of its effects limited the behaviours which could be legitimised. 'I was just pissed' allowed a transgression of an externally predefined set of social rules around conduct, while 'I was stoned' legitimated a wider range and characteristically more 'goofy' behaviours legitimated by the rules constructed within the group. The expression of social-identities, self-control and the maintenance of a social recognition of agency, while under the effects of cannabis, provided a motivation to play and the means of 'keeping score' in cannabis as a social game.

The teenagers understanding of cannabis seemed also to be configured in terms of its potential as a social and perceptual tool. Their interest in the perceptual effects appeared to be limited (primarily to type 2 users). The principal value of cannabis was as a social tool in negotiating what they considered the limbo of adolescence while waiting to gain entry to the adult world. Its adoption as a tool was then related to their perceptions of limited resource and a lack of power - cannabis was experienced as a proxy. Continued reliance on cannabis beyond the teenage world was thus read as characteristic of being 'a loser', a recognition that they continued to lack resource, power and status. While cannabis use may have been normalised its use remains, even by these teenage users themselves subject to a value framework in which using cannabis is something less than ideal. This suggests that increased cannabis use and continuation of use beyond the teenage group may indeed, in some circumstances, be related to perceived difficulties and uncertainties in achieving the type of stable adult roles which were available in the past (Hartnagel, 1996).

Such uncertainties arguably relate to well recognised changes in social and economic conditions of globalisation and late modernity in advanced capitalist societies (Giddens, 1991). The adaptations to principal social roles discussed by

Giddens were rooted in increasing autonomy and increasing access to resources and technology. The findings however, suggest that changing social and economic conditions have resulted in a diminution in the capacity to achieve and maintain the kind of 'pure' relationships suggested by Giddens in the context of principal social roles.

The discussion highlighted that the social adaptations to such conditions are not coherent, rather they are diverse and piecemeal - based on extended diversity of circumstance. These differences are accompanied and exacerbated by social and generational inequalities in resources and the greater impact of such inequalities of resource in terms of the extended potentialities inherent in differential access to technologies. It seems however, that other factors contribute to the attributes that Giddens relates to 'pure' relationships continuing to be valued, or seen as an ideal. The teenagers adaptation to this, involved seeking these attributes in non-contingent proxy roles, since they could not be accommodated in immediately available contingent roles. The teenagers appeared better able to access these kind of open, understanding, mutually supportive relationships in the context of peripheral relationships, rather than in close ongoing relationships.

If traditional roles were bound in certainty and established conventions for role performance, fluid modern roles can be read as a reaction to uncertainties over resource and status between participants. If modernity opened up the possibility of new ideals and values in relationships, late modernity and the uncertainties of globalisation have again changed the relationship between the lifestyles and life choices open to people, their relationships and attendant value systems. As noted in the introduction psychoactive drugs use is known to have been common in societies across history. While there may be common reasons underlying this use, there is no doubt that the meanings brought to that use are rooted in the wider contemporary sociological dimensions of particular societies. Equally the meaning of adulthood is rooted in both the expressed and inherent values and ideals of cultures and societies but bounded by the common limitations of human existence in the biography, experiences and circumstances of individuals.

The teenagers' perceptions and expectations of adult roles appeared to be based on those of their parents and on parental aspirations for them. They involved driving, a stable career and relationship, starting a family, home ownership and a degree of financial independence. However, the majority recognised that the reality they faced was an extended period of parental dependency. Extended dependency on parents was considered as a failure and invoked a strong moral dimension rooted in a widespread 'work ethic'. The kind of stable autonomous adult roles of the kind available to many of their parents' generation have, however, arguably become increasingly difficult to achieve. While Hartnagel (1996) viewed forced extended adolescence as a transitory problem which would pass in time, in the early twenty-first century it appears to have become more deeply entrenched in both the modern industrialised world and in less developed countries. This situation of ongoing adversity and incapacity to achieve autonomous adult roles may suggest that the inherent conditions of contemporary youth present significant risks for both drugs use and for wider mental health and wellbeing. If, as seems possible, cannabis use facilitates a type of social network which in some way mitigates for these difficulties, cannabis use may indirectly have positive effects on wellbeing. This may complicate any negative relationships established between mental health and cannabis use (Chabrol et al., 2005). At the very least this will have some impact on any perception of costs and benefits of drugs use.

