Raving On: Exploring the Construction and Consumption of Dance Music Experiences

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The research described in this thesis was carried out in:

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Abstract

Whilst dance culture and ‘clubbing’ has exerted a huge influence on worldwide youth culture in recent decades, academic engagement with this leisure phenomenon has been limited both in scope and in methodological approach. In this thesis I adopt an interpretive, auto-ethnographic research approach to exploring contemporary dance culture with the aim of furthering alternative interdisciplinary approaches to leisure research. I also seek to broaden our understanding of the area by shifting the focus of attention to new areas of enquiry (specifically clubbers’ motivations and preferences and the role of the dance music media). In addition, I examine the usefulness of the performance metaphor in understanding dance culture and argue for the conceptualisation of dance events as liminal spaces. Informed by a constructionist epistemological perspective, the thesis investigates the social realities of the dance culture participants and attempts to reveal the many and varied influences which shape the socio-cultural construction of dance culture.

As would be expected in an auto-ethnographic approach, the thesis begins with an account of my own involvement in dance culture, followed by a contextualisation of contemporary dance culture which examines its development from illegal raves and warehouse parties into a highly structured, commercialised leisure activity. This overview of the nature of dance culture also provides a critique of the academic literature on the topic and assesses work which has discussed its evolution and ‘legitimacy’ as an authentic youth subculture. The study approach is then outlined and the methods (namely auto-ethnography, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, online conversations and textual analysis) presented and discussed in detail.

The thesis reveals the many and complex influences which attract clubbers to particular dance events and analyses contemporary dance culture under the themes of: the significance of travel; visual spectacle and the role of crowds; dress and performance; altered states; dance culture as youth culture; dancing, acceptance and belonging; the role of the media; and the influence of DJs. It emerges that issues of identity development, performance and self-fulfilment are central to participation in dance culture and I suggest that there are numerous parallels between immersion in dance culture and religious experiences. Participants described their travel to major dance events as spiritual journeys and notions of pilgrimage, visual spectacle, congregation and collective ‘worship’ imbue their accounts of their experiences. Analysis of the dance music media focusing on the role of DJs in dance culture also revealed powerful discourses of originality, authenticity and performance. Such discourses not only position these individuals as ‘high priests’ of dance music but also affirm the construction of dance sites as spaces of hedonism, liminality and the performance of alternative identities. Whilst the thesis attempts to provide an insight into the world of contemporary dance culture, it does not offer definitive conclusions; indeed, I
would argue that it would be inappropriate to do so. Thus my final chapter is more of an epilogue and it considers the potential offered by incorporating diverse methodologies into the study of leisure and outlines an agenda for future research into dance culture and cognate areas.
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CCCS – Centre for contemporary cultural studies
CMC – Computer mediated communication
DJ – Disk Jockey
DJs – Disk Jockeys
IRC – Internet relay chat
PPA – Periodical Publishers Association
Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Research as a personal journey
This study examines contemporary dance culture, the successor to acid house and rave culture within the UK. It maps a journey of exploration, discovery, revision and modification through charted and uncharted terrain in a quest for personal knowledge and a contribution to the literature on dance culture and youth leisure cultures. It has been a journey of self discovery which has enabled me to explore and to appreciate the fine grained complexities of this cultural phenomenon. For although I have long been associated with the dance scene, I had not appreciated the extent of the ideologies involved in its practices and the layers and textures of meanings embedded in its processes until I began this study of the world of dance culture and clubbing from a participant observer perspective (Ervin 2000).

Before proceeding any further however I feel it is important to locate myself in this project and discuss why I chose this particular area for investigation. There is a growing body of work within tourism research that situates the researcher within the research project (Westwood 2004, Doorne and Ateljevic 2005), incorporating their personal narrative, which draws upon the auto-ethnographic method (Reed-Danahay 1994, Bochner and Ellis 2002). This method seeks to utilise and exploit the personal knowledge and experiences of researchers, to facilitate the exploration of areas they have personal involvement with and to gain deeper insights into the social worlds and realities of participants in different activities. Whilst this approach has gained increasing currency within tourism research and many other spheres of social research its utilisation within leisure studies is notable by its absence. Therefore the impetus behind adopting this approach is not only to lead to more revealing research findings through exploiting my relationship with dance culture, but also to incorporate new methodological approaches into the sphere of leisure studies.
I acquired my first rave mix tape - a recording of a DJ Slipmat performance from a rave called ‘Fantasia’ - at the age of 13, by which time I was already versed in some of the ideologies of music consumption, with a distain for the majority of the commercial mainstream chart music available at the time. Indeed much of my favourite music was linked to the 1960s and 1970s counter cultural movement. This movement was radical, it threw away the rule book, rejecting many of the norms and values of mainstream society and had a massive influence on society for generations to come (Marwick 1982, Abercrombie and Ward 1994, Roberts 1997, Edmunds and Turner 2002). Having spent several years wishing I was born thirty years earlier so I could have been part of this powerful social movement, my discovery of rave was my chance to be involved in something different and potentially revolutionary. Not only did I find the musical aesthetics both quirky and novel, but I also bought into a whole set of ideologies of underground cultural movements and the authenticity of musical forms.

At the time rave culture was new to me, although it had been in existence for some years. Living in rural west Wales I was a long way from what was very much an urban based phenomenon, but although I could not attend the events I wanted to be a part of this culture, to be involved, I knew something important was happening and it was going to get bigger. It was edgy, it was fresh and different, it was frowned upon by many in authority (although I was not quite aware of the extent at this point) and as a teenager these traits were highly appealing. At this age I was restricted to collecting mix tapes from events, collecting event flyers, and reading Eternity the only dance-specific magazine I could get in my local town, a magazine I was later to feature in as winner of its ‘Up and coming DJ of the month’ competition in August 1997. Later a number of individuals who had travelled to big, regional raves started organising small scale local events, both legal and illegal. It was within this grass roots scene that I had my first real experience of rave, in the summer of 1994. The first events I attended were small scale but exciting, with an atmosphere of communality generated by their word of mouth promotion. To experience the music in its intended context and to be around like-minded individuals was inspiring and I spent the nights moving from one area of the parties to another, exploring
different zones and enjoying the personal encounters. Each and every event had a feeling of uniqueness as I never knew if I would experience the same thing again. From these initial events my communication networks developed and soon I was travelling to north, mid and south Wales, in an eagerness to discover new places, meet new people and to go to as many parties as possible. Since there were no real night clubs in these rural areas, these events were usually held in farm outbuildings, in old manor houses, in marquees, on mountain tops and even by reservoirs in the middle of nowhere such as Llyn Briane in Mid Wales and it was made all the more exciting as the Criminal Justice Bill (1994) had recently been passed in an effort to stamp out illegal raves. But we knew that once a party had started, the police, with their limited resources, had no chance of stopping it.

After a time of listening to mix tapes and going to parties I decided to purchase some record decks myself and within a year I was disk jockeying (DJing) at various parties. I loved DJing from the start, playing my favourite tunes to people and seeing them enjoy them was wonderful, as a clubber I played a role in the construction of dance experiences, but as a disk jockey (DJ) this was taken to another level, as I was now an active creator and manipulator of the musical soundtrack so central to these events. DJing became like an addiction to me, I was propelled, hooked on the feeling I got from performing and seeing the response from the audience, there was nothing I had experienced before or have done since that compares with the buzz and excitement of performing to appreciative crowds. As I performed at more events I made a name for myself, which led to other bookings and then a residency for a period in a club in Swansea. With this level of commitment I also became more involved in events management and event promotion, which I found both enjoyable and challenging. I also began to realise, however that there are a multitude of aspiring DJs out there, which means intense competition and personal rivalry. More recently aside from a DJing at a small number of events in Cardiff and around west Wales, I have become more contented with playing for my own pleasure.
My clubbing adventures have taken me to a variety of destinations where I have met new people and encountered many different experiences. They have taken me to places that I would never had known existed and never experienced first hand were it not for my involvement in this culture. My participation has provided me with a wealth of emotional and social experiences, which in the process of this investigation I will explore and draw upon in providing additional insight into this powerful cultural phenomenon. My breadth of experience both academic and in terms of the dance culture have inspired me to embark on this study of dance culture to bring about new ways of interpreting and understanding what some say was the most influential youth phenomenon of the latter part of the twentieth century (Merchant and Macdonald 1994, Collins 1998, Critcher 2000).

1.2 Academic rationale
Over time music has become embedded within the leisure industries and central to the myriad of activities they sustain; whether as the background or the focus, in many settings leisure and music are inseparable (Bennett 2005). The importance of music to leisure is also becoming increasingly recognised by leisure studies scholars. The journal Leisure Studies recently published a special issue on “Popular Music and Leisure”. In his editorial to this edition Bennett (2005) discusses the relationship between music and leisure and how it has grown over the years in tandem with the growth of manufacturing and economic affluence, the growth of radio and the development of specialist music programming such as MTV. Papers in this edition point to the role of music in the social construction of space (Bull 2005, Lincoln 2005, Todorovic and Bakir 2005) and the huge role it plays in contemporary society in terms of identities, people’s perceptions of spaces and their negotiation of social, cultural and psychological aspects of life. Although there is no specific paper on dance culture in this issue Bennett (2005) does recognise that dance clubs continue to be a very popular form of leisure within contemporary society. This acknowledgement of the importance of dance culture to contemporary leisure practices and yet the lack of academic analysis of the phenomenon despite the centrality of music to the leisure industries, constitutes a major part of the rationale for this thesis. Dance culture is acknowledged for its significance, however the
depth in which it has been studied means there remains a vacuum of information concerning this huge area of youth leisure, particularly with regards to developments in the past decade. Indeed one of the seminal texts addressing dance culture was published over a decade ago by Thornton (1995) and there has been limited academic engagement since. Hence it is very surprising that this recent edition of *Leisure Studies* neglects dance culture and gives it little more than a passing comment.

The time for a fine grained study of this important cultural formation is long overdue and being a participant myself gave me a unique angle from which to study dance culture and its participants. Dance culture is a cultural phenomenon akin to no other, although bearing cultural continuities with many. It has been influenced by the legacies of earlier youth cultures, many of which had at their core music, drugs and dancing, activities which have featured prominently in the leisure lifestyles and processes of identity development and expression of young people for decades. Music is often regarded as “the cultural form closest to the lives of the majority of British youths” to the extent that “youth leisure and identity often revolve around music” (Thornton 1995: 19). Emerging from the seeds sown by disco, contemporary dance culture has been influenced by the clubs of New York, Chicago and Ibiza amongst others. Moreover, it could be said that emerging from its roots in events in run down industrial areas of cities, derelict warehouses and other disregarded industrial premises, the contemporary dance culture is a testament to the will of ordinary people to find alternative means of enjoyment and personal fulfilment when their needs are not met by society or business.

In addressing dance culture it must be acknowledged that the cultural circumstances in which practices first emerge will determine their subsequent development and evolution and guide their ideologies. In the case of dance culture it emerged in the mid 1980s, a period of economic restructuring and recession, the height of the Thatcher years, where the outlook for many was bleak. It was a period of individualism and elitism, guided by the promises of capitalism, which for many were a distant dream. The response was a desire for release, from the drudgery of life and the
conventions imposed by the mainstream night-time entertainment industry of the period (Redhead 1989). The result was warehouse parties; eclectic musical events in illegal venues, with no dress codes and more inclusive door policies. Such was the resonance of these events with the people at this time that they quickly grew and multiplied. But at their core was the ideology of inclusivity, acceptance, tolerance and embracement of the unconventional, the antithesis of the Conservative government of the day. These values, although not always practised, were central in the ideological construction of contemporary dance culture and fundamental to its widespread appeal and meteoric growth into the biggest youth cultural phenomenon the UK has ever seen (Merchant and Macdonald 1994, Critcher 2000).

In the need to situate this thesis, the study traces the origins of contemporary dance culture from disco, to warehouse parties, acid house, to rave and on to the plethora of post rave genres existing today (Brewster and Broughton 2000). It examines the range of influences that led to the largest youth culture of all time forming in the late 1980’s and 1990’s, despite (and some would say because of) the virulent response from the media and the draconian measures implemented by the government to quash this deviant cultural phenomenon. Such was the will to participate that despite drastic and dire media portrayals of the early acid house and rave scene, dance culture flourished throughout the 1990’s, reaching its peak in the UK around the Millennium. It has since progressed to a mass youth phenomenon, where even major tourism operators are using dance music to sell package holidays (Sellars 1998).

The superclubs of the 1990’s transformed the dance music scene and elevated many DJs to superstar status, with pop/rock star followings. Clubs such as Gatecrasher, Cream, Godskitchen and Ministry of Sound, with the assistance of the dance music media, created such hype and interest in their club nights and DJ appearances that for many successive years they attracted capacity crowds to their weekly events and developed cult followings. The biggest clubs maintained capacity crowds by competing for and booking the biggest DJs and the clubs which achieved the best DJ line
ups were ultimately those who paid the highest prices. Thus, through sheer supply and demand factors and the economies of scale facilitated by the super clubs capacities, DJs’ salaries rose dramatically as did their status. Whilst the super club empires have had to restructure, dance music and club culture has continued to flourish as a leisure activity with continually increasing levels of commercial support. Dance music is still big business with many of its suppliers being multi-million pound enterprises, adopting aggressive business strategies to achieve market growth, market penetration and greater brand awareness and prestige. However this is a neglected area of academic scholarship as little research has been undertaken, particularly with reference to the developments of the last decade (Critcher 2000). The longevity of dance culture is also of great significance, as in comparison to many previous youth subcultures dance culture has far outlived others and the most optimistic of predictions concerning its lifespan. This signifies the extent to which dance culture has been embraced by successive generations of young people and the definitive nature of clubbing in terms of youth leisure activity over recent years (Roberts 2004). Emerging from the warehouse party scene of the mid 1980’s and inspired by the eclectic club scene of Ibiza, acid house and rave culture spawned a vast number of genres and subgenres, which have created numerous spheres of engagement for a diversity of people, not all of whom comfortably sit within conventional definitions of youth.

Many authors have commented upon the influence of age on individuals’ leisure choices, the most famous of these being Rapaport and Rapaport (1975) who developed the theory of ‘Leisure and the Family Life-cycle’ whilst others such as Rojek (2005: 131) also agree there is a “strong correlation between age, life options and identity formation”. Thornton (1995: 15) considers age to be the largest determinant for participation in clubbing spaces commenting, “going out dancing crosses boundaries of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, but not differences of age”. At the younger end of the age scale clubbing is restricted by financial, parental and legislative constraints, at the other end of the scale interest in clubbing declines rapidly with people moving out of home, as there is less stimulation to get away from parents. Additionally when people form
relationships and move in with partners their propensity for and interest in clubbing is also thought to decline significantly (Mintel 2004). Although this statement may be fairly accurate in that the groups with the highest propensity to go out are in the younger age groups, clubbing is participated in by an increasingly wider age range, with many individuals deferring starting families until later in life and many individuals with families still attending nightclubs. Indeed as highlighted by Roberts (1997) amongst others, age is increasingly becoming irrelevant as an indicator of leisure activities. Goulding and Shankar (2004: 642) also comment “today...more and more people are extending their youth and engaging in activities that at one time would have been thought of as part of “youth culture”. Findings from a Mintel Nightclubs report (2004), also suggest that although it is the younger age group with the highest propensity to attend nightclubs, they are frequented by a range of individuals of various ages.

A major appeal of clubs in the UK is that they provide an alternative environment to that of the home, which is often felt to be claustrophobic and stifling of individuality for young people. Clubs offer places where youths are relieved of the social and psychological control of their parents (and wider society), free to indulge in activities and drugs of their choice (Malbon 1999). The opening hours of clubs are another factor, which is believed to both contribute to their appeal and differentiate them from pubs and bars as historically licensing regulations permit clubs to be open well past the closing time of pubs. There is also the sense of place associated with these two venues, whilst pubs are associated with local crowds and are aesthetically similar to the ‘traditional home’ (Thornton 1995). Dance clubs often have more of a cosmopolitan atmosphere and are intended to be aesthetically stimulating rather than comforting. “Clubs...offer other-worldly environments in which to escape; they act as interior havens with such presence that the dancers forget local time and place” (Thornton 1995: 21).

Another reason Thornton (1995: 22) raises for the popularity of clubs over pubs amongst young people is that pubs “tend to cross age and style boundaries”, whilst clubs are generally geared towards youth markets.
Clubs produce fine tuned products geared towards specific segments of the clubbing market, whilst most pubs offer a far more generic product, meaning clubs attract a crowd with far more specific and similar tastes than pubs. Clubs and dance events are therefore constructed as places with unique associations, both through their physical constitution and the social codes of conduct within them. Their constitution as places which exist outside of the parameters of everyday life is also of great interest to this study in terms of their portrayal by participants and the media and the discourses surrounding events.

The work of authors such as Goulding and Shankar (2004: 641) who investigate the appeal of dance culture to the “cognitively young thirty something[s]” and Jackson (2004) who interviewed a range of participants from their mid twenties to early forties, also demonstrate that dance clubs have become attractive to a wider demographic since Thornton (1995) conducted her research. Merchant and Macdonald (1994: 34) also point to the inconsistency within the findings of previous studies regarding the age and class composition of rave culture, illustrating that “rave culture is far from homogenous”. This discussion highlights a further information gap on the motivations for, appeal and experience of dance events for the different groups of people who frequent them. This issue requires further consideration of motivations for participation and in relation to this, preferences regarding participation also require investigation to provide further insights into the participants in this diverse cultural phenomenon.

The intended outcome of this study is to better understand the motivations, preferences and ideals of participants in this culture, leading to an increased awareness of the complexity of youth cultures and the issues concerning leisure choices in post-modern society. Rave/dance music culture became one of the biggest subcultural youth leisure phenomena ever in the late 1980s; although some would argue that it never really constituted a new subculture (Merchant and Macdonald 1994, Redhead 1991). Although there were significant subcultural traits associated with the acid house movement of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, its subsequent growth and commercialisation has left its subcultural status in serious doubt with many
academics, accompanied by growing discontent with current definitions and explanations of subculture in general (see for example Gelder and Thornton 1997, Bennett 1999, Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003, Huq 2006). The role of niche media in the development and dissemination of youth cultures is a particularly pertinent area that previous studies of subculture excluded and considering the proliferation of youth and lifestyle media over the past decade remains a significant area to be addressed. Indeed the media is another avenue this research is seeking to explore. Through a discourse analysis of a number of key dance music magazines this research will reveal how the media contributes to the ideologies held by dance cultures participants and the role it plays in the social construction of dance culture. As authors such as Pritchard and Jaworski (2005) and Doorne and Ateljevic (2005) comment, the analysis of cultural texts provides new ways of seeing and understanding the complex manner in which social realities are contested and constructed within the framework of wider cultural codes and discursive practices.