In relating cannabis use to difficulty in achieving stable, autonomous 'traditional' roles we might usefully speculate on some reasons why these groups appear to be predominantly male. It is possible that the inability to achieve autonomous adult roles may be experienced particularly acutely by young males, this may be indicative of their alignment with traditional gender roles. It has been noted that men are more likely to deal with depression and anxiety through drug and alcohol use (Nazroo, 2001). The analysis suggests that the use of drugs or alcohol may in fact be a social mechanism through which men initiate, facilitate and maintain a non-contingent friendship group through which they gain a different type of social support (perhaps involving supporting aspects related to masculinity), than that available in contingent relationships. This being the case we would expect to see increased involvement in such groups and activities in times of identity tran-

sition, or when increased strain is placed on contingent relationships. We would expect these groups to continue to be valued until stable identities had again been achieved. Increasing investment in these stable roles might then lead to progressively lower investment in such relationships and activities. However, this also suggests that other proxy roles may function as an adaptation to the lack of, or uncertainty around contingent roles. If such proxy roles allow the freedom to engage a wide range of attributes, which people need to express their sense of an 'authentic' self, these roles might usefully be maintained, being protective when more contingent roles are threatened or cease.

The drugs used in such groups can all be understood instrumentally, that is their direct effects may be understood as a form of 'self-medication', however these arguments suggest that the social aspects of use may be significantly more important. This suggests a limit on the efficacy of substitution for the direct effects of a drug. Pathologising, or medicalising cannabis use as self-medication, in this context is likely to be as ineffective as criminalising use has proven, in reacting to increasing levels of drug use in society (Booth-Davies, 1992). However, it also suggests that proxy roles may be a useful way of thinking about the features required in treatment, or psychosocial interventions to control and reduce substance use. More work would be needed to understand the relationships between perceptions of contingency and non-contingency, of the value available from proxy roles at different points in the life course, and proxy roles in the presence or absence of contingent roles. It seems likely that this would initially involve synthesis and recontextualisation of existing work to develop and evaluate whether it holds any new implications for existing theoretical perspectives on treatment.

A further danger of pathologising cannabis use is that it may come to symbolise and legitimate the inability to achieve adult roles. This can then set up a cycle in which social identities, self-understandings and self-narratives become bound up with cannabis. This is a way cannabis dependency, while not a biological dependency, becomes more potent as a psychological dependency rooted in the legitimacy of a medical diagnosis, in the form of a sick role (Parsons, 1951). Cannabis could

then be used as means of understanding and explaining routine problems of life, perpetuating a cycle of inability to cease use and a concomitant inability to understand one's self as inhabiting a legitimate adult role, with its attendant responsibilities. On the other hand pathologising cannabis use can allow society to condemn the cannabis user for their inability to achieve adult roles which may not in fact have been open to them to pursue - legitimising its own failings. The very act of pathologising particular forms of behaviour including drugs use, locates the source of an individual's lack of agency and diminished locus of control in the use of a drug, while ignoring the individual's wider problems rooted in their social position, social problems, their limitations of resource and of power (Booth-Davies, 1992).

While the findings and analysis have stressed the social over the instrumental in understanding cannabis use, it may also be that the reason cannabis smoking was particularly valued lies in a synergy between the effects of the drug and the social group which developed around its use. In this case the social benefits of use may outweigh the risks for many users, particularly if use is perceived to be limited to times of identity transition. While there may be a degree of falling off of benefits from the direct effects of cannabis over time, one of the main mechanisms which limited use appeared to lie in demarcating what was appropriate to adults, from what was appropriate to teenagers. Cannabis use might then be expected to persist in the face of continuing role uncertainty until individuals come to redefine their understanding of what contemporary adulthood means. It remains possible that this redefinition may include the acceptability of continuing cannabis use in adulthood.

I have suggested that the reasons cannabis use and the teenage cannabis smoking group are valued is rooted in the non-contingent nature of the group and the importance of non-contingent groups and activities to identity transition. In part the increasing use of cannabis may in this context reflect the changing nature of adult social roles. Much of the classical literature on identity involves an intrinsic moral dimension, it conceives of adult social roles as common, achievable and if one is a good, responsible and committed person, enduring (Erikson, 1968). In other

words the pay-off for continued investment in socially valued behaviours is stable roles and relationships, conferred social status, meaning and self-worth. Secondly, continued competence in performing these roles will result in some degree of satisfaction of one's needs and desires concomitant with this investment. By contrast the uncertainties and contingencies of modern labour markets, spousal and familial relationships, and the absence of common codified value-systems, suggest that learning to be an adult is now an ongoing struggle, learning to manipulate and negotiate a claim to adult status, in relationships that ultimately involve differential status and power. This emphasises the need for a more expansive perspective on the relationship between personal and social identity, in which fundamental identity claims, that are common across identities (adulthood, masculinity, responsibility, etc.), are negotiated in order to legitimate social claims, which result in the satisfaction of needs. If identity is political, it is no less personal, social or economic (Hall and Du Gay, 1996).