Rave/dance music culture's subcultural status has also been questioned due its lack of authenticity, originality, social resistance and rebellion (partially due to media influence); its varied class composition; non political agenda; egalitarian gender relations; non definable fashion; numbers involved and the position of drugs (Redhead 1991, Merchant and Macdonald 1994). Due to the variety of influences it has drawn upon in its creation and development rave/dance music culture may be considered more of a hybrid popular culture rather than a typical subculture. This is due to the elements and influences it has drawn from other youth sub and style cultures, in that they are not 'original' or unique to this youth leisure activity. Whereas previous youth subcultures were identifiable thorough participants' fashion statements, their lifestyle choices, musical tastes and political ideals, dance music culture and its participants are not. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the traditional concept of subculture is also increasingly difficult to apply to contemporary youth cultures (Gelder and Thornton 1997, Bennett 1999, Huq 2006). Through investigating the composition of this cultural phenomenon and the attitudes and motivations of those involved, this thesis will attempt to provide an
alternative means of analysing and addressing youth cultural groupings in the light of the decreasing relevancy of the concept of subculture. It will use alternative methods of addressing youth cultural practices such as the performance metaphor which has gained increasing currency within tourism studies over recent years with a valuable role to play in the analysis of human actions (Denzin 2003). As Doorne and Ateljevic (2005: 174-175) comment "the use of the performance metaphor provides a theoretical lens through which socio-cultural practices of 'consuming' ... can be captured, observed and examined in terms of language, actions and socio-strategic behaviour". I believe this is a useful tool to use in addressing dance culture and also contributes to another aim of this research which is to incorporate research approaches and methods from other disciplines into the study of leisure.

An overview of some of the most recent texts in the field of leisure studies also demonstrates the requirement for further research into the areas which this thesis is investigating. In Roberts's recent text on the leisure industries (2004: 136) he acknowledges that "in recent years 'clubbing' has probably been the definitive youth, or young singles, leisure activity" and yet he only has one paragraph on clubbing. The limited coverage of dance culture within this book in addition to the limited range of sources cited in relation to clubbing (Thornton 1995, Malbon 1999 and Critcher 2000) again highlights the need for further research into this area. Harris's recent text 'Key Concepts in Leisure Studies' (2005) also mentions clubbing and the concepts relating to it. In his discussion on 'Ecstasy' Harris (2005: 58) explores "the collective excitement generated among clubbers", as one of the key motivating factors for participation in clubbing. Harris (2005: 59) concludes by commenting "overall it is the overwhelming of the senses, especially hearing, in clubs that produce altered states in participants, leading to tranquillity, an awareness of self and environment, feelings of warmth and peace". Although there are some truths within this statement I believe this is a great simplification of the motivations for participation and there is considerably more to explore.
A third recent text by the prominent leisure studies scholar Chris Rojek (2005: 132) also addresses the need for further understanding of media influence, the coding practices associated with their consumption and the influence of practices of interpretation on the differentiation of “generational attitudes and perspectives”. The extent to and the manner in which the media influences generational attitudes and the social realities of these consumers is seen as of vital importance in terms of leisure research. In discussing this issue Rojek (2005:132) states:

This whole area is under-researched in leisure studies and is a major gap in our knowledge of how leisure forms and practice develop. In particular, questions of how aesthetic forms code generations and the ways in which forms are transferred and negotiated intergenerationally are relevant and require study.

Such comments point to the need not only for the analysis of a wider range of cultural products in relation to leisure studies, but also for the adoption of a greater range of research methods into leisure studies.

1.3 Research aims and objectives

As outlined above this research seeks to build on the body of knowledge concerning contemporary dance culture, to gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes and motivations of those concerned and to reveal the discourses prevalent within dance culture. In exploring the discourses of dance culture this study also seeks to explore the role of the media in the construction of dance culture as this is a seriously neglected area of academic enquiry. Discourse analysis seeks to explore “the way language works to organise fields of knowledge and practice” (Tonkiss 2005: 374). Despite its long history elsewhere, this approach has only recently gained currency in the field of tourism and leisure research in an effort to reveal the deeper complexities of cultural phenomenon. As Jaworski and Pritchard (2005: 5) comment in relation to the ‘discursive turn’ within the social sciences “discourse not only reflects but also shapes social reality, our identities and our relations with others including patterns of power, dominance and control”. Therefore another aim of this study is to incorporate research approaches from other disciplines into the study of
leisure phenomenon, building on the debates between discourse and tourism (Pritchard and Jaworski 2005). This study adopts an ethnographic approach to studying dance culture with the research methods encompassing participant observation, interviews, focus groups, internet research and media discourse analysis. These methods are used to bring a cross disciplinary approach to studying dance culture, which as a leisure activity, requires consideration of numerous disciplines in its study.

In the true nature of social science research the objectives of this study have morphed and evolved considerably from those initially established. Whilst the initial focus was far more with the subcultural status of dance culture, its commercialisation and the corresponding views and attitudes of participants with respect to such factors, it has become considerably more holistic as certain lines of investigation were ruled out as their significance declined and other avenues opened which appeared to be far more relevant routes to take. The thesis thus has the following objectives:

1: To contextualise contemporary dance culture through an examination of its historical development and structural composition.

2: To investigate and analyse the preferences of participants in terms of the consumption of dance music experiences.

3: To investigate and analyse the motivations for participation in dance culture.

4: To investigate the role of the media in the discourses of dance culture, particularly in relation to DJs and events.

5: To further alternative and interdisciplinary approaches to researching leisure.
1.4 Methodological approach

As indicated above, this study adopts a constructionist approach in the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism, utilising a range of research methods primarily drawn from anthropology and media studies to provide an in-depth investigation of dance culture. In order to bring about new means of understanding leisure phenomenon and practices, which draw on a range of disciplines, it is necessary to adopt a combined approach to the research process (Westwood 2004). As the aim of this study is to conduct ethnographic research to understand a phenomenon and its construction and due to my personal involvement within the research and this culture in general, I have to clearly foreground myself as part of the research process. Such auto-ethnographical approaches have been gaining increasing currency over recent years in the field of tourism research and it is the intention of this study to incorporate these emerging approaches into leisure activities. Autoethnography recognises that the researcher, research and research process are inseparable and enable the researcher to exploit their own knowledge and reflect upon this throughout the research process (Davies 1999, Bochner and Ellis 2002).

Epistemologically I adopt a symbolic interactionist paradigm, which recognises the subjectivity and fluidity of cultural knowledge, activities and texts (Blumer 1969). It acknowledges that interpretation is highly subjective, influenced by a myriad of factors that individuals experience and engage with in their lives. It is, as Seale (2005: 510) comments:

A body of theory that emphasises the organisation of everyday social life around events and actions that act as symbols to which actors orient themselves. Interactionists frequently study this through observation of face-to-face interaction and a preferred method for doing this is ethnography.

The theoretical perspective of this research and its methodological constitution will be further discussed in chapter 4 which considers all the issues and arguments concerning the approaches taken to this research.
1.5 **Overview and thesis structure**

In this chapter I have presented an introduction to this research in terms of my personal motivations for conducting this study, which relate to my interest and involvement in this area. This has been followed by my academic rationale, which is to further explore what is a relatively under researched area of leisure studies and build on cross disciplinary approaches used in tourism research and the debates between discourse and tourism. I have then stated my aims and objectives for this study, before briefly outlining my methodological approach.

Chapter two seeks to provide the reader with a background to dance culture through an examination of the development of dance culture and the cultural factors and forces considered to be most influential. This chapter charts the development of dance culture from disco and the clubs of America, to the warehouse party scene, the explosion of acid house and rave and the subsequent fragmentation of dance culture. It also considers the role of institutions such as the government and the media in creating the largest youth culture the UK has ever seen. Finally it provides the reader with an outline of some of the components of dance culture to further understanding of this phenomenon.

Chapter three provides a critique of the concept of subculture before addressing the literature in the area of dance culture. Key themes within this section are debates between notions of the 'mainstream' and the 'underground' and the processes and concepts surrounding authenticity; the media; resistance and incorporation; dance music and identity; dance music and drugs; territory, space and place; dance and liminality and the social construction of space.

Within Chapter four I provide details of and discuss my epistemology, theoretical perspectives and methodology. I explain why I have adopted constructionism as my epistemological perspective and how this has led to my adoption of the philosophical perspective of symbolic interactionism. Finally this section outlines the methods utilised to achieve the aims and objectives of this research.
Chapter five is the first findings chapter of this thesis which considers issues surrounding the preferences and motivations of participants. Here a number of themes emerged concerning issues related to geography, visual spectacle and crowds, dress and identity performance, drugs, the cultural status attributed with participation in dance culture, dancing, notions of acceptance and belonging, the role of the media, musical policies and DJs.

Chapter six presents the rational for conducting a discourse analysis of the dance music media, largely based on the argument that the media are highly influential in modern society and there has been little systematic analysis of the dance music media. Findings from the media discourse analysis focus on two areas, DJs and events and reveals the complexity and layers of discourse surrounding the portrayal of DJs and the social construction of dance events.

Chapter seven further discusses the findings of chapters five and six and the literature review. This chapter considers the factors that shape participant perceptions of self and others including dress, the degree and nature of participation and subcultural involvement. In addressing these issues it adopts performance as an alternative theoretical perspective in which to situate this discussion. It then continues to explore the role of space and place in dance culture and investigates the processes involved in the construction and commodification of dance environments, addressing the applicability of the concept of liminality to dance music experiences and the places where they occur. The final chapter of this thesis then provides an overall summary of the thesis. It draws together the outcomes of this research and considers avenues for future research in this area.
Chapter 2
Contextualising rave/dance music and club culture

2.1 Introduction
This chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive chronology of the development of dance culture in the UK. Rather it is intended to provide a selective discussion of the contexts in which and influences from which contemporary dance culture formed and evolved. Acid house, rave culture, dance culture, ecstasy culture - call it what you will - has emerged and developed from a cultural melting pot; the product of diverse social groups and nationalities and their experiences of music, technology and drugs, within a dynamic political and economic environment. It is important to recognise that there is a wealth of work on the area of dance music and club culture, much of which is addressed in this and the next chapter but that there is also much scholarship which is beyond the remit of this study. Having said this, there are three key texts which dominate the literature (Thornton 1995, Collin 1998 and Brewster and Broughton 2000) and these sources will therefore necessarily dominate certain sections of this chapter and the next.

Although this investigation focuses upon UK dance culture and its participants, its contextualisation would not be complete without an acknowledgement of its global nature. Contemporary dance culture has arisen and developed through a range of international influences and interactions; it is a global youth phenomenon from Asia to Australia, Britain to Belgium, Canada to China - dance music is everywhere. It is dance culture’s global nature which has probably been instrumental in its longevity. UK dance culture emerged through a confluence of influences, the gay clubs of America and the alternative club scene of Ibiza were central to its initial development and they continue to exert influence on the development of dance culture today. Dance cultures are now evident in most countries across the world and its largely instrumental nature means records transcend international boundaries far more freely than many other genres of music. This fluidity also means that many of the biggest DJs and
most devoted (and wealthy) fans also travel to many destinations around the world to perform at and experience events (Sellars 1998). Fuller consideration of global dance culture is beyond the scope of this investigation, however it is essential to highlight, that dance culture is a global phenomenon, with participants, events, artists, DJs, labels, websites and magazines across the globe.

The chapter has been divided into a number of sections that outline and consider the influences upon the development of dance culture, referring to a range of social, political and cultural factors in order to provide a holistic consideration of contemporary dance culture. The initial section considers the development of dance culture from disco to warehouse parties, acid house, raves and beyond and explores the forces and factors shaping the progression of this musical culture. Following this is a consideration of the government response to acid house, rave and dance culture, itself a key influence on its depiction in the media and on wider perceptions of dance culture. The media’s response to the emergence of warehouse parties, acid house and raves is also outlined in a discussion which demonstrates the role of the media in the development of contemporary dance culture.

Following this analysis of the social and political factors that shaped the development of dance culture a number of more structural issues are considered, as an appreciation of the diversification of dance culture into a number of overlapping genre-based scenes is essential to understanding the composition of contemporary dance culture. Related to this are the various clubs, promoters and DJs who are central to the provision and construction of dance music experiences and who are the links between dance music and a range of external agents. In terms of the structural composition of dance music culture, the niche media that serve this market are also of great relevance and the chapter also considers the role of these magazines and the Internet. Finally the global nature of dance culture is addressed, as although it is beyond the remit of this investigation, the global nature of dance culture is also fundamental to its status as a popular cultural form.
2.2 From warehouse parties to acid house raves and beyond – the birth and growth of dance culture

There are obvious connections between house/rave/dance music and its predecessor of dance floor mayhem, disco, which was considered by many as culturally inferior to most musical manifestations (Tomlinson 1998). This was largely due to disco’s perceived superficial nature and the level of commercial exploitation it had experienced by the time it entered the mainstream. The record industries’ response to discovering the popularity of disco was to remix anything and everything to a disco beat (Brewster and Broughton 2000). This led to a flooding of the market with inferior quality releases, motivated by purely commercial objectives, which rapidly accelerated disco’s demise as a mainstream genre. However disco did not disappear, it simply returned to its underground roots, the black and gay clubs of America, where it was allowed the cultural space to mutate and evolve.

In their insightful investigation into the origins and evolution of DJ culture and contemporary dance music, Brewster and Broughton (2000) chart how dance music evolved from disco to house, to acid house, rave and finally into today’s plethora of genres and subgenres. Their analysis concludes that it was in the gay clubs of the USA that contemporary dance music originated as an evolved and mutated form of disco. It was heavily influenced by the DJs, who in their constant search for music to heighten the experiences and emotions of dancers, played with and built upon the musical structures established by disco. It was only later that these styles became part of the UK dance culture, when UK artists began producing similar music and when some of the American scenes’ most prolific records crossed the Atlantic to become part of warehouse parties DJs’ play lists. Their influence caused a split within the warehouse scene and was to prove instrumental in the evolution of acid house, rave and its successors.

Brewster and Broughton (2000) interviewed nearly one hundred DJs and reviewed numerous secondary sources in an attempt to establish a definitive history of DJ culture and hence dance music. Their work reveals
that many genres of music were named after the clubs that generated and popularised particular styles. In addition, they reveal how definitions and labels that later became synonymous with very distinct styles, actually had their origins in the musical ethos of particular clubs and their resident DJs, rather than the stricter senses in which they were later applied. The label ‘garage’ originated from the influential New York club Paradise Garage (1977-1987), whose founder and resident DJ Larry Levan embraced an eclectic music policy, most of which bears no resemblance to what many would later define as ‘garage’. Indeed the sound defined as garage during the mid 1990s was very different to the sound defined as garage a decade later. Likewise the term ‘house’ originated in Chicago at a major club ‘The Warehouse’ (also established in 1977), which was a predominantly black and gay club, with a penchant for music with a solid four-four rhythm (Collin 1998). However, for many years the term ‘house’ related to a rebellious attitude and lifestyle rather than a distinct type of music:

If a song was ‘house’ it was music from a cool club, it was underground, it was something you’d never hear on the radio. In Chicago, the right club would be ‘house’, and if you went there, you’d be house and so would your friends ... One day soon Chicago kids would invent a stark new kind of dance music, and because where this came from, and because where it was played, it would steal the name for itself (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 317).

It was in Chicago in late 1984 and early 1985 where a handful of DJs, seeking new material to play in the clubs, began making their own tracks which resemble what is now known as ‘house music’. It was from these early house producers such as Steve ‘Silk’ Hurley and Farley Jackmaster Funk that the UK’s first chart breaking house music came (Collin 1998). Farley Jackmaster Funk’s ‘Love Can’t Turn You Around’ reached number ten in the UK in September 1986 and Hurleys’ ‘Jack Your Body’ become the first house number one in January 1987 (Brewster and Broughton 2000). It was also from Chicago that ‘acid house’ first emerged, with DJ Pierre making a record called ‘acid tracks’. Its name and sound would prove to be the basis of an entire sub-genre of music (Brewster and Broughton 2000). Indeed it was ‘The House Sound of Chicago Volume 3: Acid Tracks’ that caused such
a stir amongst the UK media and partially led to the ensuing moral panic that surrounded acid house. Moral panic relates to the labelling and demonisation of individuals and groups, influenced by the media and other social institutions such as the government and the police often relating to “relatively minor acts of social deviance” that are amplified and take on a distorted significance as a result (Jary and Jary 1995: 427). It was the sleeve notes that accompanied the album, with their references to the controversial nature of the music and drug culture it emerged from, that were intended to provoke a reaction from the tabloid media and so it did (Collin 1998). Although significant, this event was not the only factor in creating a moral panic over dance culture – an issue I shall return to below.

In his analysis of the UK dance music scene Crosgrove (1989) charts the development of acid house from its origins in the warehouse parties of the early eighties, to the birth of acid house entrepreneurs and the death of the warehouse party circuit, in the late eighties. Crosgrove focuses particularly on the scene’s transition during this decade. Warehouse parties in the UK evolved as a backlash against “official discotheques” and their commercialised music and placed strong emphasis on “obscure music, hard-core dancing, cheap amphetamine and cans of extra strong larger” (Crosgrove 1989: 39). At this point the warehouse party movement was all about resistance and opposition to the music and environments being supplied by the mainstream night-time entertainment industry at the time, providing alternative music in a different environment and sharing many parallels with the North American scene. Warehouse parties were dark, grimy events attracting a mix of people who felt alienated by Thatcher’s Britain and the social and economic conditions it created (Abercrombie and Warde 1994). The eighties were a bleak time for many young people and for many warehouse parties, acid house and later raves were seen as the antidote. Initially the music policies of warehouse parties were eclectic and they featured funk, rare groove and other non-commercialised dancing music, although this was all to change later.
I think we were a nation thoroughly pissed off, let down. We were told we would go to college and that there’d be this wonderful life for us, and it wasn’t happening. Acid house was a chance to make it happen for ourselves – this was how we could make our futures. Our clubs were support groups, a society. A lot of people’s hopes were in it – a job, a life – and we were writing it as we went along’.

Nicky Trax, co-founder, Confusion Club (Bussmann 1998: 3).

By the mid-eighties some of the underground resistance qualities of the warehouse scene were becoming submerged as the warehouse parties became larger, more frequent and far more commercially orientated in that many even featured fairground rides to attract people and there were often several parties in London on the same night. Crosgrove (1989: 39) suggests that by this point “the warehouse party scene had grown into a significant and hugely influential youth phenomenon”. Its direction was no longer dominated by a close knit group of individuals but by a wider selection of DJs and entrepreneurs and at the same time a change was occurring in London’s club scene, as more people visited the island of Ibiza and experienced its eclectic nightclubs and sampled ecstasy for the first time (Bussmann 1998, Collin 1998, Brewster and Broughton 2000). This point marked the introduction of ecstasy into UK drug and dance culture, previously fuelled by alcohol, cocaine and amphetamine.

For those who had experienced the club and drug scene offered by Ibiza, London’s offerings seemed bland, formulaic and restrictive. Thus by now famous figures in the scene such as Danny Rampling and Paul Oakenfold (today the world’s most highly paid DJ) began introducing the ‘Balearic’ vibe of mixing eclectic musical styles with the early house records into a select few venues in London. On returning to London from Ibiza in November 1987 Ian St Paul and Paul Oakenfold were reluctant to give up the hedonistic partying they started in Ibiza, and wanting to repeat these experiences in London, they decided to start their own night. Their first event was titled Future and was based in a small club on the side of Heaven, “one of London’s oldest and best nightclubs” (Bussmann 1998: 6). This first event was a success and they continued there for several months. However in April 1988 Paul Oakenfold and Ian St Paul took a gamble and
hired out Heaven - London’s premier nightclub venue with a 1500 capacity – for a Monday night for an event called Spectrum. After the first three weeks of attracting crowds well under their required breakeven figure they decided to give it one more go and this fourth event attracted huge crowds, as Collin (1998: 67) has said; “there has never been such a spectacular weekly event in London before or since”. Following this success story, various other promoters began hosting their own acid house nights and the entrepreneurial ethos of the late eighties took hold of many of those in the scene.