The satisfaction of basic human needs in advanced capitalist societies occurs at a distance, through social and material networks over which individuals (and the groups to which they belong) often exert little influence or control. The key to the satisfaction of existential, physiological needs has become the ability to articulate a right to the satisfaction of one's needs, through establishing one's identity and status in relation to particular social frameworks. These may include, nationality, birthplace, payments such as tax, insurance, rent, and more subtle frameworks such as the ability to engage the power of groups through appropriate dress, voice and behaviour (Castells, 1997). While some of these frameworks are articulated in a rights context, the reality of living within them is that they are fluid and contested. This in part reflects the dynamic uncertainties of living at the mercy of global market structures, though it also reflects aspects of long established conventions and traditions, religious or political dogma, as well as more personal ideals. This suggests an intriguing idea - in the experience of life in modern industrialised societies Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of need may be effectively turned on its head. Self-actualisation (though perhaps not in quite the terms Maslow intended), as

the successful social articulation of ‘authentic’ (and at times inauthentic) identity claims, has become the keystone from which social competence flows, and ontological and existential security follow.

If the available labour market does not directly meet basic needs, even if these needs are taken up by the state, we cannot expect the work role to be experienced as an autonomous viable, legitimate and sustainable adult role. This is not an argument that adulthood should be perceived as a state of independence and autonomy, rather that it involves an accommodation between agency, freedom, contingency and dependency. The teenagers’ conception, and arguably that of their parents, is that their adult roles, and the returns on their investment in these roles, will be broadly commensurate with those of previous generations. The social frameworks, infrastructure and value systems of modern western societies have been built on assumptions that viable and sustainable adult roles provide the capacity for sustainable access to housing, personal transportation, participation in a social culture predicated on consumption, and a surplus which can be invested to mitigate problems in the future. This has been configured as an ideal which can be attained through investments (of material and immaterial resources) in education and participation, and acceptance of legal, tax and political frameworks. While this ideal of adulthood might never have been attained by the majority, it appears that it is available to an increasingly small minority. If cannabis use, as suggested by the data, is attenuated primarily in response to achieving stable ‘adult’ roles, there are tangible risks of increasing use over a period in which social values and assumptions continue to adapt to the impact of globalisation.

This argument suggests that levels of cannabis use, normalisation in society, and the responses of society to cannabis use, are intrinsically linked in a dynamic involving the uncertainties of global and local economic circumstance, and social and economic policy reactions to these situations. The complexities, scale and lack of control over these dynamic systems would suggest that the impacts of any gross changes in policy would be difficult to predict and to evaluate. The risks and benefits of any particular strategy will be likely to impact different groups, in different

localities, in unpredictable ways. While acknowledging that we are starting from a less than perfect situation, one of the reasons for a lack of progress in the drugs field indisputably lies in the lack of strategic agreement on what constitutes progress. Attempting to define progress at the social policy level inevitably involves recourse to social ideals which often bear little relationship to the kind of problems faced by individuals, or groups in particular localities.

Initially this project had a much greater focus on culture, cultural production, media and the impacts of living in a media-saturated 'communication age'. As time went on it was primarily the pace of change in this regard that gave me cause for concern over the utility of the data as it aged. The first cohort in 1998 did not have mobile phones; Spud's dealing was done from a phone box around the corner from the research site. The second cohort all appeared to have mobile phones but this did not seem to make a great difference to their behaviour. I had thought this might make it easier for them to arrange meetings rather than bumping into one another at a common smoking venue - if it did the effect was minimal, their contexts were limited not by communication but principally by transportation and that had not changed.

I would imagine the first cohort were aware of the internet but would be surprised if more than one or two had an email account. For the second cohort it was a part of their school lives and a few had access at home, they played games online, one or two had looked for background about cannabis or other drugs. In return for access I was involved in a session teaching internet research for job hunting to a younger group at the school. This was interesting in that it suggested a relatively low engagement with the internet, limited competence in using computers and more importantly a lack of competence in directed searching and processing the results. Internet use has increased apace in this age-group, in particular social-networking has given them something to do online and a new communication resource. This may have led to changes in the existence, or the characteristics, of the teenage social groups that meet to smoke cannabis. At first sight it seems possible that these technologies may provide an alternative way of meeting the needs that were being

met by the teenage social group; or other social, legal or environmental changes may have had an impact. However, it seems to me that the very characteristics, the unfettered visceral interaction in a physical locale, the status plays, banter and social processes that the group provided in microcosm are exactly the things that cannot be replicated by communication at a distance.

The groups interviewed and their activities were, I have suggested, a product of their social context and their environment. They were a bunch of teenagers united by their life phase, by limited resources and by physical proximity. The organisational structures of culture, subcultures and society had limited meaning for them, they existed socially in communities of regular physical interaction. The signs and symbols of wider cultural knowledge or participation were not the common currency within the group. The common currency was behaviour within the group, within the context of smoking cannabis. These are evidently not the kind of ‘communities’, or ‘cultures’ that policy makers discuss, they are much smaller and more transitory than that. They are groups who regularly spend time physically interacting with each other. This is not the only context in which the construction of meaning for these individuals takes place. Much of this construction of meaning takes place in contingent relationships and these contingent relationships, of family, close friends, colleagues, school-friends, mentors and so on, are not necessarily geographically bounded. A wider construction of meaning at the individual level will involve cultural participation, production, and a relationship to mass-media and cultural products.

The research highlights that people need both contingent and non-contingent relationships. The non-contingent relationships appear to give confidence in navigating the wider social world at a time when basic needs are fulfilled by abstract and unseen networks of activity over which people have little or no control. They provide a proxy then, not just for an absence of ‘meaningful’ contingent roles, but perhaps for the imposition of the social in the previously more direct relationship between man, the environment and satisfaction of needs. The establishment of such encounters and relationships requires common public social spaces which allow

some freedom in interaction and for spending time. However, the privatisation of public space suggests public spaces are increasingly transactional, the meanings which can be constructed in any given place laid out by the commercial imperatives in operation in that space. Or perhaps by the social understandings governing acceptable behaviour and status hierarchy within that space (Malone, 2002). The arguments advanced in this thesis suggest that in response to the conditions of modernity, the need for some form of non-contingent relationship spaces and activities will grow, just as the capacity to articulate the legitimacy of accommodating these needs diminishes. It suggests a tension between the formality, or freedom in the provision of spaces and activities, and their ability to fulfil the functions required of them. This tension will inevitably be exacerbated by competition for use of space in the increasingly limited socio-spatial contexts of towns and cities.

The criminalisation of 'rave' culture in the 1990s can also be read through this lens. Rave culture in Manchester took place in the interstitial spaces, spaces made redundant as manufacturing left the city, or through planning policy. Raves took place under train arches, in (and on) the empty flats in Hulme before their demolition, or out in the country in disused quarries. The soundtrack for this movement was produced in studios clustered in empty Victorian warehouses and workrooms. The final physical dispersal of this culture took place as these warehouses were emptied to make way for inner city flats, but in truth the culture had already fragmented as the move from fields to clubs had resulted in the fracturing of styles catering for niche markets. The teenage friendship group was (and my guess is that it still is) the place where the first attempts are made at authentic DIY production, development and participation in a community, a mini-culture, takes place. It is one possible starting point in producing authentic, 'folk' communities of meaning. While this might seem to hark back to the tired arguments of people like William Morris, it is not mere ideology - mass culture is moribund without the existence and emergence of authentic 'folk' cultures to subsume and marketise (Ritzer, 2003). On another level the very 'reality' offered by these folk cultures is both marginalised and in another sense sustained, by the semiotics of identity and identification maintained by the manipulation of styles and fashions in mass culture and mass production.

As trends in drugs use change, so too do trends in research, and at the time of writing identity is to a degree lying fallow. The arguments around identity in the late 1990s, through the turn of the millennium, failing to reach any meaningful consensus, and the terms of the debate limiting its operationalisation. Likewise, drugs research appears to be going through an instrumental phase emphasising monitoring and quantification above theoretical development. The relationship between theory and praxis is always difficult, the insights gained in this exercise are not easy to operationalise and the relationship between the theory discussed and the empirical data is in many respects speculative, though the interpretations are grounded in the data. The findings of the present study are limited in their scope to a particular form of cannabis use, taking place in a number of groups of young males. While not an affluent group, the sample was distinctively suburban; they lived in a largely non-threatening environment where gang activity was not directly relevant to them. Their aspirations, values and behaviour were largely socially positive, if not conservative, their drug use being their only link to wider criminality. Further, the group focused on a core of fifteen to sixteen-year-olds in the final years of compulsory education. The interpretation of the findings does have wider relevance in that they relate the findings to wider relationships between identity and social conditions.