As the American house records established themselves in the charts British producers also began producing house music. Shoom, a club night started by Danny Rampling and his fiancé Jenni and fuelled by ecstasy became more and more popular until the point where it was turning away hundreds of people each week. As the supply chain for importing ecstasy into the UK became more established, ecstasy became more available and so the alternative club scene grew (Collin 1998). There was a revolution in progress, the synergistic mix of house music and ecstasy rapidly led to the development of a new scene, a new type of night-time entertainment, which was accompanied by a whole new set of drug-induced interactions. At this time the scene was concentrated in London, however as the word spread regarding dance music and ecstasy the rest of the country soon embraced this new movement:

Something was happening: something with a life of its own. Suddenly you could go out and have a private revolution inside your head while a public revolution was going on among hundreds of others. Acid House gave a new perspective, a perspective that made nine-to-five jobs look very unimportant indeed. The result of this new optimism was low-level anarchy; people jacking in mundane jobs to do their own thing (Bussmann 1998: 7).

The growth of dance culture in the UK was more than a dance and drug inspired hedonistic phenomenon, although it was such. For its participants it was much more than the sum of its parts and the effects of the drugs within the context they were used (politically, socially and culturally) led to
Chapter: 2 Contextualising rave/dance music and club culture

a rejection amongst many of the social and cultural shackles, the norms and values that dominated London at the time. It inspired different approaches to life, to selves, to others and to institutions:

Taking E had a much deeper effect on most people than making them dance. Gradually, day-to-day existence seemed to be fresh and new. E wiped the mud off everything. Miserable bastards suddenly found they weren’t. After years of being stuck with the way their minds worked, overnight people were able to take a step back and re-evaluate their whole personality. You seemed to see things for the first time ... life was fun again (Bussmann 1998: 14).

By the summer of 1988 acid house had become increasingly popular throughout the UK and as ecstasy culture took over the scene it emerged as the dominant style of music within the warehouse party circuit. To the discontent of many of the scene’s original adherents, the crowds it now attracted “became bigger, younger, apparently more hedonistic and decidedly more suburban” (Crosgrove 1989: 39), as the scene itself became more commercialised and better publicised. It was at this point that the scene began attracting a more middle class and younger audience, as it moved away from its working class inner city roots. As time went on more people from other backgrounds came to hear of what was going on in the warehouse scene, through word-of-mouth, together with the promotional efforts of event organisers and the attendant media exposure. It was also in 1988 that the UK tabloid newspaper the Sun also began running articles on the drug-crazed youth of the nation, a significant influence in the development of dance culture, which I shall return to later in this chapter.

By May 1989, thanks to the media’s attention on the dance scene, (now labelled acid house), the warehouse parties were attracting crowds that were too big for the venues and there was a significant level of police opposition to the parties. Crosgrove (1989) and Critcher (2000) comment how, from this point on, the scene was subject to increasing commercialisation in addition to social and governmental scrutiny and that as a result, organisers began operating in more rural venues often located around London’s orbital motorway in order to avoid police confrontation and
to admit more people. The new types of venues (such as aircraft hangars, barns and open fields) and the aggressive entrepreneurial attitudes of some of the event organisers (such as Tony Colston-Hayter) led to massive acid house parties with crowds of up to 8,000 people. Crosgrove (1989) comments that by September 1989 the parties organised by Tony Colston-Hayter were attracting crowds of 14,000 people and his security were resisting police intervention with baseball bats, Rottweilers and CS gas. With such activities receiving considerable tabloid attention - which only served to publicise the controversy of this youth movement and draw thousands more young people to the rave scene - the government was spurred into action to accommodate acid house culture within the legal entertainment industry.

In 1989, the warehouse scene was also changing in Scotland as Glasgow’s biggest illegal warehouse party, when faced with financial difficulties, sought and gained sponsorship from one of Scotland’s major brewing companies. That such companies were interested in sponsorship not only illustrates the size of these events, but also highlights the fact that brewers were concerned about the effect of the scene and its illegal drugs on alcohol sales. Ecstasy and alcohol did not mix and given the choice between the two, for the vast majority of clubbers there was no decision to make. It is at this point where Crosgrove (1989) considers the warehouse party was sentenced to death. The brewing companies had begun influencing the scene, it had given in to the pressures of commercialisation and thus the underground nature of the scene was disappearing fast. The concerted efforts of the various entrepreneurs involved in the scene by this time were such that Crosgrove felt that much of the original essence of the scene had all but disappeared, leaving no more than ‘Acid enterprise’. It was at the point where many of the scene’s original participants gave up on it, just as countless others had just discovered it. Writing at this time Crosgrove (1989: 39) commented: “put at its most bleak, the warehouse legacy has all but abandoned its contact with subcultural creativity and is simply its own peculiar drama: the tragedy of Thatcherism unmasked”.
In comparison to the behaviour and attitudes of people in the earlier warehouse parties there was also a change in attitude and behaviour as the scene evolved. Crosgrove (1989: 39) goes on to comment how the crowd and their behaviour at the big outdoor parties “owed more to the Club 18-30 holidays, stadium rock gigs and football matches, than to the more ‘cool’ studied and narcissistic soul style that had previously defined the scene”. Arguably such comments illustrate the elitist perspective of some cultural commentators such as Crosgrove, who considers that simply because the parties became larger and more outrageous they were less culturally important and meaningful. In reality this was far from the death of UK dance culture, as whilst the exclusivity of the scene diminished, a whole new audience brought their own ideas and ideologies to the cultural melting pot. As Collin (1998: 4-5) comments:

The reoccurring story within Ecstasy culture was of people coming into the scene ... becoming involved and altering the direction of the scene itself by applying their own personal frame of reference to their experience. Clubbers, entrepreneurs, travellers, hippies, criminals and musicians all contributed new discourses to the scene by adapting it to suit their own desires and necessities.

Dance culture became an overground underground movement and continued to flourish. By this I mean that although dance culture was overground in that it was widely known about and part of mainstream consciousness, its essence and practices remained largely underground, outside of mainstream norms and values and still largely inaccessible to the majority.

As the eighties gave way to the nineties, and ‘acid house’ became a household name (largely due to the influence of the tabloid press), the warehouse and acid house scene was relabelled as the rave scene, another social categorisation with limited longevity. Rave culture became considerably more commercialised during the 1990’s as promoters began to operate licensed events such as World Dance, Biology, Dreamscape, Helter Skelter, Fantasia and Obsession to name a few. These events were
predominantly held outdoors or in large leisure arenas and warehouse complexes with high overheads and huge profit margins. Such was the attraction of these events that their advertising was national and their promoters developed extensive merchandise ranges encompassing tape packs, clothing, bags and even lighters. These actions served to develop and reinforce brand images in the minds of the consumers, generate additional revenues and provide free nationwide promotion. Such activities illustrate how commercially orientated and business ‘savvy’ these early promoters were and also set a precedent for promoters that followed.

2.3 Government response to rave/dance music culture
The government reaction to acid house and rave culture was unprecedented in the history of youth cultures in the UK, shaping the future development of dance culture, instigating a decline in the illegal sector of rave culture and forcing promoters to operate within the UK legislative framework. Redhead (1991: 94), commenting on the reaction of the police, the government and the media to the development and subsequent explosion of the rave scene and dance music culture in Britain up to 1991, describes how all three institutions saw the rave scene as a “threat to public order”. The concern for public order was so great that the Metropolitan Police Force, along with 11 others in the south of England, founded the Acid House Intelligence Unit in 1989, to gather intelligence on the scene and formulate future plans for its control (Critcher 2000). New legislation was quickly enacted, firstly the licensing act of 1988 gave local authorities greater power to refuse licenses to premises on the grounds of the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act and second the Entertainment’s (increased penalties) Act 1990 increased the penalties for people organising events without a license. These measures taken by government made it even more difficult to hold licensed events and perpetuated the illegality of the leisure activities of a large section of youth in society.

Intriguingly, perhaps a further reason for such a strong and swift political response to dance culture in comparison to previous youth cultures was not only due to the scale of the phenomenon, but also to their location and
many of their participants. As dance culture involved the sons and daughters of more affluent and powerful people and because of the number of events organised in the South East of England, the problem was possibly taken that much more seriously due to the region’s demographic profile and hence political influence. The areas where the most raves were organised and most attention was focused also illustrates that many of the participants in dance music culture were drawn from the affluent South East of England. Indeed one of the early rave scenes’ most infamous promoters, Tony Colston-Hayter, was the son of a very prominent magistrate in the southeast. One has to question if the early raves had been solely supported by working class youths and took place in remote, less affluent areas, whether there would have been such a dramatic response to it from the police, government and the media? Whilst there have been moral panics throughout the history of youth cultures, for example in relation to mods and rockers, hippies and punks (Hebdige 1979), never, prior to dance culture, had a youth culture been specifically named in legislation and their activities so controlled.

The most significant and furthest reaching piece of legislation introduced by the government was The Criminal Justice Act and Public Order Act of 1994, referred to by Brewster and Broughton (2000: 391) as “one of the most repressive measures ever passed by a modern democratic government”. This was an act so controversial it triggered massive protests that turned into riots in central London and united a range of disparate individuals and groups that the act sought to control, restrict and weaken. Critcher (2000: 150) commented how it was implemented for a range of purposes including “action against terrorism” and “clarification of police stop and search powers, as well as targeting raves and new age travellers”. This new act gave the police wide ranging powers in terms of preventing and intervening with raves and “never before over years of moral panics...had government considered young people’s music so subversive as to prohibit it” (Collin 1998: 223). Critcher (2000: 154) considers that “a central component of the social reaction to rave culture was that the young people involved were at risk”. Certainly ecstasy was an unknown and unregulated quantity with
powerful effects and this caused great concern amongst society. In addition to its unknown long term effects was also the influence it had on young people, for the response of young people to taking ecstasy was incomparable to any other drugs used by youth cultures, as it not only altered patterns of perception, but radically altered patterns of social interaction and social cohesion within participants.

Interestingly, however, it seems as though the police were reluctant to use the new legislation and the majority of people arrested under the Criminal Justice Bill in the first year were road protesters not ravers. Indeed, by the time this act had been passed the problems associated with the activities which it was intended to address were already disappearing as the scene began moving into licensed, legal venues. Critcher (2000: 151) comments the scene was:

Not so much suppressed as relocated, moved indoors into licensed premises: situated in predictable venues, with identifiable proprietors, subject to clear legal requirements and with their own internal mechanisms for maintaining order. It is no accident that arcane restrictions on night-club licensing hours were lifted at the same time that the perceived problem with raves was at its highest. Starting in London, night-clubs were licensed until the early hours. The Ministry of Sound opened in 1993 with a closing time of 10 am.

Therefore a significant factor behind the authorities’ attempts to stamp out dance music culture was its unregulated status, the perception that the youth of the country were in great danger and the moral panic this caused. However when the government and the police realised the movement was too large to stop they had to readdress the issue and devise more proactive solutions, resulting in extended licensing hours to accommodate the rave culture in licensed premises where it was subject to greater regulation and control.
2.4 Rave/dance music culture and the media

The development of the UK dance culture was also heavily influenced by the media, both the tabloid press and youth lifestyle magazines. According to Collin (1998: 68) it was in May 1988 that “the first feature about acid house was published in the youth magazine i-D”. This commentary brought acid house to the attention of a wider audience and thus was hugely influential in the development of the scene. By the end of the summer of 1988 “the Sun signalled the dawn of acid house as ‘cool and groovy’. Then, just as swiftly, the paper took an about turn and captained an offensive of ‘panic’ proportions” (Redhead 1997: 57). After a brief period of positive endorsement with the publishing of an “acid house fashion guide” (Collin 1998: 77), the tone of the Sun’s reporting once again became negative.

Having identified the role of ecstasy within the rave scene the Sun published a series of features on the dangers of ecstasy, resulting in a moral panic. In the following weeks they were to publish headlines such as EVIL OF ECSTASY (Sun 19 October), ACID HOUSE HORROR (Sun 25 October), DRUG CRAZED ACID HOUSE FANS, (Sun 28 October) and GIRL DROPS DEAD AT ACID DISCO (Sun 31 October) (Thornton 1995, Redhead 1997, Collin 1998). Redhead also comments on how there was “a chorus of celebrities called to comment on the state of the nation’s youth” (1997: 57). Rave music and all those involved in its organisation and promotion were portrayed as evil pied pipers leading the nation’s youth into a black hole of drugged debauchery. The music was dismissed by the mainstream DJs and other prominent media figures as ‘rubeesh’ and “the closest thing to mass zombiedom” (Redhead 1997: 57). Everything possible was done to try and discourage Britain’s youth from participating in raves. Various articles were published on the horrors of ecstasy including a feature in the Sun titled “DON’T BE A SUCKER” (Bussmann 1998: 30), which warned of ecstasy’s side effects, many of which related more to LSD and others of which were pure myth. The impact of such features and the effects actually experienced by individuals led to the media reporting on ecstasy being largely discredited amongst clubbers (Thornton 1995, Bussmann 1998).
Crosgrove (1989: 38) notes with surprise how the tabloid press took nearly ten years to cover the scene, but does not express surprise at the tone of their reporting of the drug fuelled, hedonistic partying. Indeed he describes how “in one of those odd and mutually determining twists of subcultural history, the mainstream press got its story the week the warehouse party died”. Only when the scene reached the point where brewers began sponsoring warehouse parties and large convoys of vehicles were travelling the M25 awaiting instructions to raves did the media and the politicians realise something significant was happening in youth culture. Then motivated by their social responsibilities and the potential for sales the tabloid media gave dance music culture the full front-page treatment in the most sensational and emotionally provocative way possible (Crosgrove 1989, Thornton 1995, Bussmann 1998, Critcher 2000), repeating incidents of security guards fighting police with dogs and baseball bats to prevent them entering and stopping illegal events.

McRobbie and Thornton (1995) comment on the moral panic instigated by the tabloid media, politicians and commercial sector surrounding the rave movement and how these institutions instigated the moral panic surrounding dance culture for their own gain. Moral panics serve a number of functions in contemporary society some of which are overt and some more covert, whilst other motives reside in the sphere of conspiracy theories (Hall et al 1978). Increasing sales and viewer numbers through providing emotional and highly charged coverage of contemporary issues is a primary aim of the media; here the profit motive is thinly disguised under the rhetoric of moral concern and maintaining social order. Likewise the government’s involvement in such panics can be viewed from a number of perspectives in terms of preserving the status quo in society (hegemony), detracting attention away from other important issues, such as the economy and unemployment in the eighties and nineties (McRobbie and Thornton 1995) and using such references to increase state powers in the control of the population (Hall et al 1978). The implementation of legislation in response to moral panics is also considered to be a further means of enforcing the image of control and leadership amongst the general public,
which also serves to strengthen the public position of political parties (Cohen 1972).

As previously mentioned the commercial sector also played a role in the moral panic surrounding dance culture. For example, London Records courted controversy with ‘The House Sound Of Chicago Volume III: Acid Tracks’ in 1988, with numerous references on the sleeve notes, linking the music to and glamorising drug culture, commenting about it being “one of the most controversial sounds of 1988” and predicting a split in opinions between those who love and hate drug culture (Thornton 1995: 131). Following its release the music press immediately predicted a backlash from the mainstream media about acid house and some months later the mainstream media “took the bait and subjected the culture to the full front page treatment” (McRobbie and Thornton 1995: 566). Consequently what was publicised through the tabloid coverage was more than just a ‘deviant activity’, it was the whole movement that surrounded it. McRobbie and Thornton argue that “knowledge of this youth-culture ethos” (exploiting the media to incite moral panics to gain subcultural credibility) “is such that its exploitation has become a routine marketing strategy of the publishing and recording industries” (1995: 565). It is unquestionable that the tabloid media played a huge role in the development and dissemination of rave culture, through their extensive front page treatment and the negative tone of their reporting. By giving it prime position in their coverage, they highlighted its significance to youth in society and gave greater satisfaction and credibility to those involved, who aspire to be part of something that is defiant of society’s norms and values (Cohen 1972, Hebdige 1978).

Therefore part of the social uproar and media coverage concerning acid house was incited by those within the industry “well versed in the ‘hip’ ideologies of youth subcultures” (McRobbie and Thornton 1995: 566). These culture industries used their understanding of deviance amplification to incite the media into generating vast amounts of free publicity for the scene through their front page treatment, whilst also lending the scene more credibility with its adherents. Examining the influence of institutional
reactions on youth cultures, McRobbie and Thornton (1995: 565) comment, “youth are not inclined to lament a safe and stable past but to have overwhelming nostalgia of the days when youth culture was genuinely transgressive”. Inspired by the ideals and principles of youth cultures of the past, contemporary youth cultures perceive negative media reporting as validating and “moral panic can therefore be seen as a culmination and fulfilment of youth cultural agendas in so far as negative news coverage baptises transgression” (McRobbie and Thornton 1995: 565).

This section has considered the role played by the tabloid media and the commercial sector in the development and dissemination of rave culture. The fact that the media attributed such significance to dance music culture initially highlighted what an important cultural movement it was and inspired many more young people to become part of it. It is questionable how successful the growth and dissemination of dance music culture would have been without such high profile and emotionally charged reporting from the media. Moreover, to support and sustain dance culture a plethora of lifestyle magazines providing commentary and information on the scene have come and gone over the years, with many still in existence. Therefore not only has the media been instrumental in inadvertently popularising dance culture but it has also been key to sustaining it through the development of the dance music media, an issue I will return to below.

2.5 Dance music culture diversification
There has been a tendency amongst scholars such as Redhead (1991, 1997), McRobbie and Thornton (1995), Critcher (2000) and Rietveld (2003) to treat dance music monolithically. Arguably, all these researchers have been reluctant to explore how the dance music movement evolved and diversified, (although the complexity and subjectivity surrounding issues such as genre development and evolution and the complexity in addressing the myriad of post rave sub genres is plausible reasoning for such, the fragmentation of the post rave scene is critical to understanding its contemporary nature). The fragmentation of the rave scene is a significant factor in the wide scale dissemination and acceptance of rave/dance culture
amongst the youth population. The diversification of rave culture has led to a wide variety of experiences (both musical and experiential), which have all been discussed under the term of rave/dance music culture, yet in practice, the market has become segmented with many specialised products targeted at niche markets and a myriad of genres and subgenres geared to satisfy a diverse range of tastes. As a result "it’s hard to define exactly what dance music is these days; much more than the up-tempo music you hear in clubs, it embraces a host of genres and subgenres too exhausting to list" (Ojumu 2003).

Culture has always evolved and dance culture is no exception, moving from disco, to warehouse, to acid house, to rave and subsequently to the vast range of genres which exist today (in mutated and splintered forms). This next section of the chapter seeks to provide further understanding of the diversity of scenes now encompassed by the term ‘dance culture’. Dance culture is an umbrella term that describes a wide variety of musical styles and scenes, which are diverse due to their speed, rhythmic structures, compositional influences and ideologies, styles of fashion and dress, and the social and demographic characteristics of their participants. Yet even in the mid 1990s the media and government "attempted to class together youth cultural groups which, certainly initially, had quite different origins, lifestyles and focal concerns" under the umbrella term rave culture (Merchant and Macdonald 1994: 18). What is significant about the various genres of dance culture is how they have developed from and perpetuated the development of individual scenes in terms of music, events, participants, DJs and artists, record labels, internet sites and numerous other cultural products and services. Around each individual musical genre there now exists an entire market in terms of producers and consumers, individuals and organisations that create and supply the demand for the products and services which sustain these cultural groupings. In fact, they are more than merely markets, they are sophisticated communities engaged in a diversity of socio-cultural and economic exchanges.
A major challenge for any researcher attempting to contextualise dance culture is the inherent fluidity of its composite scenes and their participants. Whilst many scenes are autonomous they are also interlinked and interdependent, for example sharing media and distribution channels and technologies. In addition whilst some participants may be solely involved in a single genre-based scene, others may embrace a number of scenes in a less elitist and more egalitarian manner, even progressing from one genre of dance music to another. Therefore the compartmentalisation of participants (whether producers or consumers or both) can only be loosely based upon musical and event preferences. Nonetheless crowds at specific events often display many similarities, with specific scenes generally attracting individuals with shared musical, experiential and stylistic preferences (Jackson 2004).