This study has suggested that drugs use, whether problematic or not, is likely to involve complex psychosocial processes which though they may appear to centre on the use of the drug, can be better understood as a response to meeting individual psychosocial needs under a particular set of social circumstances. More particularly, it suggests that cannabis or other drugs use is not necessarily representative of teenage rebellion, dysfunction, an innate proclivity for risk-taking, or an attachment to alternative, or subcultural understandings. Cannabis use may however, be read as a reaction to the increasing demands placed on teenagers, via increasing uncertainties over investments and rewards. This situation may place a greater strain on contingent relationships, resulting in a requirement for increased commitment and investment in the relationship and in contingent goal-oriented activities. It is perhaps this, which elevates the value of the teenage cannabis smoking group as a non-contingent group, engaged in a non-contingent activity. This dynamic

has wider relevance beyond drugs use and the experience of teenagers. Work on wellbeing and positive social functioning often stresses the importance of close, contingent relationships on maintenance of identity (Thoits, 1992). Particularly in relation to life-transitions, and accommodating to uncertain and transitory identities, produced by the conditions of late-modernity, the importance of non-contingent relationships and activities may not have received sufficient research attention (Lamb et al., 2011).

At root this study highlights firstly the importance of interrogating the way in which understandings of drugs use are constructed by different types of users, health practitioners, policy makers, and different groups in the wider public (Lewin, 1946). Secondly, it demonstrates that differential understandings of drugs use are rooted in social valuation processes and moral positioning which reflect allocation and access to social and material resources. The moral judgements made in relation to illicit and particularly youth drug use, are one aspect of a wider differential social positioning around youth. The difficulties of teenage transitions to adulthood, though mediated by access to resources are more fundamentally rooted in access to the 'adult' roles from which they can derive social value. The teenage cannabis smoking group was a transitory assemblage in which members principle activities whilst smoking cannabis involved constructing and deconstructing social and personal meaning, and socially negotiating value based on that meaning. The roles they enacted within the group were proxy roles - they served to provide an arena for identity play.

The model of identity which emerged through considering the experiences of the teenage cannabis users has thus proven valuable in considering much wider issues. It hints at the relationships between a person's sense of identity and their heuristics for negotiating the legitimacy of their actions, by articulating identities in different social contexts, in order to satisfy needs. Further, it suggests a complex relationship between the satisfaction of needs, contingency, dependency and identity. It reveals something of the manner in which individuals go about deciding what their needs are, the social legitimacy of needs and of satisfying needs in a particular way in

a particular context. Further, it emphasises that identity is bounded by access to social, material and immaterial resources. In considering social identities as socially negotiated identity claims, which are legitimised and supported by prior resources, it suggests that identity development involves both immediate and strategic aspects.

Even the teenagers most committed to cannabis tended to agree that cannabis was not the ideal tool to accomplish what they wanted to achieve. They used cannabis because it appeared to them the best tool available, and available to all of them. It was chosen from a limited range of options open to them at the time, as a leisure activity which allowed them to create personal and social meaning at some remove from institutionalised structures. Herein lies the rub, we cannot successfully respond to male teenage cannabis use by providing institutional structures in which the teenagers are required to perform through externally imposed systems of meaning over which they have little influence, or their personal meaning making activity is framed as immature, or in other ways illegitimate. There was a youth club very close to the areas where the home group met, none used it, it performed a different type of function for younger teenagers. Likewise the teenagers could gain access to pubs but largely choose not to. Some had girlfriends but nevertheless still participated in the overwhelmingly male groups of cannabis smokers. None of these alternative, more socially legitimate domains appeared to provide the characteristics the teenagers seemed to innately require. Any externally legitimated space implicitly involves contingency, it is contingency which legitimates it. The teenagers required for their exploration of identity a non-contingent social space where existing role expectations and their associated behaviours could be suspended and new strategies and heuristics tried out. This transition space was only needed for as long as they failed to achieve legitimate social roles in wider society. The question remains as to whether their cannabis use will continue if wider structural conditions deny them access to legitimate roles.

The view which developed over the course of this project is that we must come to see identity as intrinsically malleable, or fluid - identities take on aspects of their containers - they can only be considered stable in as much as their container

is stable. These containers are socio-material, they can involve social and material components - by making ourselves 'in' the physical and the social world we instantiate ourselves in time and in memory. The strong role identities of the mid-twentieth century may have led us to treat identities as though they themselves were the container. The study came to suggest that we need to read identity as both a medium and a potential characteristic of all communication. In the same way that 'all is political' disempowers the overt political act, to consider 'all is identity' regardless of intent or reception is to make identity facile. Both Castells' (1997) and Giddens' (1993) understandings of identity have direct relevance here. Castells' describes the operational context of specific identity claims and mobilisation in transactional interactions in broadly institutionalised social structures. While Giddens provides an account of the making and remaking of identity as personal and social meaning which accompanies, informs and is informed by reflexivity and performance of these institutionalised forms of identity.