Dance music culture is therefore comprised of a number of interconnected yet separate scenes, some of which are largely independent and autonomous whilst others are more interdependent. In addition, a vast number of businesses contribute to the maintenance, dissemination and progression of this culture. These include the clubs and the musical events, the promoters, the magazines, record labels, web sites, DJs, DJ agencies, music producers and promotions businesses. Thus, whilst the scenes from which contemporary dance culture is composed have many different qualities each revolve around the "confluence of innovations in music, drugs, and dance" (Critcher 2000: 145).

2.6 Clubs, venues and promotion
As events are so central to dance culture, this section will now consider the clubs, venues and promoters in more detail. We have seen how dance culture has changed profoundly, in its nature and composition, since the early days of warehouse parties and raves. Whereas previously, the majority of dance music experiences were illegal, today these are the minority, as most dance events are now legitimate and licensed, although a significant number of illegal events take place across the country, quantification is impossible as few receive media coverage and neither are
they advertised. Thus there remains an illegal side of the dance scene, but although it occasionally receives coverage in both the dance and the mainstream media, the tone of reporting demonstrates it is no longer considered particularly controversial.

Indeed Internet searches on the subject bring up numerous news, local authority, police force and interest sites featuring commentary on the illegal rave scene and specific events. Therefore although many commentators consider that the Criminal Justice Bill eliminated the illegal rave scene it merely reduced the size and frequency of such events and prompted organisers into more covert operations. As Muir (2004) comments "Illegal party organisers and the police engage in a weekly battle of wits up and down the country, in buildings and on contested strips of land. Last year the battle was taken underground as organisers were interrupted while attempting to stage a party on a tube train". This refers to an event staged on the Circle Line Underground route in London where a group of 300 people had a party occupying two carriages of the train. According to Muir (2004) the party was stopped, however Mixmag (Anon 2003d) commented on how the police sent the train on its way. Whilst this illustrates how different media vehicles attempt to portray the scene, their tone is in sharp contrast to the headlines of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Now much more moderate headlines appear such as, "Kit seized to stop illegal rave" (BBC 2004), which relates to an incident where police in Northamptonshire confiscated equipment when 600 people gathered for an illegal rave near the M1. Similarly "Thousands attend illegal rave" (BBC 2003), was the headline reporting an illegal event near Hereford, where police estimated there to be 3,000 people in attendance, a figure too high for them to be able to do anything more than monitor the situation.

Since the early 1990s nightclub licensing has become more liberal as a result of the government's strategy of containing the rave scene within licensed premises and the realisation of the economic benefits of a legalised dance scene. In his study Redhead (1997: 95) discusses the importance of 'youth' and 'pop' tourism to local economies, highlighting the contribution of
bars and clubs to the economic prosperity of cities particularly Manchester. However, the previous licensing framework operating throughout the UK required most of these venues to close by 11pm or 2am. This restricted the legal night-time economy, whilst illegal, unlicensed events suffered no such constraints. Faced with such a loss of income to the illegal sector, Manchester council considered it was no longer appropriate to continue such licensing practices, seeing more liberal licensing as the answer to enhancing the attractiveness and profitability of the night-time economy (Redhead 1997). Indeed this approach was mirrored by a nationwide initiative at the time to increase the entertainment potential of the civic centres of towns and cities across the country through liberalising licensing conditions “under the banner of the 24 hour city” (Roberts 2004: 11).

The organisers of the bigger dance events have focussed their attention on gaining licenses for their events and moving into licensed premises, as they have too much to lose due to the powers granted to the police under the Increased Penalties Act (1990) and the Criminal Justice Bill (1994). From this point on we can discern a divergence of dance culture into two separate and interconnected cultures, the one legal and the other illegal. Both shared much, but also differed in terms of their organisation, locations/geography, ideology, media and communications networks and the motivations of their event organisers and participants. Above all, the legal events are governed by licensing restrictions, anti-drugs security measures and drug prevention strategies, whilst the illegal dance scene is characterised by more open drug taking, unrestrained hedonism and anti-authoritarianism.

Dance music events and raves now occur in a multitude of environments from conventional nightclubs, to fields, exhibition centres and the Millennium Dome, however the diversity of locations in which events take place and the methods of collecting licensing statistics make accurate quantification of the industry impossible and beyond the scope of this study. Problems establishing the size of the dance sector are also compounded by the nature of the statistics available relating to the supply side of this
sector. Mintel (2006) comment that whilst no official figures exist they estimate there are “approximately 2,000 venues in the UK where the primary offer is that of dancing to music”. However this figure excludes bars, pubs and other venues, which cater for dancing and supply DJs. Additionally it does not account for the high number of dance events held in alternative venues, ranging from hotels to leisure and exhibition arenas. Another barrier to quantifying the industry relates to the licensing of events and even with the introduction of the recent licensing act (2003), quantification of this industry has not become easier.

The development of dance music culture and its diversification and fragmentation means that supplying dance music experiences has become a lucrative market. The supply side is now composed of a vast number of businesses from smaller scale club-based promotors to large promotion organisations that have regular club nights and hold large indoor arena and outdoor festival events. Supply ranges from small clubs with a capacity of several hundred, (of which there are many), to larger clubs of up to 3,500 capacity, such as Nation in Liverpool, the former home of the Cream brand (Petridis 2003). A small number of even larger dance events take place in venues such as the NEC in Birmingham and The National Ice Centre in Nottingham, with capacities of five to fifteen thousand people. The largest events of all are the annual festivals such as Homelands, Creamfields and Global Gathering, which have capacities of up to thirty five thousand people.

The key to any successful event is its line-up of acts (DJs) and naturally the more famous the DJs and the more of them, the wider the geographical catchment area. As I have previously mentioned and which I will return to later in this chapter, DJs are central to dance culture and therefore to the marketing of events (Brewster and Broughton 2000). The production of events is also a major factor in marketing strategies, this relates to the quality of sound and the resources employed to create and enhance the atmospheric ambience including the actual size of venues. As dance events constitute a form of experiential consumption the largest brands employ
substantial resources to create spectacular environments, which are aurally, visually and physically stimulating.

In terms of supply, the majority of promoters in the dance market are small scale and generally hold weekly or monthly events in single venues, rather than having multiple venue strategies. At local and regional level promoters may also offer club nights and occasionally club tours or multiple venue strategies. Within this broad categorisation there is significant diversity in terms of the business approaches and professionalism of event organisers. The smaller scale organisers, aiming for a local audience, will focus on smaller scale operations in local venues. At this level, often, but not always, one or two famous DJs will be booked and advertised to play alongside a number of resident DJs. There may be some additional touches to venues but most of the production will rely on in-house facilities. It is at this level where most dance music brands start their operations, and depending on their success and the entrepreneurial ambitions of the promoters, they may move onto larger venues that require more sophisticated promotional techniques to fill. Promoters operating larger venues than these often attract crowds from a wider geographical region due to their greater appeal and their marketing activities. The strategy to attract greater numbers of clubbers from a wider area involves bigger DJ line-ups with several famous DJs performing in a reputable club, arena or venue. For this scale event the promoting brand would generally have a considerable reputation within its target market in addition to relying on famous DJs as a pull factor. In addition to the number of high quality reputable DJs the standards of sound and lighting is also generally better in larger clubs and venues.

Whilst the vast majority of dance music events fit into the two categories above, there are a handful of major brands (Ministry of Sound, Gatecrasher, Godskitchen and Cream), recognised by all clubbers regardless of musical preferences, who carry out their operations on a national and international basis. These brands, with the exception of Cream, all own and run ‘superclubs’, and also organise one off events in arenas and other clubs around the UK and the world. Godskitchen also owns Ice in Las Vegas,
whilst Ministry of Sound own Taipai in Thailand (in fact their UK club is reported to generate only 3 percent of their annual revenue). Gatecrasher also have plans to open a further 10 clubs across the UK (Anon 2003b) and opened its second venue Discotheque in Leeds in September 2005. Cream has an alternative strategy and is opening a series of Baby Cream venues described as a “national style bar restaurant concept” (Anon 2004a:32). In addition to the major dance brands, within each genre-based scene there are other large-scale brands well known within their respective scenes, but not necessarily by participants in other scenes.

National and international brands engage in a greater diversity of events. Having the capital and the brand image to support large scale operations, such brands operate club events and tours, arena events, festival events, global tours and summer residencies in international clubbing destinations such as Ibiza. The club events operated by these brands will inevitably be in larger scale venues, often with capacities of one to two thousand. A number of these brands such as Cream, Gatecrasher and Godskitchen also host arena events in venues such as Birmingham’s NEC and Cardiff Ice Rink, such is their reputation they are able to attract capacities of ten to twelve thousand to many of these events, drawing on the national market, with many clubbers travelling from across the UK.

Festival type events represent the most commercialised end of dance music culture; these are generally massive events with capacities up to 40,000 and have the potential to make both huge profits and huge losses. The festival events take place on farmland and airfields, start in the early to mid-afternoon and continue until the following morning, although in the summer of 2005 Godskitchen staged its first two-day dance festival and Hi-Fi North and Hi-Fi South also emerged as two day events with camping in 2006. Dance festivals typically have a number of large marquees featuring different styles of music to appeal to a diverse range of dance fans. These are also the most expensive type of dance music experience apart from clubbing holidays, which are generally composed of a number of separate clubbing experiences. These events come with the highest costs and hence
the highest customer expectations and thus extensive marketing is vital (including advertising, sponsorship and partnerships with other dance music brands) if they are to generate enough interest. Events such as Homelands, Godskitchen Global Gathering and Creamfields are eagerly anticipated events in the clubbing calendar, receiving lots of publicity and hype from the dance music media (in the magazines and on various radio shows). These are some of the few events to truly embrace and represent the entirety of the music available under the umbrella term dance music, whilst most events only attempt to cater for the needs of small segments of this overall market.

The growth and popularity of dance music amongst the youth market has lead to numerous companies sponsoring and endorsing clubs and events, in addition to various songs themselves being used as sound tracks to adverts, films and television programmes. These actions have served to both position such products in a more positive light with this market and also to promote dance music culture to a wider audience. Such actions are generally perceived to be positive for the scene by its participants, apart from when such associations are seen to degrade the integrity of the music or other aspects of this culture. Despite this fairly philosophical attitude towards increasing commercialism within dance culture, it should also be noted that there are many participants who hold very different opinions. For those strongly opposed to commercialisation, many of the biggest brands in dance culture are perceived as being in direct contrast to the ideological origins of dance culture, especially when they are sponsored by even bigger companies.

Common sponsors of clubs and events are alcohol producers, for example Bacardi and Strongbow sponsor We Love Homelands, We Love Sundays at Space, Godskitchen Global Gathering and Creamfields. At these events Bacardi host a Bacardi Bar, a separate branded arena featuring big name DJs and a bar stocked with Bacardi products. Such sponsorship illustrates the significance of clubbers within the drinks industry's overall market, and the positive associations such events can have on their brand image.
stations are also key sponsors (for instance, Galaxy 102.2 sponsors Godskitchen Global Gathering and Radio 1 sponsors We Love Homelands), as are music stores, for example HMV sponsored We Love Homelands and Godskitchen Global Gathering, whilst magazines such as M8 and DJ magazine also sponsor Godskitchen Global Gathering.

Aside from such sponsorship, events are also supported by other dance music brands through various means. Thus many club nights have associations with bars, record labels, record shops, and fashion retailers in order to increase credibility with their respective target markets, generate additional income for the promoters and to mutually benefit both parties. There has also been a growing trend over recent years for record labels to host their own nights under their name.

### 2.7 DJs and their role in dance culture

All cultural scenes have their icons and role models and within musical cultures, these icons and roles models are predominantly the performers and musicians. In band based musical cultures attention is mostly focused on the lead singer and/or the lead guitarist within any given band, but the relative absence of performing bands within dance culture has lead to the rise of DJs as identifiable performers; endowed with the qualities attributed to musicians in other musical cultures. DJs thus play a central role within dance culture and as such they should be considered as part of any holistic investigation of dance culture. However to date little attention has been paid to these cultural icons by scholars of either popular culture or media studies. Although DJs are commonly acknowledged in academic studies of dance culture there are few accounts that attempt to provide deeper consideration of the cultural position and positioning of DJs within dance culture. Authors such as Sellars (1998: 611) comment on the power and influence of DJs within dance culture to the extent that during the 1990’s the tourism industry “witnessed a move towards young people taking holidays to pursue their interest in Dance Music and to follow their favourite DJ to wherever in Europe, or the World, they may be playing”. Whilst a number of broadsheet journalists such as Ojumu (2003), Petridis (2003)
and Gillan (2003) have also paid fleeting attention to the role of DJs within dance culture, the only significant analysis has emerged in the work of Brewster and Broughton (2000), although others such as Takahashi and Olaveson (2003: 86) have also considered perspectives such as the role of the "DJ as 'Technoshaman'".

To understand the position of DJs within dance culture requires consideration of the authenticity and cultural credibility of musical forms. Thornton (1995) examines the issue of authenticity and musical format, commenting on perceptions concerning the cultural integrity of live performances and recorded music. In the past live music was associated with authenticity, whilst the recorded format was not held in such high regard and consumption in recorded format was not seen to generate the equivalent cultural status. Thornton (1995: 4) comments that, while much attention has been paid to the authenticity of 'live' events, "little has been written about the new authenticities attributed to records and recorded events" and in her work she attempts to address this imbalance. Thornton believes that there are significant enough differences between live music cultures and club cultures to describe club cultures as 'disc cultures'. This is due to the reversed role and perceptions of records and performances within club culture in comparison to live music cultures. She suggests that "within disc cultures, recording and performances have swapped statuses: records are the original, whereas live music has become an exercise in reproduction" (Thornton 1995: 4). Arguably the predecessor of modern dance music, disco, also played a huge role in establishing disc cultures and the acceptance of mixed recorded music, as a form of entertainment and musical form in its own right.

In essence, Thornton believes that there are two forms of authenticity involved in dance music culture:

The first sort of authenticity involves issues of originality and aura; this value is held most strongly by DJs. The second kind of authenticity is about being natural to the community
or organic to the subculture; this is the more widespread ideal (1995: 30).

Another difference between club cultures and live music cultures is the minimal and sometimes non-existent role of traditional musicians within club cultures. Here it is sound engineers, producers and DJs who are the main creative minds behind the music, although there are often live elements too. In terms of performances by dance music stars Thornton (1995: 4) argues that, “the clubber consensus is that these kinds of appearance are often laughably inauthentic attempts to visualise something which is best left in its pure sonic state”. However since Thornton’s research was published in the mid 1990s there has been another shift within music culture with the rise in popularity of bands and an increase in the number of dance acts performing live. The biggest dance events now often feature a number of live acts and there are a number of groups who specialise in live performances such as The Prodigy, Kosheen and the Basement Jaxx to name a few. However DJs remain the predominant form of entertainment in dance music clubs and events, which goes someway in justifying their elevated cultural status.

A number of authors have investigated the evolution of the cultural significance of records for youths in great depth, charting the historical decline in the popularity of live music, which was initially stimulated by the dance halls of the 1950’s and 1960’s (Firth 1987, 1988, Thornton 1995, Brewster and Broughton 2000). However this is not an avenue that this research seeks to explore, since the cultural significance of recorded music is now established and undisputed in contemporary youth culture. Brewster and Broughton (2000) are the authors who most extensively charted and analysed the rise of DJs in society both in relation to music culture in general and to dance culture in particular. They comment on how the DJ rapidly rose to become a central and powerful person in the promotion and dissemination of popular music with the invention of commercial radio. In the early days of radio in the 1920’s broadcasts were still primarily of live music, however as the quality of the recorded format improved the UK’s first radio show playing records was launched in 1927 (Brewster and
Broughton 2000). At this time and for some time afterwards, it was live music that was prioritised both for its superior quality and cultural status as the medium of music broadcast on radio. By the 1930's radio was becoming a central element in the marketing of records, in line with their increasing popularity in home entertainment (Firth 1987) and by the late forties and early fifties most of the barriers to the rise of DJs were removed, with the invention of cheap portable radios and legalities with the music industry resolved.

The inter and post war years also saw a rise in the use of recorded music as both economic conditions and technology improved. In 1946 Jimmy Savile became the first "superstar DJ" in the UK (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 52). He used two turntables instead of one to enable a live public DJ performance with more limited intervals in the music. Jimmy Savile became the first club DJ in the UK and the world and was hired by Mecca Ballrooms to play at their venues across the country. Savile went on to DJ on Radio Luxembourg becoming a household name in the sixties, and presented the first ever Top Of The Pops programme in 1964.

Brewster and Broughton also cite the role of mods as the driving force behind British club culture in the sixties. "The mods became noted for obsessive attention to fashion and a predilection for necking amphetamines. They also loved dancing" (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 66). These people gathered in a variety of legal, but mostly illegal unlicensed clubs, which enabled them to dance all night stimulated by amphetamine and rhythm and blues. Initially, as with many subsequent subcultures, the mod scene and its all-night party culture centred around London, however it soon spread to other parts of the country, becoming especially popular in the Midlands and North and in the years to come mod culture mutated into northern soul (Brewster and Broughton 2000). Northern soul as the name suggests was a culture unique to the North of England, most of the records played were from obscure American artists and small labels which failed to penetrate the American music scene. But it was this uniqueness, the variety of records and their lack of acceptance within the rest of the UK that
fuelled this scene (along with amphetamines to keep people dancing). Working class youths trapped in the drudgery of factory work and industrial living needed escapism on the weekend and a sense of being part of something stimulating and unique. DJs sourced the rarest records to play due to the emphasis on musical variety making them “obsessed and compulsive collector[s] of vinyl” (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 86). The northern soul scene was to contribute much to the art and ideology of DJs.

Such was the emphasis on DJs and the records they played in the Northern Soul scene that posters began to advertise the DJs themselves (Thornton 1995). Northern soul was a completely retro movement, which in many ways helped it retain its purity, although as it relied on old records there was no flow of new music. This factor did however save this scene from exploitation by the music industry. As with the mod scene and the later rave scene, northern soul was also an all-night culture, also often taking place in illegal venues and completely outside mainstream music culture. “There was no undercurrent of aggression...but rather a benevolent atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie” (Godin cited in Brewster and Broughton 2000: 93). Ian Dewhirst (a prominent Northern Soul DJ) comments on the atmosphere at a prominent club in the Northern Soul scene:

It was like a dream. Like suddenly knowing you’re home. And this wonderful feeling of togetherness. All these enthusiasts, misfits and nutter[s] that had travelled from all over the place. It just felt like a really little, elite, very tight scene (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 99).

Another contribution of northern soul to the rave scene was that “many DJs schooled in the dancehalls, bingo halls and discos of the northern circuit ended up playing a role in the early UK development of house” (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 113).