Participation in wider social group identities provides only a framework for interaction, the dynamic construction of personal meaning can be enabled, constrained and reproduced over time through this institutional structure, but we must not confuse the structure with the identities it supports. As the meanings of institutionally derived identities are levelled, eroded and experienced as ever more distant and abstract (Ritzer, 2003), it becomes less tenable to consider them as constitutive of personal meaning, since they no longer relate in the same way to substantive shared action spheres. To understand the action, structures, meanings and identities of any individual we must increasingly look to the more methodologically difficult proposition of inductive research into the ephemeral co-constructed participatory social structures which people dynamically bring into being through interaction.

Even with the increased minority communications potentials of the internet, 'being' a cannabis user, and involvement, or association with, cannabis use as a social movement remains a highly marginal phenomena when compared to the scale of routine social use of cannabis. Regardless of normalisation, self-identification and identity mobilisation via the identity of 'cannabis user' appears to bring little benefit

in institutional structures. The study emphasised that normalisation of cannabis is not institutionalisation of cannabis use. Rather normalisation represents cannabis coming to be used as a social tool in the repertoire of a greater number of small social groups who instantiate their own understandings of cannabis use. It was of direct importance to the value that cannabis held for the young cannabis users that they were not playing a game with known externally derived rules, they were dynamically making, remaking, and subsequently breaking and reconstituting their own personally and socially negotiated highly ephemeral rules and understandings. It was for this reason that it turned to Giddens' identity, rooted in wider structuration theory, to provide an account of the relationships between ephemeral performative action, which makes and remakes ephemeral and liminal social structures, but by turn is enabled, constrained, changes and recreates the more concrete and observable structures and institutions.

Cannabis use, as a social activity, for the teenagers in this study and perhaps for wider groups appeared to provide a stable answer to an unstable and constantly evolving set of problems related to an unstable and uncertain world. As this study has stressed, we cannot approach the issues of drugs use as a problem of structures, agency, power, resource, or any other single dimension. Both in its problematic and non-problematic forms it involves a complex dynamic interplay of many factors. Likewise identity alone cannot provide a full account of drugs use, rather it is one dimension which needs to be explored and understood further in its relation to these other components. Like these other components we cannot understand identity as a fixed concept, it is embedded and intertwined with these wider dimensions and as such is changing, developing and responding to fluctuations and trends in these wider systems. Giddens (1976) outlined the epistemological issues around this through the idea of the double hermeneutic, however the methodological implications and the implications for social policy remain underdeveloped. We must learn to make sharper distinctions between our communicative metaphors, our abstract concepts and the observable empirical world.

Phenomenological perspectives regarding the embedding of practices into life's background suggest that in the life of a regular cannabis user, cannabis may be highly valued and enjoyed but it can at the same time be mundane, commonplace, routine. As such it is rarely for users themselves an object of critical reflection and users in the process of responding to research are often learning and working out their own thoughts and habits. There was a general ambivalence rooted in the multiple uncertainties of being a teenager, this was displayed by the teenagers over many aspects of their life including their cannabis use and their membership of their current, or other cannabis smoking groups.

This sense of living in a constant suspended present forever geared towards the uncertain achievement of some desired future state is not just a feature of teenage life. The concept of suspended liminality - being in a constant state of change and uncertainty is a key feature of contemporary modernity (Beck, 1996). In response to this condition the number of strategies individuals adopt to both utilising identity as a resource and to developing personal meaning appears to be diversifying and accordingly increasingly complex. Diversity and uncertainty appears to bring a dual pressure, firstly to make identities more rigid by exercising them and binding them to well codified social roles, secondly to create alternative open structures which can accommodate more fluid and authentic self-expression. The study suggests that cannabis and cannabis use must be recognised as a diverse and multi-faceted symbol, resource and tool for the construction of personal and social meanings. Where to use, how to use and how to locate and mobilise the meanings of use are all potential components in a range of 'games' that may be codified to a greater or lesser extent.