Whilst northern soul was promoting the role of the DJ in the UK, in 1965 across the Atlantic in America, club culture was also taking off in a big way. One particular club that opened that year was Arthur, which later became a
New York legend. It was here that DJ Terry Noel first mixed two records together in public, he even had a customised sound system to effect the music with individual speaker crossovers. He mixed on a simple set up with two record decks with a volume control on each deck, “Noel was the prototype of the modern DJ” (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 71).

Collin (1998) also discusses the role of various American clubs and DJs in progressing the art and status of contemporary DJs. Citing the efforts of DJs such as Francis Grasso who “helped pioneer the technique of seamlessly mixing one record into another”, Collin (1998: 11) discusses the way this DJ initiated many techniques utilised by DJs today. Francis Grosso was the DJ in Salvation, a gay club in the Hell’s Kitchen district of New York, which opened in the aftermath of the Stonewall riots, a major force in the initiation and development of the gay liberation movement in the USA (Goldman 1978). Salvation was one of the first openly gay dance clubs in New York creating a focus for decadence and self indulgence, where both the crowd and the DJ pushed social, physical and musical boundaries with everything they could. Such was the nature and distinctiveness of this club and its practices that after less than three years of operation it was closed down by the police and fire department, but it “had influenced not only the soundtrack of nightlife, but its very shape and form” (Collin 1998: 11).

Another DJ cited by Goldman (1978) as highly significant in the development of DJ practices and status was David Mancuso, famous for holding loft parties in New York and mixing an eclectic diversity of music using an array of effects and techniques in the process.

Another factor in the development and progression of the art of DJing was the emergence of the 12-inch single format in 1975, this new format had significant implications for it dramatically improved the sound quality of vinyl and “gave dance music a new dynamic: both length and depth” (Collin 1998: 13). Whilst previously the 7-inch format restricted the length of songs and the quality of reproduction, the 12-inch facilitated a new approach to the construction of records and the introduction of remixes. With extended breakdowns and rhythm sections, remixers were able to
tailor records to the demands of DJs enabling longer, more creative and more intense mixes, which also "helped sustain the momentum of the dance floor" which was a key factor in the popularity of disco (Thornton 1995: 60).

It was through disco that the modern DJs as we know them evolved, where many contemporary mixing and production techniques came from and where the notion of producing music solely for the dance floor gained considerable momentum. This was where mixing really took off with records "being treated as DJ’s tools rather than just representations of a live performance...[a] new conception of what popular music could be" had arrived (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 139). Similar to many proceeding and preceding youth music cultures, in its early years disco was also mostly confined to illegal clubs and the underground black and gay club scene. It was in 1978 that disco emerged from the underground into the mainstream with the release of Saturday Night Fever, pushing DJs further into the public eye and raising their cultural profile as entertainers in their own right (Goldman 1978, Collin 1998).

For the club DJ, the disco era was when he came of age. This was when he became a star, even a god to his dancefloor. This was when he learned his vocabulary of mixing techniques, and this was when the industry recognised him as the person best placed to create dance music rather than just play it (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 139-140).

By the early 1990s a number of DJs had achieved pop star status due to their centrality within the clubbing experience, as selectors of music and maintainers of dance floor momentum and for their individual styles (Thornton 1995, Collin 1998 and Brewster and Broughton 2000). Moreover the development and mutation of various pre and post-disco disc cultures whose focal point was the dance floor, led to increased focus on and creative possibilities for DJs. Innovative, technical and creative advances in DJ’s performance techniques and their increasing involvement in production and remixing furthered the notion of DJ as artist and entertainer. Furthermore their role as arbiters of taste and evangelists of new musical
trends, in addition to their ability to remix pop songs for these emerging markets made DJs very popular with record companies as well as the wider public. As Brewster and Broughton (2000: 384-385) comment:

Though it took them a while to recognise the DJ as an artist, the record companies hadn't been slow turning his remixing skills to their advantage ... they had quickly realised that having a dance version of a tune ... allowed them to promote it to a whole new audience via the clubs. In the nineties, when dance music had evolved into highly compartmentalised scenes, this idea of remixing for marketing purposes was taken even further ... labels started making the remix a vital part of their marketing strategies. As a result, certain remixers [often DJs] – those perceived to have a strong style which could be targeted at a particular sector of the market – were in great demand.

As with all markets, it is the development of products into brands and the establishment of practical, emotional and psychological relations between the product and its market that stimulates and sustains demand for the product and facilitates their transformation into marketable commodities (Kotler et al 1998, Murray 2000, Hesmondhalgh 2002). This is what has happened in the dance music scene with regards to many of the most prominent DJs, in that they developed practical relations with record companies and emotional and psychological connections with clubbers. These factors have stimulated demand for some key DJs to the extent they can command five and six figure sums from record companies for remixing records and five figure sums for live performances, which generally only mean mixing records for several hours.

A sure indicator of the global importance of DJs is the fact that Tiesto, a Dutch trance DJ voted number one in the world several years running by clubbers polls, is able to sell out stadium gigs of 25,000 capacity and performed as part of the opening ceremony for the 2004 Olympic games to an estimated audience of nearly 4 billion people (www.tiesto.com). Additionally on the 16th of April 2005 Tiesto performed as part of an opening ceremony for Disneyland Paris’ Space Mountain: Mission 2 in the heart of Disneyland Paris (www.tiestoatdisney.com). Interestingly, a google search
for Tiesto also brings up 1,140,000 hits. Part of Tiesto’s fame, as with many of the world's biggest DJ's, is that he also creates a significant proportion of the records he plays during his performances, many of which are exclusive to him as they are never released. Further consideration will be given to DJs and their role in dance culture in chapters three, five and six of this thesis, such is their importance in contemporary dance culture.

2.8 Dance culture and specialist media

Over the past two decades consumer magazines have witnessed explosive growth in the UK in terms of the number of publications and consumer spending on them. According to the Periodical Publishers Association (PPA) there were 3,229 consumer magazines published in the UK in 2004 (PPA Marketing 2004a), which constitutes a “35% rise in title choice since 1992” (IPC Media 2004: 24). The importance of consumer magazines in contemporary society is also demonstrated by the amount spent on them; in 2003 consumers spent £1,997 million on magazines, a forty five percent increase in real terms over the past decade (PPA Marketing 2004b). There are magazines that cater for a vast range of leisure activities and special interests, including several aimed at dance music participants. Some magazines provide coverage over the entire dance music spectrum (such as Mixmag and DJ), whilst others are niche products targeted at groups with more specific musical preferences (for example MB, Knowledge and ATM). At the same time there has also been coverage of various elements of dance music within other more broadly targeted lifestyle and fashion orientated publications such as I.D, Front and The Face.

There has been significant development in the dance music media over the past fifteen years, with various titles emerging to satisfy the growing market in the mid to late 1990’s. This was the period during which UK dance culture experienced greatest growth, with the peak in the number of publications around 2002. However recently the number of dance music specific publications has declined, which has served to place even greater emphasis on the cultural importance of the remaining magazines. Ministry (part of the Ministry of Sound group) published their last issue in December
2002, *Muzik* ceased publishing in September 2003 and other publications such as *Jockey Slut*, *Seven* and *Wax* also ceased operations between 2002 and 2004. The exact circulation figures for individual publications are also difficult to establish, although individual magazine’s media packs and figures provided by organisations such as the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) and the Periodical Publishers Association (PPA) do provide some detail (see table 2.1). ABC is an independent non profit organisation that monitors and verifies circulation figures of various media publications within the UK and the PPA is an industry body for magazine and business-to-business publishers in the UK.

Table 2.1 Dance music magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine &amp; date established</th>
<th>Price (£)</th>
<th>Genres covered</th>
<th>Circulation (2004)</th>
<th>Frequency of publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>breaks, drum and bass, Hip-hop and Nu-Beat</td>
<td>25,000 15,000 10,000</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. 1994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UK USA Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>breaks, deep house, Drum and Bass, Hard House, Hip-Hop, House, Vocal House, Progressive, R'n'B, Techno, Trance, Tribal and Twisted</td>
<td>20,000 N/A N/A</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. 1988</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>breaks, drum and bass, Electro, Hard Dance, Hip-Hop, House, Leftfield and Chill, Progressive and Tribal, R&amp;B, Techno, Tech-House, Trance, UK Garage</td>
<td>13,000 N/A N/A</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. 1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixmag</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>breaks, drum and bass, Electro, Hardcore, Hard Dance, House, Techno, Trance</td>
<td>50,500 N/A N/A</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. 1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowledge was established in 1994 as a free publication and re-launched in 1998 as a commercial monthly produced by Vision Publishing, a specialist music orientated magazine and book publisher, its current cover is price £3.50. It is more of a niche magazine than many of the others serving the dance sector and focuses on the genres of drum and bass, breaks and hip-hop: house and trance and their sub genres do not feature in this publication. According to the magazine’s advertising department, monthly sales in September 2004 were around 25,000 in the UK, 15,000 in the USA and 10,000 in the rest of Europe (Knowledge media information pack October 2004). Figures were quoted as being the same in 2003 apart from USA figures which were higher at 17,000 that year (Knowledge Media Pack 2003). Their estimated readership is six times the circulation figure.

M8 was established in 1988; publishing on a monthly basis it is an independent magazine, not part of any publishing house and currently has a cover price of £3.50. Correspondence with the magazine’s publisher David Faulds established that the magazine’s current circulation i.e. the amount sold, is 20,000, a figure which it is claimed has remained relatively steady over the past few years. “M8’s editorial policy focuses on contemporary youth culture issues such as music, club culture and fashion. M8 is at the cutting edge of club culture, striking a balance between the music that fills the clubs, the people who run them and the clubbers who determine their success” (M8 Media Pack 2003).

DJ was established in 1991 and is produced by Future Publishing, a company responsible for publishing over 200 consumer, business to business and client magazines, it is published on a fortnightly basis and its current cover price is £2.80. In October 2004, according to the deputy editor Tom Khil, the circulation figures were in the region of 13,000 per fortnight or 26,000 a month. This was a decline on the ABC figures for the period from 01-Jan-2003 to 31-Dec-2003, during which time actively purchased units per fortnight were on average 14,485 (ABC 2004b). Other figures obtained from ABC for an earlier period (January to December 2001)
show average sales during that time were 20,018 a fortnight (DJ Media Information Pack 2004).

*Mixmag* was established in 1991 as a monthly publication and has a current cover price of £3.85. *Mixmag* is one of the longest running dance music specific publications, covering the entire spectrum, but tending to focus on the latest popular music genres. Sales figures from the first of January to the thirtieth of June 2004 from ABC state there were 50,457 actively purchased copies on average per month over this period (ABC 2004a). This compares to the previous year from January to June 2003 when sales averaged at 53,212 per month. Circulation for 2003 however declined 28.2 percent from figures recorded the previous year (IPC Media 2004). Publishers and editors of other dance magazines have commented that during its' peak *Mixmag* had an average circulation in the region of 100,000 copies per month. *Mixmag* is produced by Emap, a publishing company responsible for managing a portfolio of over 65 consumer titles in the UK such as *Heat*, *FHM*, *Closer*, *Empire*, *Max Power*, and *Today’s Golfer* and 240 products in the business to business marketplace (Emap 2004).

Although the magazine sector catering for dance culture has contracted somewhat over the past few years, there remain a number of key publications, which serve a number of functions. The dance media inform clubbers of events, DJs and musical releases, drugs, fashion, new technology and other lifestyle related issues. What is uncertain is the future of these current publications with the contraction of dance culture in general and the rise of new technologies of communication revolving around the internet. However their presence provides a significant resource for participants and for researchers such as myself, and the discourses produced by these media will be considered in greater depth in chapter six.

The contextualisation of contemporary dance culture would also not be complete without acknowledgement and consideration of the role of the Internet. The rising number of people with Internet access and particularly broadband connections, means the Internet is a huge resource for dance
culture. "In the third quarter of 2004, 52 per cent of households in the UK (12.9 million) could access the Internet from home, compared with just 9 per cent (2.3 million) in the same quarter of 1998" and in 2006 57 per cent of UK households have internet access (National Statistics Online 2006). The Internet offers a whole host of features and services for participants in club cultures; from forums, chat rooms and message boards; to record shops, downloads, music distribution and Internet radio; it must also be remembered that the promotional role of the Internet is also considerable in terms of artists, record labels and events (Jones 2002, Hesmondhalgh 2002, Lathrop 2003). The other feature of the Internet is that it is not limited by geography and participants from all over the world are able to communicate, sharing their views on musical issues and on a wide range of dance and non dance culture related topics (Huq 2006). The fact that Internet sites are accessible worldwide also means there are a huge number of sites with the ability to cater for all the sub genres, geographical scenes and interests within dance culture. Indeed a simple search for 'rave' on one search engine Google, brings up 5,610,000 hits, 'dance music' brings up 2,150,000, 'hard house' brings 922,000, 'house music' brings 682,000, 'trance music' brings up 205,000, whilst 'trance' music brings up 3,010,000, 'drum and bass' brings 567,000, 'techno music' brings up 486,000 and 'acid house' brings up 353,000 hits.

One of the many important Internet resources for dance culture are the forums/message boards and chat rooms that provide communication forums for participants (Jones 2002, Huq 2006). Such interactive areas are generally part of larger sites that cover specific areas of dance culture (often a particular genre, sub genre or a select few genres), whilst some cover dance culture more holistically. These sites also generally contain features such as artist interviews, event reviews, record reviews, picture galleries, online shops and links to other related websites. The forums/message boards range from being very general forums in which anything can be discussed, to forums focused on future events, past events, regional forums, record releases, studio production techniques, musical software and hardware and all manner of other topics. The general trend is that within
any one website offering a forum/message board service there will be several different message boards, depending on the types of interactions, comments or questions people are seeking to make at any one time. Indeed www.gurn.net, a website very popular in the UK (with 11, 871 registered members in April 2005) and one which has helped inform this research, has nine different message boards for different types of messages.

The presence of the Internet dance related sites and the forums within them means participants can communicate with others on a whole range of issues from events and releases, to advice on production techniques and promoting records and events. The ability to engage in such processes means there is the potential for a high degree of communication between many often disparate individuals, who share a common interest in dance culture. These forums have become central to the dissemination, sharing, development and sustenance of cultural knowledge norms and values in contemporary dance cultures and will no doubt continue to do so. Although there is considerably more that could be said about dance culture and the Internet, such discussions are beyond the intended scope of this research.

There is no doubt that it is a powerful tool and communications medium for contemporary dance culture. The manner in which dance music participants use and interact with the Internet demonstrates this is a multifaceted dimension of global dance culture and Internet-based fieldwork will be drawn upon in later chapters.

2.9 Summary

This chapter has introduced and contextualised dance culture, its development and its constitution. We have seen how it evolved from its roots in the club scenes of New York and Chicago into disco and the new musical styles, which were later imported across the Atlantic and adopted within the warehouse party scene. This chapter has charted the development of warehouse parties into the acid house scene, and the birth and growth of rave culture and considered the diversity of factors which influenced its development in these early days.
I have also addressed the development of dance culture in the UK, the government and the media’s response to this cultural phenomenon and concluded that were it not for the moral panic surrounding dance culture, it would never have gained the youth support that it did. This demonstrates the role of the media in the construction and dissemination of cultural knowledge surrounding dance culture, which many youths may never have known about without the front page treatment it received from the media. This chapter has also highlighted how youth are often attracted to activities classified as deviant.

The diversification of dance culture from acid house, to rave and the subsequent plethora of genres and sub genres has also been explored. The fragmentation of acid house has led to a great diversity of interrelated and overlapping scenes, all of which bear some degree of cultural continuity with the original acid house scene, despite possessing varying aesthetic qualities. These scenes provide different points of engagement with dance culture for a diversity of people, with entire structures of supply and demand to service them.

In order to provide the reader with a fuller picture of the constitution of dance culture this chapter has also examined the clubs, venues and promoters that together supply dance music experiences. It considered that whilst in the early days of dance culture the majority of experiences were illegally supplied, such events are now the minority and although illegal events still occur, legal events account for the majority of supply. Dance events are supplied by a range of providers, or promoters as they are commonly referred to. These range from large scale organisations such as Ministry of Sound, who operate on an international level, to small scale promoters who organise club events in single venues attracting local crowds. This section has considered the promotional strategies and remits of different scale organisations and events and the diversity of venues where dance events take place. In order to provide an overview of dance events the issue of sponsorship and the links between dance music and
other companies has also been explored to illustrate the commercial nature of contemporary dance culture.

The centrality of DJs within dance culture has also been discussed in this chapter, as have the views of a number of academics, who have considered the rise in the cultural importance and cultural credibility of DJs. Since the post war years DJs have been gaining increasing credibility as entertainers and this chapter has charted a number of influential factors in the rise of DJs to the status they have achieved today. Although it was disco that really brought DJs into the limelight, this chapter has also made explicit the role of youth cultures such as Northern Soul which also played a role in the cultural status attributed to DJs.

Finally, the niche media associated with dance culture have also been briefly considered in this chapter in relation to the magazines and also the internet, both of which are central to the dissemination of cultural knowledge within dance culture. I will return to discuss and analyse the role of magazines in greater depth in chapters five and six. The following chapter will continue to explore the literature on dance culture focusing particularly on the relationship between dance culture and cultural theory.
Chapter Three

Theorising rave/dance music culture

3.1 Introduction

Analysis of the dance music movement ranges across a number of academic disciplines including: sociology, cultural studies, cultural geography, leisure studies and anthropology. Therefore, although it is essentially a leisure pursuit, the study of dance culture is embedded in a variety of research and academic disciplines and has been examined from a number of perspectives. This chapter will provide a selective overview of these perspectives and discuss academic analysis of rave/dance music culture and its participants.

As discussed in chapter two, when dance culture first emerged in the form of warehouse parties and raves in the 1980s and early 1990s academic analysis largely focused on the institutional response (primarily the media and the government) to dance culture (Crosgrove 1989, Redhead 1991, Merchant and McDonald 1994, McRobbie and Thornton 1995, Critcher 2000). These analyses largely concentrated upon the media representation of dance culture and the moral panic that followed and explored the response of the media and the government to the perceived threats, both from and towards the youth of the country (which at the time were also perceived as an inherent threat to the fabric of society). However as we have seen, once new legislation was passed to increase penalties for illegal rave organisers and licensing restrictions became more liberalised, the scene became more controlled and hence this type of analysis and commentary became less prevalent.

In addition to this emphasis on the institutional response, there has also been considerable academic interest in the relationship between dance culture and sub-cultural theory, popular and sub cultural forms and on constructions of identity and space, some of which was tied in with the above analysis of the media and government response to this youth culture. It is this strand of analysis which the current study seeks to build upon and hence it is the main focus of this literature review chapter. Explorations of popular and sub cultural forms and the social construction of identity and space are all well established areas of academic enquiry and of particular
interest in the context of this study are the related issues of: clubcultures and the media; authenticity; cultural credibility and underground movements; resistance and incorporation; exclusivity; inclusion and exclusion; youth cultures and identity; cultural capital and taste cultures; and socio-cultural constructions of space. Each of these key areas are discussed below in order to locate this study of music, identity, authenticity and space in its wider theoretical and conceptual context.