The fundamental distinction presented by the typology of commitment relates to the nature of the relationship between the users and cannabis as a tool. For type one and type three users, the stoners and the social users, cannabis was part of a social technology. The use of cannabis as an intoxicant was a pragmatic choice over the other available intoxicants. The use of an intoxicant legitimated, for those involved, the suspension of wider institutionally bound behaviours and goals and (perhaps

synergistically with the biopsychosocial effects of the drug) helped in bringing into being the dynamic social space of the group. The group provided a space where they were free for a time to take an active part in the co-creation of personal and social meaning and experiment with different ways of interacting and presenting themselves. For the type two users, the sophisticates, cannabis was used in the wider creative technologies of production and consumption of creative artefacts, as well as the social function. The commonality between the three groups is the use of cannabis in communication and the creation of personal meaning. For types one and three, this meaning was confined to ephemeral social interactions. For type two it could also relate to the creation and consumption of cultural artefacts - though it would be amiss to consider these artefacts as constitutive of the physical manifestations of a 'drugs culture'. Some were by nature related to the effects of cannabis, and the active adoption of cannabis in a symbolic repertoire though these appeared to hold more interest for type 1 and type 3 users. The type 2 users used the effects of cannabis to explore, create and remake aspects of wider extant culture. For all though, cannabis was a proxy for functions which they recognised would ultimately be better served without cannabis if and when alternative routes and pathways became available to them.

If we are to create institutions which address the manifest problems of society we need to recognise and accommodate the reality that institutions only ever bound, enable and constrain the world of dynamic social action. This ephemeral world in which we co-construct 'who we are' and which brings meaning to our daily activities is the source of both performative and biographical identity. Role identities and institutional identities, which we increasingly transact in return for resources, while more measurable, seem to be becoming less meaningful to us as individuals when taken over an extended life-course. It is natural that, faced by ever increasing complexity and dynamism a society reacts by moving conservatively to protect and shore up the institutions which have served it in the past. But as complexity increases apace institutions must themselves change and adapt in order to remain relevant and our reading of the institutions of the past itself continues to change and

adapt. The idea that we can cling to the old world by entrenching ourselves in the traditional roles and institutions of the past is a myth - we are always reinterpreting and reconstructing that past with reference to today.

The generation that the second cohort (SG) belonged to are often represented in the media as politically disengaged and disenfranchised. As they have moved to adulthood many in this generation remain demographically disenfranchised, the satisfaction of their immediate needs conflicting with those of the more numerous property holding generations. They are at times derided as a generation of passive agents in consumer culture and seen as constructing their identity through ownership and symbolic display. This reductive lens through which they are portrayed as 'youth tribes' should tip us off to the fact that we have not only failed to understand the world they live in, and the systems of meaning which they then construct, we have failed to try to understand it. This ephemeral world not being so amenable to positivist methods we fail to acknowledge it and its importance at a time when our world is only becoming more ephemeral. As the dynamism of the global system as a whole increases day by day, we can learn something from the spontaneous creation of social meaning which underlay the value of cannabis to the teenage cannabis smoking group. In response to rigid institutions which fail to meet extant needs we as humans share a common heuristic mechanism. We naturally step outside the formal system and create new meanings and structures from that which is available to us. Inevitably these ephemeral structures will hold little interest for those others, who's established legitimacy and access to resources rests on their continued investment in attained roles and established institutional formal structures. The fact the the teenagers were not committed to cannabis use as an alternative social movement, means cannabis use should not be considered in the same way as other minority identities such as youth, gender, ethnicity, or belief. It appears to belong to a class of identity problems rooted in access to resources, to institutions and to legitimate (or adult) roles, that are emerging internationally as a consequence of globalisation and the inability of traditional nation states and international institutions to control market systems in late modernity. Traditionally we have viewed markets and globalisation as supply side issues in drugs problems - the foregoing debates suggest a number of mechanisms where they are important in sustaining

demand. The wider implications of these debates are that identity will become an ever more potent dimension in understanding social life and that the nature of identity and the resources people bring to constructing it will continue to diversify. Under such conditions theory cannot be the pursuit of static unchanging laws, it must acknowledge the dynamic nature of the problems at hand, making use of what has gone before, creating and recreating itself through constant reference to empirical data.

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Appendix I: Interview Schedule

The interview schedule on the following pages is a contemporary version of the original used from 1998 onwards. It was prepared for interviews conducted in relation to the MMU schools survey activity (discussed here as *school group*). The schedule consists mainly of prompts and general areas of interest and was loosely applied with an emphasis on getting respondents talking about the way cannabis fits into their daily lives. The schedule itself remains unchanged from 1998 though in earlier cohorts signed confirmation of informed consent was not required.