### 3.2 Dance music and subcultures

Youth rebellion and its expression through subcultures has been an area of significant analysis and sociological interest since the 1940s, (Gordon 1947, Becker 1963) developing particularly in the 1970s (Hall and Jefferson 1976, Hebdige 1979) and once again at the turn of the last century (Gelder and Thornton 1997, Redhead 1997, Muggleton 2000). Sociologists and scholars in cultural studies have taken particular interest in the reactions of working class youths to social inequalities, suggesting that working class young men combated their relative socio-cultural powerlessness by resisting the wider social norms and values. This resistance was embodied in 'rituals' (Hall and Jefferson 1976) and 'style' (Hebdige 1979), where previous dress styles were borrowed and adapted to create a form of bricolage “which juxtaposes previously unconnected signs to produce new codes of meaning” (Barker 2000: 154). The creation of new codes of meaning were interpreted as a source of empowerment for the members of youth subcultures, as they were in control of something in their lives; something that held particular meanings for them not shared by the wider society. Their cultures were perceived as autonomous from and thus impervious to adult society. Paradoxically, negative media coverage of a subculture was seen as the ultimate confirmation of its unique qualities, whilst positive coverage was seen to strip it of its subversive values.

Chapter: 3 Theorising rave/dance music culture

Studies (CCCS). Bennett (1999) provides a comprehensive critique of the term subculture as it is understood within CCCS theory and presents a convincing argument for a shift away from the use of the term ‘subculture’. He suggests that the term ‘neo-tribes’ is far more appropriate in the context of defining the social groupings in postmodern society, “as it allows for the shifting nature of youth’s musical and stylistic preferences and the essential fluidity of youth cultural groups” (Bennett 1999: 614). Such academics regard the concept of subculture as too rigid to portray what are often far more temporary and incoherent groups than the term connotes (Thornton 1995, Gelder and Thornton 1997, Bennett 1999, 2000, Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). In addition they suggest that subculture has become overused through its application in an ad hoc manner to describe numerous youth cultural groupings and has become a catch-all term, further decreasing its relevance and value in analysing youth cultures (Gelder and Thornton 1997, Bennett 1999, 2000, Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003).

This section therefore considers some of the criticisms of CCCS subcultural theory’s application to dance culture, discussing the views of a number of scholars, who have been critical of the relevance of this theoretical concept in the context of postmodern youth cultures. This section considers the issues of cultural continuities and their relevance to dance culture, drawing on examples related to previous youth subcultures, whilst also highlighting the differences between these and dance culture. A number of scholars have highlighted these differences which include: the role of the media in the development of subcultures; the characteristics of dance cultures’ participants, (their age, class, gender, political views and their dress styles). Further distinctions of club cultures have also been explored by Thornton (1995) who has analysed the territorial distinctions and affiliations in dance cultures and who provides an alternative theory to subculture from that proposed by the CCCS.

Whilst various academics have criticised the applicability of subcultural theory to contemporary youth groupings, Merchant and Macdonald (1994) comment that during the mid and late eighties the majority of sociologists
who had previously studied young people turned away from youth cultures as a result of the lack of 'rebellious youth styles' and the rise in youth unemployment at that time. Merchant and Macdonald (1994), in addition to other scholars such as Ward (1997) have commented that despite the popularity and meteoric rise of rave culture as a youth phenomenon "the response to rave by serious commentators has been at best muted but generally non existent" (Ward 1997: 4), being "met with only a half hearted response from youth experts" (Merchant and Macdonald 1994: 17). Indeed this neglect has continued, with only a few in-depth examinations of dance culture having been conducted in the last decade (Thornton 1995, Collin 1998, Malbon 1999, Jackson 2004).

Whilst some authors such as Smith (1992) considered rave culture to be simply a subcultural successor to previously documented post-war subcultures like punks and hippies, others such as Merchant and Macdonald (1994: 32) and Redhead (1991) argue that rave culture represented a "significant break in the chain of post-war youth sub-cultures". Although these authors accept Hebdige's (1978) views on the cultural continuities within youth cultures and recognise there are many such features within dance culture, they also consider there are significant differences between dance culture and previous youth cultures. To substantiate their argument Merchant and Macdonald (1994) and Redhead (1991) draw comparisons between the rave culture (as it was then termed) and previous youth subcultures. They highlight the various cultural continuities across them and comment upon the ethos behind rave music and its similarities to punk (such as sampling others’ records and shunning the tradition of ‘star performers’, although this was to change considerably during the 90s with the rise of superstar DJs). Within both of these cultures there was also very much a DIY ethic in terms of the production and distribution of music, at least in their early days. In this way rave/dance culture was perceived to have acquired this ethos and ideology from punk and was considered to be simply another subcultural continuity.
In addition the ‘alternative living’ philosophy of New Age Travellers, who comprised a section of the dance culture, has also been compared to the anti establishment, “anarchic, anti-capitalism of Punk” (Merchant and Macdonald 1994: 31). However anti-capitalism ideology can also be associated with the hippy culture of the sixties, thus demonstrating the continuity of this ideology within two proceeding subcultural movements. The psychedelic imagery used within the rave culture, associated paraphernalia, the position of drugs and the quasi-spiritual elements in rave culture also held strong links with the hippy movement of the sixties, and many other youth cultures in which drugs have played a significant role. Gore (1997) also draws many comparisons between the ‘cultural continuities’ (Hebdige 1979) of the hippie culture of the sixties and seventies and the rave culture. I believe that there are various cultural continuities between dance culture and preceding youth cultures, just as there are continuities within wider culture: these are the ideologies and issues that strike a cord within people and have a certain resonance within social groupings. I also think that the legacy and associations of particular discourses means that, through adopting certain ideologies, groups are able to take on and build upon the identity of previous groups to create their own contemporary cultures, which are more authentic due to the cultural continuities within them.

In developing the issue of cultural continuities Redhead (1991: 94) argues that “the acid house/rave scene has never really constituted a subculture” in the same way as those subcultures of the fifties, sixties and seventies. Redhead also believes that using traditional sub-cultural theory to understand rave culture will “end up in confusion” (1991: 94) since such approaches suggest that there is nothing new about rave culture because it has borrowed so many elements from other youth cultures and fashions to create its own. However I would argue that many other subcultures also borrowed elements from previous cultural groups and it is the context within which these aspects are situated that constitutes creativity, so in this respect I do not consider dance culture to be different from previous youth cultures. Redhead (1991) also adds how previous theorists looked beyond
the media portrayals of youth/subcultures to discover the ‘authentic’, ‘real’ subculture as opposed to the ‘distorted/manufactured’ media image. There was the notion that pure, authentic subcultures existed outside of the media and that media influence contaminated subcultures and rendered them inauthentic. This stance was justified through theorising that over time the image projected by the media becomes real as more people join in and conform to the manufactured media portrayal rendering the subculture inauthentic, as it was simply a manifestation of its media portrayal. This raises the issue that the time between the emergence of the real subculture and the development of manufactured subculture is getting ever shorter due to the proliferation of media channels in western society (Briggs and Cobley 1998), thus (theoretically) reducing the elements of creativity, authenticity, social resistance and rebellion associated with previous youth subcultures. There are a number of flaws in this view of the interaction between youth cultures and the media, flaws which highlight a real need for a revised approach to the study of pop and youth culture which moves away from subcultural theory to explain future developments in this field. Thornton (1995) also criticises the CCCS approach as it does not account for the role of media and commerce in its analysis of subcultures and neither does it give any significance to processes of social change.

In the case of rave/dance music culture the majority of its growth and development has occurred since its initial coverage by the mainstream media, which first reported upon dance culture in 1988 (Collins 1998). Therefore dance music culture in its present form is inseparable from and incomprehensible without considering the role of the media (both mass and niche), however to date such analysis has been limited (Thornton 1995). Although the story of warehouse, acid house, raves and dance culture is incomprehensible without considering the media’s influence, it is entirely a matter of individual subjectivity and perception as to whether it is any less authentic or real as a result. I would suggest that it is still as authentic, there are simply a greater range of forces acting upon its development. Indeed, the fact that dance culture has continued to evolve and mutate at many different levels, within and outside the spheres of various media
vehicles highlights the difficulty in applying previous subcultural theory to dance culture. For within dance culture the various media play a central, though largely unexplored role, in the construction of social and ideological realities due to the range of niche, micro and mass media vehicles in contemporary society. I will return to this and discuss the role of various media vehicles in dance culture in greater depth below and in chapter six.

Aside from the relationship between dance culture and the media there are a number of reasons for my argument that rave/dance culture is different to previous youth subcultures. Firstly, the number of people involved in rave (and subsequently in dance) culture is far greater than the number of participants in previous youth subcultures. Whilst previous subcultures were the realm of elite minorities; “rave has become a mass youth cultural phenomenon”, as “hundreds of thousands of young people now attend raves” (Merchant and Macdonald 1994: 32). It is this ‘mass’ appeal that makes CCCS theorisations problematic because part of traditional subcultural theory is that youth subcultures were the symbolic response of working class youths, to the unequal world they faced. However rave culture’s participants are not only working class youths but people of various ages and classes – from working class youths, to college and university students, as well as those well into their working careers (Goulding and Shankar 2004). The applicability of CCCS theory to rave culture is further undermined because it does not fit the resistance/acceptance dichotomy in the way that previous youth subcultures did. Merchant and Macdonald (1994: 32) comment, “the CCCS tended to argue that those in the subcultures they described were the few who had not been incorporated into bourgeois society. Subcultures, for them, were all about resistance, through rituals to the dominant forms of society”. However as dance culture has a far more varied composition, the opposition to incorporation argument has less strength in comparison to previous cultures, which had a largely working class composition.

Many commentators (from example Redhead 1989, Merchant and Macdonald 1994 and Critcher 2000) argue that rave culture is not overtly
political and the only time it has directly opposed the authorities is over the ‘right to party’ issue. However, there are numerous subsections of dance culture that have a very political agenda as dance music has formed the soundtrack to many political protests and illegal parties to this day across the UK (BBC 2006). Arguably the continual resistance of many of its participants to conform to the UK’s drug laws is certainly an expression of political defiance and a desire not to conform to the wider norms and expectations of society. The free/illegal party scene is also further evidence of the unwillingness of many participants to confine their activities to the rigid structures of the legal entertainments industry. The presence of this scene or more accurately these scenes, as there are many regional scenes, is also evidence of the anti-capitalist attitudes of many participants. Although it must be said that mainstream dance culture is primarily hedonistic and leisure orientated, unlike the more politically motivated previous youth subcultures.

Unlike other subcultures studied by the CCCS where the role of women was considered less important, it has been suggested that they play an equal role in rave culture, as participants are split relatively equally by gender (Merchant and Macdonald 1994). This is in contrast to the largely male dominated youth subcultures of the past. Such a view could be contested however, given that the majority of people involved in directing dance music culture such as promoters, artists and DJs are actually men and there are relatively few women in positions of power within dance culture. Therefore although there may be similar numbers of men and women as participants within dance music culture, there are more men than women occupying positions of higher cultural status. From personal experience the gender balance also varies between different generic scenes and different venues and events.

The lack of “readily identifiable visual styles of dress, body adornment or hairstyles” is also another reason for identifying dance culture as different to previous youth cultures (Merchant and Macdonald 1994: 33). Whilst many previous youth subcultures had specific, recognisable dress codes, at most
dance events a variety of dress styles and fashion preferences are in evidence. Additionally, whilst a minority of participants dress in very distinctive clothing at dance events, outside of these they tend to blend in with the rest of society becoming invisible or ‘normal’ in their jobs or college activities. Whereas punks, goths and other similar subcultures have distinct fashion styles, those participating in the various dance music sub groups don’t generally display such distinctive dress styles on the street. This issue is representative of the multiple identities that we all assume within contemporary, postmodern society where the majority strive to be individuals, rather than part of a homogenous mass (Epstein 1998). This also relates to Thornton’s analogy of taste cultures, developed from Bourdieu, where we select identities related to individual preferences, but seek to play out these identities selectively within specific social scenarios (Harris 2005). I will return to the socio-cultural construction of space later in this chapter.

The terms ‘taste cultures’ and ‘clubcultures’ have been introduced as alternative means of addressing the cultural groupings that constitute dance culture. In her study of dance culture and its participants conducted in the early 1990s Thornton (1995), although criticising the applicability of subcultural theory to contemporary society, still uses the term in her investigation and analysis. Thornton uses ‘clubcultures’ and ‘taste cultures’ to describe the dance music culture, and ‘subcultures’ to identify those taste cultures which are labelled by the media as subcultures and the word ‘subcultural’ as a synonym for those practices that clubbers call ‘underground’” (1995: 8). These terms are used as, like Redhead (1991, 1997), Merchant and Macdonald (1994), Bennett (1999) and Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003), Thornton considers the theoretical framework established by the CCCS for the analysis of subcultures to be insufficient for the analysis of dance music culture. Thornton (1995) considers dance cultures to be taste cultures and club cultures as they are more fluid groupings than the term subculture suggests, additionally they are generally bound by territorial affiliations with certain venues and based upon the shared preferences of participants in terms of musical and stylistic tastes. As dance
culture is comprised of many niche taste-based cultures, I would agree with Gelder and Thornton (1997) that it is difficult to consider it as a distinct subculture in the conventional sense of the term.

Building on the work of Bourdieu (1984) Thornton (1995) is concerned to explore the relationship between measures of cultural distinction and individual social standing and status. Central to Bourdieu’s philosophy is the notion that people acquire cultural capital through socialisation and education, which in turn play a pivotal role in constructing and confirming social status. This theoretical concept is not just restricted to cultural capital but to other types of capital such as economic and social capital, all of which influence social status. In contrast to more classical/traditional sociological thought this approach is flexible and non-linear, reflecting the numerous ways in which people attain and maintain status in society through a range of distinguishing factors.

Another difference between subcultural capital and cultural capital is the former is less influenced or restricted by social class and there is no correlation between levels of cultural capital and levels of subcultural capital. Indeed Thornton considers one of the appeals of club culture to be its ability to 'obfuscate' class through the process of "subcultural distinctions" (1995: 12). This I would argue is a contentious point, as levels of economic capital will always influence the options available to an individual. Without the financial means it is impossible to attend clubs, to buy the latest records or to wear the latest fashions. Central to construction of status and cultural capital within clubcultures, 'hipness' is identified as a form of 'subcultural capital'.

Thornton (1995) believes much of the actions of clubbers, from their choice of clothes and hair cut, to the clubs they frequent and the media they consume, are motivated by acquiring higher levels of subcultural capital to elevate or maintain individuals' cultural status within club cultures. Just as cultural capital and status is exemplified through knowledge, education, material goods and social networks, so too is subcultural capital personified
through “being 'in the know', using (but not overusing) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles” (Thornton 1995: 11-12). However she (1995: 12) considers there is a fine line between being hip and trying too hard to be something you’re not, commenting that, “nothing depletes capital more than the sight of someone trying to hard”. Furthermore Thornton comments:

Crucially, club cultures embrace their own hierarchies of what is authentic and legitimate ... embodied understanding of which can make one hip (1995: 3).

A major element of Thornton’s analysis concerns the territorial affiliations within dance culture, the sense of ownership and status associated with participation in club culture. She raises the issue that unlike previous youth subcultures, those regularly attending clubs assume the names of these places hence the terms ‘clubbers’ and ‘ravers’, thus making the territorial distinctions between club cultures and other youth cultures quite unique. Whilst other subcultures such as goths and punks are visible on the street it is in the rave or the club where participants take on their full identity, remaining largely invisible in everyday life (Tomlinson 1998), therefore although previous subcultures were also characterised by territorial distinctions, they are more pronounced within dance culture. Within the distinct spaces of dance clubs, with their alternative codes and conventions, participants are able to embody their clubbing identities through dance and interaction with others. Subsequently there is a greater degree of territorial specialisation and distinction associated with the sites in dance cultures.

The discussion in this section has sought to establish how traditional subcultural theory and its accompanying analytical/ investigative structures no longer provide an adequate analysis of contemporary youth cultural formations and groups. Despite this, several ideological discourses of subculture remain as pertinent as ever and thus rather than abandoning traditional subcultural theory it should be integrated into new analyses that facilitate an alternative way of understanding dance culture. For example the notion that the underground is defined in relation to the mainstream still remains a critical element in definitions of self and others, a complex
perceptual condition intertwined with accessibility, distribution, degrees of media coverage (and associated discourses) and notions of authenticity and credibility. Related to issues of underground, authenticity and credibility are the processes of resistance and incorporation and the perceptions and products arising from these processes. The role of all these factors in shaping and constructing identities of selves and others remains a central element of contemporary youth cultures. Within youth cultures and cultures more broadly the role of ideology is central in the development of meaning, interpretation and response structures. Ideology is a continually evolving cultural force as new interpretations and interactions give rise to new meanings, which in turn lead to new interpretations, interactions and responses (Blumer 1969).

3.3 The underground and the mainstream: seeking cultural authenticity

Within youth cultures there is a constant presence of the ideological notions of authenticity and cultural integrity, which closely relate to ideologies surrounding the mainstream and the underground. Such notions are central to youth perceptions of self and others and highly influential to youth conduct and discourses. As Collins (1998: 82) comments on the early rave scene, "as 1988 rolled into 1989 ... Many of the original participants could not deal with what it had become - 'commercial', 'mainstream' and 'overground'". Even in its earliest incarnations, issues of mainstream, commercialisation and underground were subject to debate within and outside the dance music scene (Crosgrove 1989), thus indicating the varying perceptions people have towards a cultural phenomenon depending on the timing and context of their experience of such events. It also demonstrates the exclusivity and exclusion ideology of dance culture, where its exclusive image is created partially through being less accessible than other forms of entertainment. However such debates over what is or is not commercial, mainstream and underground within dance culture continue to this day (Malbon 1999).

The underground versus the mainstream as an area of cultural 'distinction' is a complex ideological yet paradoxical condition related to participant
perceptions of selves and others (Thornton 1995, Collins 1998 and Malbon 1999). The defining issue in this ideological paradox is the position of others, whereby participants largely define themselves in relation to others, as to what they are not and what they don’t consume. As Thurlow (2001: 319) comments on the terms of youth ‘crowds’ and ‘cliques’, “the pinpointing and labelling of other is an important contrastive resource for establishing who we are and who we are not”. Labelling and the perceptual and reputation based positioning of others is central to constructions of individual and group identities. Within dance culture these others are labelled as the mainstream, a catchall categorisation that signifies the homogenous assemblage that is mass society. The mainstream is perceived as dictated to rather than acting on free will, ruled by the media and the latest trends, fickle and inherently shallow, these are highly exposed and accessible cultural groupings, products and activities, perceived as exploited by and open to exploitation by political and commercial institutions.

The ‘mainstream’ is often equated to the masses, something that participants in club cultures strive to distance themselves and maintain autonomy from (Thornton 1995, Malbon 1999, Huq 2006). Associated with ideologies concerning the ‘masses’, the mainstream is considered unoriginal, shallow and a product of homogenised cultural production, and therefore of little cultural value. The distance clubbers can retain from the mainstream is a symbol of their ‘cultural worth’. Thus, what is underground must be kept that way to prevent its exposure to and exploitation by the mainstream. As Banerjea (2000: 64) comments:

The underground is at once stuffed, starved, covered and exposed. Within much hegemonic discourse it exists as a curious paradox. It is that place and those productions which must be made knowable to, yet kept apart from, what presumably constitutes ‘the overground’. That is mainstream consciousness.

Just as in the world of visual arts and the wider creative industries, those involved in club cultures clearly admire groundbreaking artists, whilst
simultaneously disapproving of artists who deliberately seek a high media profile “as being charlatans or overrated media sluts” (Thornton 1995: 5). This area also relates closely to the issues of authenticity and originality, that worthy cultural artefacts emerge from being in touch with and growing out of the culture, rather than being instigated and therefore dictated to by market forces (Feifan Xie 2003).