Young People's feelings about drugs:

Views on Cannabis Use Survey:

This small scale, qualitative survey involves the interview of a number of young people who are about to, or have just, completed Year 11 of their schooling. The aim is to add some detailed views about cannabis use to compliment the quantitative data obtained about cannabis use and views about cannabis from a study of Year 11 pupils' feelings about drug use across nine schools in and around Greater Manchester. This study (and the present survey) is being managed by Dr Christopher Wibberley from the School of Health, Psychology and Social Care at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

Verbal consent will be obtained for interviews and confidentiality of information guaranteed for those consenting. Tapes will be identified by the survey title and a number which will not be recorded against interviews. Thus individuals will not be identifiable to those listening to the tapes – analysis will be within the team comprising Dr Christopher Wibberley & Mr Jonathan Lamb (Research Student at MMU).

Dr Christopher Wibberley

Principal Lecturer

Email c.wibberley@mmu.ac.uk

Young People's use of Cannabis

Dept of Health Care Studies, The Manchester Metropolitan University

Can you tell me about your cannabis use:

weekly use; spend; where from (& how); heavy days/light days?;
when; where; who with; how; why; history; changes in use;

What about your friends' use of cannabis?

prompt re how use relates to who they're with – social aspects of
usage?

So on a typical day, tell me how your cannabis use fits in with other
things

what other things do you do? what are the most important things
you do? how does your use of cannabis relate to these activities –
or ...?

Tell me about other legal and illegal drugs you use

as per 1

If you had to explain to someone, who'd never used cannabis, why you
use it – what would you say?

What do you really like about cannabis?

Do you reckon that there's any down side to your cannabis use?

Tell me something more about your life generally

what are your interests?; what do you think you're going to do now
you've left school?

How do you reckon your use of drugs will change in the future?

Is there anything else you want to say about your use of cannabis?

General prompts

Tell me a bit more about that pauses can be very effective +

What do you mean when you say ... go on ..

When you said yes ... mmm go on a bit erm .

Appendix II: Ethical Undertakings to Research Participants

The following was constructed originally for the authors MSc study of the 'Adult Reflectors' group and adapted for use in the aborted study of drug using groups in their mid-twenties

1. This document presents the precautions taken in this research to protect the interests of participants in Mr. Jonathan David Lamb's PhD study: 'Identity & Illicit Drug Use: the social and personal construction of 'drugs cultures'.
2. If there is any item that you do not understand please ask and it will be explained.
3. In taking part in this research you are committing yourself to inclusion in the study and in subsequent publications based on this work. You are however free to remove yourself and all data associated with you at any time prior to submission/ publication.
4. This research project is purely for the purposes of academic research undertaken at Manchester Metropolitan University. It is not connected to or associated with any third party agencies.
5. No individually identifiable data will be supplied to law enforcement agencies under any circumstances. Neither shall the researcher reveal the identities of any of the research participants or individuals referred to by research participants to any second party.
6. No second parties will have access to the raw interview data. If it is necessary to provide interview transcripts for academic review the audio will be transcribed by the interviewer and anonymised prior to release.
7. This said the PhD Thesis and any associated publications in scholarly journals will be publicly available. The researcher therefore undertakes that he will take every effort to protect both the identities and the interests of participants.
8. All names of people, business names, specific places etc. which may lead to the identification of the participant will be changed.
9. Where sequential disclosure of information is likely to compromise the interests or identity of participants, or if any other aspect of the reporting compromises their interests or identity, the participant will be consulted before submission or publication of the associated document. In the event that they cannot be contacted the data will not be used.
10. Participants should be aware that their stories may be recognised by those close to them. If any item is likely to compromise their interests in this regard it will be discussed with the

participant and adapted or removed as necessary.

11. Interviews shall be recorded on minidisk which will be erased at the first opportunity after transferring data to computer.

12. This computer shall not be networked and all work will take place on a secure encrypted disk image.

13. Archived interview data will be held on high security encrypted DVD.

14. All audio data held on computer or DVD will be erased once the project is complete.

15. You will not be given a copy of this document to keep since the possession of it may serve to identify you with the work. This document will however be made available to you upon request.

16. It is suggested that you take care over who you reveal to that you participated in this research. This is of course at your own discretion but it should be born in mind that you have been recruited as part of a social group and that your revelations may serve to compromise the identity or interests of fellow participants.

17. This is not a legal document but it should be regarded as a 'binding verbal agreement'.

18. You will not be asked to sign any document in relation to this study as it may serve to compromise your identity.

19. Please be clear that you will not receive any payment for this work.

20. Can you confirm (verbally) that you don't feel under any compulsion or social pressure, by virtue of your relationship to myself, or that of ourselves and any third party, to take part in this research.

21. Given the conditions set out above I will now ask you to confirm (verbally) both that you understand these conditions and that you are happy to proceed.

22. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