The juxtapositioning of club culture undergrounds and the mainstream serves to further legitimate dance cultures as culturally sophisticated. Being the opposite of exposed and accessible, dance cultures are positioned as culturally autonomous, out of the reach of the mainstream media (in an ideological sense) and therefore more authentic. Commenting on this crucial area of distinction and identification within club culture Thornton (1995: 5) considers the fundamental factor distinguishing clubbers identities is:

Between the ‘hip’ world of the dance crowd in question and its perpetually absent, denigrated other – the ‘mainstream’. This contrast between ‘us’ and the ‘mainstream’ is more directly related to the process of envisioning social worlds and discriminating between social groups. Its veiled elitism and separatism enlist and reaffirm binary oppositions such as the alternative and the straight, the diverse and the homogenous, the radical and the conformist, the distinguished and the common.

In addressing the concepts of the mainstream and the underground, Thornton (1995) and Malbon (1999) can be criticised for their tendency to reduce cultural differences to a sort of binary reductionism through the classifications of selves and others; underground and mainstream; radical and conformist. The value of such binary divisions must be questioned in their application in understanding complex cultural phenomena such as dance culture. They criticised the CCCS for being too simplistic and rigid in their classification and analysis of subcultures but one has to question have they merely transposed one set of binary reductions for another?
In summary, whilst scholars such as Thornton and Malbon have done much to foreground dance music as a field of study, it could be said that their work largely fails to account for subjectivity based upon individual difference. If the mainstream is constituted of exposed and accessible homogenous cultural groupings, products and activities, perceived as exploited by political and commercial institutions, then whom and what is attributed with these traits is very subjective and highly personal. The nature in which life experience affects perceptions of mainstream and underground is given little attention by academics, although this makes a significant contribution to clubbers' self identity and perceptions of others. I would contend that there exists a broad spectrum of clubber perceptions related to what is underground and what is mainstream and their affinity to and disdain for various social groupings, musical genres, artists and media vehicles.

3.4 Club undergrounds and the media

The media, which informs participants within and outside of dance culture, is entwined in clubber's identity distinctions and linked with the ideology of the underground and the mainstream. The media is an area highlighted as significant to clubbers in terms of cultural validation and degradation whereby "members of subcultures acquire a sense of themselves and their relation to the rest of society from the way they are represented in the media" (Bennett 1999: 604). This is an issue tied in with perceptions of mainstream and underground, in that certain media channels and vehicles are associated with the mainstream, whilst others are given underground status. Like the mainstream, which many clubbers seek distance from; the mass media is viewed by many with similar distain. The highly accessible nature of the tabloid media in particular reduces the exclusivity of any cultural knowledge it conveys and therefore the esoteric qualities of niche cultural forms. Correspondingly, levels of media exposure or more significantly types of media exposure (mass tabloids, broad sheets or niche media) also help perpetuate the exclusivity of dance culture through restricting the distribution of cultural knowledge. Although in reality it is nearly as easy to buy a copy of Mixmag as it is to buy a copy of the Sun and
therefore the knowledge is just as accessible in a physical sense, the niche target audience and lower distribution figures make Mixmag more exclusive at a cultural level. As Thornton (1995: 6) comments, “the distinction between the ‘underground’ and the ‘media’ ... encompasses a series of further contrasts including the esoteric versus the exposed, the exclusive versus the accessible, the pure versus the corrupted, the ‘independent’ versus the ‘sold out’”. These polarised distinctions play a key ideological role constructing, maintaining and distributing subcultural capital, and are also inextricably linked with the discourse of authenticity and its associated connotations.

Thornton considers that club undergrounds perceive themselves as ‘renegade cultures’, opposed to and striving to avoid the limelight of the mainstream media, however she argues that “there is, in fact, no opposition between subcultures and the media, except for a dogged ideological one”, (1995: 116) “which fulfil the specific agendas of their beholders” (1995: 10). This ideological position again relates to the perceived authenticity and thus cultural integrity of texts represented and reported by different media vehicles. Mainstream media coverage provides exposure, thus making cultural issues more accessible, and this in turn undermines the ideology concerning the esoteric qualities and exclusivity within clubcultures. Commentary on the mainstream however, is very subjective in itself as to what individuals consider the mainstream media to be. Whilst some consider mainstream media to be the tabloids, others would consider it to also encompass magazines such as Front, FHM, etc, whilst others may consider Mixmag and Ministry to be mainstream and others may consider all nationally published magazines to be mainstream. Thus, this is another flaw in Thornton’s (1995) analysis. Whilst she simply differentiates between mass media being the mainstream and niche and micro media being part of the underground, many participants in dance culture would hold greatly contrasting views on this matter. In addition reports in different strands of the mainstream media will also be viewed differently by participants; right wing tabloids and broad sheets are likely to be less positively received than
more left wing papers, likewise the actual content of the reporting would also greatly influence its interpretation.

Another argument proposed in constructing the relationship between clubbers and the media relates to the protection and sustenance of cultural knowledge. Thornton (1995) considers to be 'hip' in club cultures is to be in the know regarding insider knowledge, which is perceived as under threat from the distribution channels and accessibility of mass media. For example McRobbie and Thornton (1995: 565) consider that negative mainstream media coverage "legitimizes and authenticates youth cultures", whilst "approving reports in mass media like tabloids or television...are the subcultural kiss of death" (Thornton 1995: 6). However the relationship between the media and subcultures/club cultures is a complex one and needs analysing in the context of micro, niche and mass media. These media vehicles have different relationships with clubcultures and are also perceived differently by clubcultures, related to their target audience profile, population coverage, distribution channels, main purpose/features and their style of reporting.

At a local level micro-media such as flyers, posters and club listings play a central role in informing clubbers of forthcoming events and help event organisers attract crowds. Depending on whom an event is targeted at, flyers are distributed outside other events associated with attracting a similar crowd profile and posters are located within the geographical catchment area. Various independent shops, generally in the field of fashion retail and music also play a role in micro-media distribution. Such a process of promotion and distribution plays a major role in attracting specific crowds, with shared attributes, but not homogenous to various events.

At the level of niche media there are a number of publications as outlined in chapter two, which serve the clubcultures market and are highly influential in circulating and disseminating cultural capital. These publications form an information service to clubcultures on a national basis, informing of new
musical releases, club nights and other events, in addition to providing various other cultural commentaries. Indeed such is the perceived influence of the dance media that Thornton (1995:117) considers the “niche media like the music press construct subcultures as much as they document them”. Although the way in which the media helped construct acid house in its early days is well documented, there has been little analysis of the continued role of the niche media in clubcultures. It could also be contended that these publications are not perceived or interpreted consistently by all clubcultures and their level of influence is variable within dance music culture as a whole, with specific groups being more or less receptive to the discourses of particular media vehicles. However, the media undeniably plays a major role in the dissemination and circulation of cultural capital, making it more than another source of cultural credibility, it is in other words, a network which is central to the definition and distribution of cultural knowledge. The media (both niche, micro and mass) is therefore key to definitions of dance culture, yet it has not been subject to any kind of sustained in depth analysis, but viewed in a simplified, reductionist fashion. This is a key area that this thesis will explore in chapter six in order to provide a richer analysis of the dance music media and its role in the socio cultural construction of dance culture.

3.5 Authenticity and cultural credibility

Authenticity is a highly valued characteristic in relation to youth cultures and the wider music industry and as Shuker (1998:20) comments it is “a central concept in the discourses surrounding popular music”. Authenticity is an elusive and subjective attribute of artist’s work and musical forms associated with “originality, creativity, sincerity, uniqueness [and] musicianship” (Haq 2006: 113) and has emerged as a central element of dance culture ideology, although perhaps the concept has been rather taken for granted and subjected to limited analysis, often emerging in an indirect rather than direct context. Authenticity is linked to the media, as the mass media is perceived to be somehow less authentic, than niche and micro media. As the dance music media is the subject of greater analysis in chapters five and six of this thesis, it is useful to give greater consideration
to the issue of authenticity here, due to its interrelations with music, the media and cultural credibility:

Authenticity is probably the most important value ascribed to popular music ... Music is perceived as authentic when it rings true or feels real, when it has the credibility and comes across as genuine. In an age of endless representations and global mediation, the experience of musical authenticity is perceived as a cure both for alienation (because it offers feelings of community) and dissimulation (because it extends a sense of the really ‘real’) (Thornton 1995: 26).

Authenticity is fundamental to the discourses of music and clubcultures. A further area of ideological subjectivity, authenticity is related to notions of originality and creativity in an artistic sense and also to notions of community, tradition and the natural (Johnson 2000). It is therefore tied up with associations and connotations, of origins, innovativeness and creative processes, senses of place and contextualisation. These are all very open to individual interpretation as to what is and is not authentic, which will be interlinked with life experiences, media consumption and most importantly the interpretation of these two factors. As Feifan Xie (2003: 6) comments, “the authentic is not a fixed property of an object or a situation but is a negotiated attribute with multiple dimensions whose status is evaluated by different assessors”.

In order to condense this issue Johnson (2000: 281) in discussing music and authenticity considers two factors are “crucial to authenticity [these] are context and purpose”. For me this entails a wide range of validating criteria, used both consciously and subconsciously in determining the authenticity of products and texts. Context can be applied in numerous ways to the authenticities of clubcultures. From a musical perspective there is the context in which sampled sounds are situated and transposed from, both within individual records and previously released sounds. Then there is the promotional context of records and artists in terms of their use of media channels. Whilst dance videos on TV programmes such as Top of The Pops are perceived to be legitimate and authentic, actual artist performances are generally seen as phony (Thornton 1995). This is partly because a video is
constructed out of the *Top of The Pops* context then imported into it, therefore giving the artist control in their media portrayal and limiting their associations with the institution that is *Top of The Pops*. Conversely, artists appearing on *Top of The Pops* are often regarded as a less authentic and phony as the music is transferred into a context associated with manufactured pop and the epitome of the mainstream and thus through association acquires some of these attributes (Drum and Bass Arena 2003). Likewise, certain venues and media are perceived as more authentic in the dance scene; venues dedicated to dance music are generally perceived as more authentic than venues that mostly play the latest chart music but also operate dance nights.

Another reason why context is so significant to perceptions of authenticity is the way in which it is tied in with purpose (Johnson 2000). The context in which something is situated is generally directly related to the purpose for it being situated there. Thus, an artist actually appearing on *Top of The Pops* shows a greater desire to appeal to that programme’s target market and to be associated with the qualities of the programme. It is evidence of their desire to be more accessible and to appeal to a wider market (the mainstream), in direct opposition to club culture ideology, therefore making the artist inauthentic. In essence, how actions and motivations are justified and perceived determine whether someone or something is considered to be authentic or not.

In terms of genuineness, authenticity is also related to motivations and purpose. If something is perceived as being done for the right reasons i.e. with the right motivations and for the right purpose, it is largely perceived as genuine and therefore authentic (Connell and Gibson 2004b). However, when something is perceived as being done for the wrong reasons, with unjust or inequitable motivations it is seen as spurious and therefore not for the good of the culture (Haq 2006). For example, if a vocal is added to a record with the intention of making it more commercially accessible it may be considered inauthentic, however, if it is added in a genuine attempt to make the record sound more original then it may be considered more
authentic. This issue highlights the subjectivity of authenticity, as Feifan Xie (2003: 5-6) comments: “authenticity is relative rather than absolute and, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. [It] is ... a slippery and contested term”. However despite the fact that “authenticity is a relative and constructed concept” (Johnson 2000: 283), it still remains a key component of musical ideology and in this sense dance culture is no different.

There is much debate in tourism literature over the authenticity of music, places and performances (Cooper et al 1998, Aitchison et al 2000, Feifan Xie 2003, Connell and Gibson 2004a, 2004b). In addition to issues of context and purpose, or more appropriately building on these factors, are issues of commodification. When cultural products are reduced to commodities they are often perceived to have lost part of their cultural value and hence their authenticity, however this relationship is not linear and again also relates to context and purpose (Connell and Gibson 2004b). “Commodification is an issue closely tied to authenticity. However, commodification and authenticity are not a dichotomous pair of concepts. That is because the process of commodification does not necessarily destroy cultural products, for either the locals or the tourists” (Feifan Xie 2003: 6). This further highlights the subjectivity and the arising grey areas over authenticity and cultural forms, that authenticity is in the eye of the beholder, influenced by a myriad of experiential, social and cultural factors, which evolve over time (Blumer 1969).

3.6 Resistance and incorporation
Authenticity is also related to issues of resistance and incorporation, with the common perception of commercialism being that the public or the masses are the brainwashed victims of the commodification of culture, whilst a minority (often categorised as subcultures) resist incorporation. Butsch (2001: 72) comments, “trading in identities, bodies, and personal or public services crosses a moral threshold and transforms social relations traditionally regulated by values that transcend money into exchange relations regulated by money”. It is therefore the perception of those following the resistance model, that minorities, often working class youths,
resisted capitalist incorporation by forming their own subcultures (Hall and Jefferson 1976, Hebdige 1979, Gelder and Thornton 1997). These subcultures were perceived as somehow more ‘real’ and ‘authentic’, whilst the majority of society was presumed as dominated and dictated to, brainwashed by the ruling elite, trapped in the capitalist system of production and consumption. Subcultures were perceived as resisting hegemony through their distinctive dress and activities, the latter also positioning them as deviant (Hebdige 1979).

However the term ‘resistance’ associated with meaningful, politically motivated refusal to conform has become an overused phrase within cultural studies and has hence been subject to criticism (Hutnyk and Sharma 2000, Butsch 2001). The over usage of this term has over politicised many activities with no inherent political significance or motivation, as resistance, thus degrading the relevancy of the concept. Butsch (2001) argues there is a need for greater consideration of the interplay between resistance and incorporation, in addition to the definition of several levels of resistance. Such an approach would then enable differentiation between levels of resistance such as political, social and stylistic, which could each be broken down into further categories, thus clearly facilitating the classification of differing levels of resistance, whilst acknowledging the presence of incorporation and resistance simultaneously within cultural groups. As Butsch (2001: 78) comments:

We should not presume that incorporation is the end of the story of resistance, but should pose it as an empirical question. Is there a resistance to incorporation itself, a new stage of resistance, so to speak? Does one resistance die with its incorporation, with new resistances emerging elsewhere?

Such is the nature of contemporary society that any new emerging cultural trends are rapidly incorporated into the culture industries if there is a perceived economic value to do so. However this does not eliminate the potential for resistance, it merely alters the scope, angles and perspectives for resistant activity and ideology. Within cultures there is always an
element resistant to every form of incorporation, whilst there is also an entire continuum of resistant activities and philosophies from those entirely passive and dictated to, to those who very selectively tailor the incorporated product to their individual needs. As de Certeau (1984) proposes we are not immune to the powers of commercialism, neither are we all passive consumers. Although influenced by the nature of production, the products of commercialism are the pieces we fit together individually to create our own approach and perspectives to the puzzle that is life. In analysing the participation of gay men in the house scene Amico (2001: 365) comments, style may “be ‘imported’ into another social sphere, whereupon it will continue to symbolise its prior connections while concurrently engendering new associations”. Thus removing something from its original or ‘normal’ context and positioning it within a different set of cultural texts can create a new dimension and add new signified meanings to any given article.

Thus we could say that symbolic resistance in the sociological and subcultural sense is not really applicable and does not do justice to the complexities of dance culture (Jackson 2004). Malbon (1998: 18) comments:

The notion of ‘resistance’ as it was used in the CCCS debates about young people and their cultures was often simplistic and totalising, taking little account of young people’s imaginative and practical construction of their own experiences, and instead privileging only the macro-political dimensions of the so-called ‘resistant’ behaviour.

Therefore although the story of dance culture has been very much one of resistance in a micro political sense, where young people have fought for their right to party and taken illegal drugs, on a wider scale, like many previously over politicised youth cultures, dance culture has not directly constructed itself as an overtly political movement. It has certainly played a role in the restructuring of licensing laws in Britain, with Ministry of Sound being the first club to be granted with an all-night license; it has played a role in the normalisation of recreational drugs, with the wide spread use of ecstasy, cannabis, cocaine and various other narcotics; it has contributed to
the elevation of DJs to the status of cultural icons within the music industry; it has contributed to the democratisation of music production and consumption processes with computer based studio technology and bedroom DJs; and it has spawned various cultural zones where the norms and values of wider society are restructured to suit the needs of its participants. Dance culture has certainly had an impact on the wider society within which it exists and the wider culture has had an influence on the development of dance culture. However it has been the processes more so than the outcomes of these acts that have largely motivated participant behaviour. By and large it is the activities themselves that are the end objectives rather than constituting a strategic approach to processes of socio-political change.

Considering notions of resistance and incorporation therefore facilitates another approach to issues of authenticity, in that the manner in which cultural products are incorporated and incorporated products are utilised in the construction of lifestyles and identities is central to perceptions of authenticity. It is largely through the nature in which cultural products are commodified and their subsequent usage within cultures that perceptions of authenticity are derived. Thus, the processes of identification between individuals, cultural products, the culture industries that market them and the social world are central to notions of authenticity and identity. It is to this issue of identity to which I will now turn.

3.7 Dance music and identity

A common thread that weaves through the discourses of subculture, authenticity, the mainstream, the media, resistance and incorporation is that of identity. Identity is expressed through the desires to be associated and disassociated with particular practices, institutions and cultural products. However in a similar vein to the issues previously raised, identity is far from a static entity as Barker (2000: 177) comments:

Identity is continually being produced within the vectors of similarity and difference. Cultural identity is not an essence but a continually shifting position, and the points of
difference around which cultural identities could form are multiple and proliferating ... and each of these discursive positions is itself unstable ... [all] are subject to continual change since meaning is never finished or completed. Identity then becomes a 'cut' or a snapshot of unfolding meanings; it is a strategic positioning which makes meaning possible. This anti-essentialist position points us to the political nature of identity as a 'production' and to the possibility of multiple, shifting and fragmented identities which can be articulated together in a variety of ways.

The nature of identity is therefore complex and fluid. It is neither a static or a natural state of being, but based on continual processes of interpretation, interaction and modification (Goffman 1959). Thus the meaning we attribute to elements of life and the response mechanisms we develop to specific elements and combinations of elements, (which are continually changing), form who we are and how we perceive others (Epstein 1998). These processes of interpretation and response that are central to identity also mean that within different scenarios, in differing contexts and at different points in time we will adopt different identities (Rojek 2005). Additionally "since there is no automatic connection between the various discourses of identity, class, gender, race, age, etc., they can be articulated in different ways" (Baker 2000: 177).

Youth leisure cultures in general can also enable and facilitate a sense of belonging and identity, even if they are somewhat unstable and fraught with insecurity (Roberts 1997). Indeed leisure activities constitute a point of reference, identification and group assimilation, as part of the postmodern condition particularly related to the fracturing of communities, the blurring of class distinctions and uncertain futures (Huq 2006). Although not new in itself, "the change over time has been that the young people who play together nowadays have rarely grown up together and attended the same local schools. Their sole bond is likely to be the leisure taste or activity" (Roberts 1997: 9). Indeed "it is certainly plausible to argue that through their sub-cultural affiliations today's young people do not so much express as acquire group memberships and identities" (Roberts 1997: 9).
This chapter has already reflected on the complexities of dance culture ideologies and hence the various factors at play in the generation of meanings for participants. Participation in dance culture is closely linked with self-identity and social identity (Thornton 1995, Malbon 1999, Jackson 2004) that is the ideas and notions we hold about ourselves and others and the ideas and notions they hold about us. There are numerous links between the nature of participation and individuals’ perceptions of self and others. Much of the discourse surrounding identity within dance culture relates to the definition of ‘others’ and mainstream society, against which participants position themselves as part of their own identity construction. The definition of others largely relates to the desire to differentiate, whereby individuals attach themselves to or detach themselves from social and cultural tribes (Bennett 1999).

The desire to differentiate is a common factor in identity building, as the comments of Amico (2001) illustrate in his analysis of gay identities in the New York club scene. In relation to the musical choices of certain members of the gay community, where they decided to follow new genres of music that were stylistically different due to the associations and discourses associated with other genres, Amico (2001: 371) comments:

Social actors may be cognisant of surrounding discourses, and may, in fact, wish to differentiate themselves (as individuals or groups) therefrom ... Differentiation was a distinct component of making a choice to follow another genre of music apart from the one which may have appeared stylistically (linearly) obvious.

This highlights the role of musical styles in the construction of individual identities for participants in clubcultures, that the discourses surrounding particular genres evoke powerful associations and that many individuals seek to associate themselves with or distance themselves from particular genre based scenes, depending on their perceptions of such discourses. Whilst some genres may have greater underground status with the implications that they are more authentic and original ideologically, others,
because they are more accessible in aesthetic and physical terms, will be considered inauthentic, phoney and lacking in depth.

Within clubcultures the various means by which individuals acquire higher levels of cultural capital serve as a means of consolidating identity, through the provision of indicators of cultural knowledge and distinction (Bourdieu 1984). The clubs individuals frequent, the records or CDs they buy, the clothes they wear and their hair styles all form part of individuals’ identity because they make a statement about what people know and what they do with this knowledge, what it means to them. They are a demonstration and expression of the level of understanding, knowledge and commitment that participants have to club scenes, artists, musical releases, and fashion. Patterns of consumption and the evidence of such patterns all serve to certify and evidence the corresponding meaning of cultural texts to individuals. The meaning attached to practices and products correspondingly not only becomes part of individuals’ identity, but also conveys information to others about an individual’s self-concept (Kaiser 1990).

Another element raised by Jackson (2004) in his analysis of dance culture, clubbing and identity, is the role the club environment plays in providing a place where people can take on and experiment with different identities. Due to the alternative codes of interaction expected in various social situations and the individual goals of specific situations, we are identified by and stress or suppress different identity attributes in different contexts (Kaiser 1990). In this respect (to put it simply) interactions with club environments are driven by the goals of pleasure and sociality, where interaction occurs both verbally, through dancing and other gestures. Attending clubs with such a purpose therefore leads to the articulation of identity in a form different to most other forms of social activity. The clubbing context enables different approaches to the presentation of self, through emphasis on and presentation of aspects of identity suppressed in everyday life. As Jackson (2004: 158) comments:
the only expectation the night and the people make of you is
that you will make an effort to make the party. How you
chose to express yourself is your business and the rules of
presentation that operate in the wider social sphere are
shattered.

Considering the role of identity and participation in clubbing, the relationship
between identity and clubbing implies the “process of identification” with
amongst other things, people, places and practices, “constructed in terms of
belongings and outsiders” (Malbon 1999: 48). There is often felt to be a
common thread connecting individual participants in clubcultures who may
be completely different in terms of a whole host of social and cultural
factors, but within the club environment there is a mutual identification (Pini
factor in the constitution of clubbing crowds, whereby a shared taste for
music and clubbing, and the sharing of experiences, generates a sense of
empathy within club crowds. This identification and empathy is a major
contributing factor to the often-mentioned sense of belonging associated by
many with participation in clubculture. The sense of belonging generated
through participation, in turn further contributes towards the sense that
being a clubber is a significant part of many participants’ identities. This is
not to say that participation alone provides the necessary conditions for
identification and belonging, although it is a factor. As mentioned above
and in previous sections notions of identity are imbedded in a whole host of
cultural texts and it is the appropriate interpretation and display of these
texts that furthers identification and hence notions of belonging within club
cultures. The issue of belonging will be discussed further in chapter five.

3.8 Territory, space and place
A key theme emerging from the literature on dance culture is the interaction
between participation and identity construction/perceptions. However as
yet, I have given little consideration to the role of space in dance culture.
Although I have briefly referred to the alternative characteristics of dance
environments, it is now necessary to take a closer look at issues of space,
which plays a major role in identity construction and performance both
within the dance culture (Malbon 1999, Jackson 2004) and in wider social
contexts (e.g. Shields 1991, Aitchison et al 2000, Valentine 2001). “Space denotes a limited area: a site, zone, or place characterised by specific social activities with a culturally given identity (name) and image” (Shields 1991: 30). Just as identities are multitudinous, disputed, indefinite and changeable so is space; its qualities are transitory and morphing, delineated not by its physical properties but by its social construction (Aitchison et al 2000). For in reality it is the social construction of space (the discourses and associations surrounding it and their corresponding interpretations) that imbues space with properties both social and physical.

Space is no longer understood as having particular fixed characteristics. Nor is it regarded as being merely a backdrop for social relations, a pre-existing terrain which exists outside of, or frames everyday life. Rather, space is understood to play an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities; and social identities, meanings and relations are recognized as producing material and symbolic or metaphorical spaces (Valentine 2001: 4).

Space is therefore not fixed or definite but socially constructed and therefore socially contested, it is not an objective feature of physical geography, but a subjective feature of social reality (Valentine 2001). Individuals and groups construct spaces in a manner of ways and through a diverse array of influences, which means that spaces have different qualities and meanings based on the manner in which individuals perceive and interact with such spaces. Due to the diversity of influences acting upon spaces, their interpretation and therefore their attributes extend far beyond the physical boundaries of spaces themselves as “sites become associated with particular values, historical events and feelings” (Shields 1991: 29).

All spaces are endowed with meanings that influence the way they are created and consumed and in turn the use of spaces impacts upon the nature in which “people categorise others and identify themselves ... [because] ... Space and society do not merely interact with or reflect each other but rather are mutually constructed” (Valentine 2001: 5). Shields (1991: 31) describes the manner in which relationships between space, society and identity are constructed as “social spatialisation ... which
encompasses both the logic of the spatial and its expression and elaboration in language and more concrete actions, constructions and institutional arrangements”. Much of the attributes places hold in the social imagination are therefore the cumulative product of the discourses of the culture industries, social groups, political bodies and the interaction between these and individual’s lived experiences.

Within the dance culture literature there has been some engagement with issues of space (Thornton 1995, Malbon 1999, Jackson 2004) but although some scholars have commented upon the environment of dance clubs and events, there has been little in-depth socio spatial analysis of dance clubs. Thornton (1995) devotes a significant amount of analysis to the role of clubs within dance culture, considering some aspects of their social construction and the territorial affiliations between participants and the places of participation, however the depth of this analysis is limited. Malbon (1998, 1999) considers clubbing spaces from a number of perspectives, contextualising clubs as social spaces within cities; he looks at clubs as sites of “experiential consumption” and as sites for “the formation and maintenance of identities and identifications” (1998: 267). Jackson (2004) considers how clubs are constructed as different spaces within the cityscape providing an in-depth analysis of the components of clubbing. Interestingly there is little if any consideration of the role of the media, particularly magazines, in the construction of dance spaces in the work of either of these authors. This is an issue I will address in chapter six.

Thornton (1995) has examined the value and role of clubs in the achievement of youth ‘cultural agendas’ (questioning their centrality to youth culture in the mid nineties), the appeal of clubbing and the position of clubbing within the youth leisure environment, much of which was discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Without these places, these sites of participation dance culture would be nothing; it would have no purpose, no goal, and no embodied representation of the culture. So much do clubs form the core of dance culture that it is also often referred to as club culture, a culture based and orientated around clubs (Bennett 1999, Jackson
Clubs achieve highly specific crowds through having “larger catchment areas, narrower demographics and taste specialisations than pubs” (Thornton 1995: 22). In addition there are the specialist media and advertising vehicles through which clubs are publicised, the dance music media, youth radio, flyers (placed in specific outlets), fly posting and club listings, which all help attract the ‘right’ crowd. Finally (although often complained about by clubbers), the bouncers and/or door selectors are the last stage in the crowd selection process for clubs, admitting people or turning them away depending on their conformity to the club’s entrance policy. As Malbon (1999: 65) comments, “the negotiation of the door is a very explicit form of ‘identity-exposure’ in which clubbers attempt to pass a test”. These processes mean that clubbing crowds have a high degree of similarity and conformity in their musical, fashion and media preferences and even when they are not that similar, the process they have gone through to negotiate entry and the sharing of the experience creates a sense of identification. This is a major contributor to the cohesive atmosphere in clubs, as Thornton (1995: 24) comments “this institutional state of affairs is arguably the precondition for that oft-celebrated experience of social harmony, the thrill of belonging afforded by clubs”.

Youth cultures, just as other national cultures and alternative socio-cultural groupings, require space in which to function, develop and legitimate themselves, forums in which participant identities can be established and explored, where cultural knowledge can be acquired and asserted, where the ideologies of cultures are realised through practices. Whilst historically many youth cultures have been played out on the street, occupying particular urban areas (Roberts 1979, Humphries 1981), many other cultures are only really realised within specifically constructed spaces, places bound with physical and psychological signifiers such is the case with dance culture (Richard and Kruger 1998). Within dance culture it is the events, whether they are clubs or one off raves that are the social spaces where the participants immerse themselves, where the culture lives and breathes, they are socially constructed in that they reflect and are a reflection of the wider ideologies of dance culture.
Chapter: 3 Theorising rave/dance music culture

3.9 Liminality and the social construction of space

The concept of liminality is crucial to understanding the practices and constitution of dance culture. Malbon (1999: 108) hints at the liminal properties of dance clubs themselves in that they are “in-between spaces ... and [occupy] in-between times”. This section will seek to examine the notion of liminality and liminal spaces as a potential theoretical perspective for examining dance events, which will then be built upon in the following chapters. Liminality, liminal and liminoid are closely related terms used in differing contexts with various connotations and definitions, depending on the depth and complexity in which they are explored and the context in which they are applied. For some the focus is on liminality and the liminal, however others introduce the additional term of liminoid (Rampton 1999). Turner (1982) is one of the most commonly cited authors who has explored and defined liminality, liminal and liminoid in greater depth. Considering it from an anthropological perspective, much of his focus has been on the application of these concepts in pre-industrial tribal societies. Whilst for many liminality is the condition of between or betwixt, as Tempest and Starkey (2004: 507) comment, “liminality refers to the condition of being ‘betwixt and between’, of existing at the limits of existing structures”. This also relates to Turners’ concept of liminality, based on the work of Van Gennep (1960), as a period of transition, between one life stage and another – part of the rites of passage within tribal societies when boys become men - where a previous identity dissolves and a new identity is formed. Whilst liminality is a more commonly used term, liminoid is also a term used to define an alternative liminal state or space. As Rampton (1999: 340) in reference to Turners work comments:

The distinction between liminal and liminoid can be hard to draw, but while, for example, liminal practices tend to contribute to the smooth functioning of social systems, liminoid practices are often creative, containing social critiques and exposing wrongs in mainstream structures and organisation (1982:45). Similarly, liminality tends to involve symbols with common intellectual and emotional meaning for all members of the group, while "liminoid phenomena tend to be more idiosyncratic, quirky, to be generated by specific
named individuals and in particular groups” (Turner 1974 [1982:54]).

This suggests that dance clubs may be considered as both liminal and liminoid spaces, where individuals engage in a variety of liminal and liminoid practices. These concepts and their applicability to dance culture will be explored in more depth in chapters five, six and seven of this thesis.

Shields (1991) and Preston-Whyte (2004) consider how notions of liminality and the liminal affect perceptions and experiences of spaces, particularly focusing on beaches as liminal spaces. These authors consider how the properties of different spaces are socially constructed, being highly influenced by and influential to discourses which facilitate and perpetuate perceptual conditions and experiential expectations of places. Beaches are places that come loaded with expectations, of the feelings one will gain from walking along the shore, the release that comes with stepping onto the sand and the pleasures and catharsis that come from watching the setting sun. Beaches are places that are neither land nor sea, yet both; they exist as in-between zones and as such many are also contested places, which often leads to the development of particular discourses over the conventions of their use. Thus particular places become nudist beaches and surfing beaches, places of hedonism and places of quiet relaxation as particular discourses prevail. The prevalence of varying perceptions of beaches also leads to many beaches sustaining a variety of uses sometimes in harmony and sometimes with varying degrees of conflict. But there is no escaping the liminal properties of beaches. They are ever changing and uncertain, dynamic as they evolve with the cycle of the moon and the ever present lapping of the shore or crashing of the waves.

Referring to the work of Czikszentmihalyi (1974), Preston-Whyte (2004: 350) comments on the application of the “notion of liminality as "flow" considering flow to be a viable notion in furthering the analysis of perceptions and experiences of liminal spaces. Preston-Whyte (2004: 349) comments, flow is described as "a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little
distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present and future”. This certainly echoes the experience of dancers, who when dancing, experience a state of flux between notions of their individual identity and identification with the dancing crowd, a narrowing of the distinction between self and environment (Pini 1997, Malbon 1999, Rietveld 2003). Liminality refers to an almost timeless state or condition, where everyday notions of space and time can lose their relevance, where the environmental stimulus and its surrounding social discourses facilitate alternative perceptual perspectives.

In terms of the properties of clubs and other dance music experiences the notion of liminality is a very useful concept. Thus “liminality is a condition where the usual practice and order are suspended and replaced by new rites and rituals” (Czarniawska and Mazza 2003: 267) and liminal spaces are inbetween spaces “lie[ing] in a limbo like space often beyond normal social and cultural constraints” (Preston-Whyte 2004: 350). This concept fits well with dance music environments as they are socially constructed as spaces significantly different to those of everyday life, as behavioural and experiential expectations and constraints differ greatly to those of the home, work or the street. Shields (1991: 83-84) states that liminality represents "moments of discontinuity in the social fabric, in social space, and in history ... liminality represents a liberation from the regimes of the normative practices and performance codes of mundane life because of its interstitial nature". Liminality signifies gaps and spaces within the dominant social structures, between prevailing societal norms and values and those actually practised; they are the interstices between governed and regulated regions of life that are able to give rise to alternative practices and new approaches to identity performance and presentation.

Dance clubs exist as social spaces outside of our normative domains and as such they constitute sites of liberation for many. It would be a simplification to say that clubs simply ‘are’ liminal spaces. Because spaces are endowed with qualities through their use (past, present and future) they are socially constructed through a myriad of discourses within social, cultural and
political texts, emerging from a range of media with socio-cultural, political and commercial objectives. These forces collide with secondary personal accounts and peer group references in addition to first hand experiences of participants to generate individual perceptions and interpretations of spaces (Shields 1991). The level of similarity within user groups is therefore a reflection of the emergence of common themes and their acceptance of particular discursive perspectives. However as Valentine (2001) suggests, because space is socially constructed there are always elements which are socially contested, the combined effect of both of these processes is that space is also continually evolving. Little consideration however has been given to the construction and evolution of dance clubs and events and of the liminal properties they could be said to exhibit.

There is also the notion that liminal spaces are marked by thresholds which may be physical and/or psychological, but mark the transition into the liminal experience, the threshold must be reached and negotiated in order to access liminal spaces and experience their liminal characteristics and properties (Shields 1991). This also has a resonance with dance culture where in order to experience the liminal spaces of dance environments, participants must initially identify them as such and the negotiate the threshold of the door or entry gate. This is often a cause of anxiety for many clubbers as mentioned by Malbon (1999) and Jackson (2004); clubbers have to prove that they belong in specific clubs, that they will fit in. Indeed such processes of crowd selection and management could be conceived as an attempt to maintain the liminal properties of the spaces they are entering. Speaking of the unique properties of heterotopias or ‘other spaces’ Foucault (1986: 26) comments on the accessibility of heterotopic spaces in that they are not as instantly accessible as public spaces as “to get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures”. Such conditions surrounding entry and requiring processes of identity negotiation and assessment not only perpetuate their liminal properties, but also leads to the greater sense of identification within dance music events and contributes to the unique qualities attributed to them (Shields 1991). As Preston-Whyte (2004: 351) comments, “while this transition from the
known to the unknown may be accompanied by unease in some cases, it may also produce a feeling of heightened sensitivity or a deeper awareness of the special qualities of the place”. This highlights the prerequisite cultural knowledge required in identifying, accessing and appreciating liminal spaces. In order to maximise the potential of spaces, it is necessary to have prior cultural knowledge of the etiquettes and behavioural expectations upon immersion in liminal spaces, because although liminal spaces exist outside of normal social structures there are still “sets of codes of social interaction” (Shields 1991: 89).

The design and layout of clubs also contributes to their liminal status as clubs create atmospheric zones within them through lighting, music, and design, whilst the outside world is blocked out through the absence of windows. Therefore the physical properties of clubs facilitate their role as places of transition; as participants negotiate the threshold of the door, and then pass through a series of corridors, often punctuated by stairs, moving through a series of spaces, each with differing qualities. The dance floor is then generally located in the area of the club furthest from the street, its physical distance symbolic of the divide between the practices of inside and outside, separating "private from public, the dictates of dance and abandon from the routine rules of school, work and parental home" (Thornton 1995: 21).

Not only can dance events be said to constitute liminal spaces for the above reasons, but also because they (most commonly) occur at night. Hughes (1999: 125) comments, "the importance of the dark to such venues is that they share signifiers of a liminal kind of time, freed from the social constraints and conventions of the day time". Night and day are specific times which mark the cycle of the earth and both are loaded with connotations and associations. The day is generally associated with work and routine and is thus dictated by certain conventions, whilst night is a time for pleasures, a time of transition from one set of values to another, where alternative environments are inhabited and new codes of conduct
arise. Although not specifically referring to the concept of liminality Jackson (2004: 2) highlights the special qualities of the night:

Night is a time of sensual alterity during which the body is unleashed from the rules of propriety that operate in the daylight hours. We are shrouded in night’s cimmerian embrace and use this feeling to expand our carnal lives and savour disparate, social experiences.

Just as space is socially constructed, so too is time, a product particularly of industrialisation (Clarke and Critcher 1985). Convention dictates that the morning is when you awake and go to work and the evening is the time where you relax and nighttime when you sleep, likewise week days are most commonly associated with work and the weekends with leisure. Although all these boundaries and demarcations are blurring, it still remains that particular times have strong associations and therefore social expectations, of these expectations, the night is the time which is least socially restricted. It is during the night time when cultural metanarratives for social conduct and interaction lose their dominance, often aided by the consumption of narcotics (alcohol, ecstasy and so forth), with the corresponding effect of creating of a liminal time zone. The liminality of the night is also aided by the reduced visibility, which can shroud individuals’ identity and alter perceptions of space, leading to alternative perceptions of both physical spaces and social practices. Indeed many dance clubs are also quite dark and the lighting within them often serves to emphasise the darkness in an indirect way, whilst also contributing to the otherworldly ambience of many clubs.

Whilst I would argue that these are all ideas key to understanding dance culture, the dance culture specific literature has given little consideration to liminality, liminal/liminoid practices as to the social construction of spaces. Whilst Malbon (1999: 107) investigates notions of liminality in terms of the physical sense of being “outside or beyond oneself” whilst dancing and being part of a dancing crowd, there is little attention devoted to the social construction of clubs within the theoretical framework of liminal/liminoid spaces. As highlighted above there is certainly scope for the investigation of
clubs as such sites and this forms an element of my consideration of the social construction of clubbing environments and participant identities.

3.10 Dance and the body

Entwined in the construction of spaces and places are the activities that take place within them, for as outlined above, these are central to understanding their nature and construction. Since dancing is a key activity in clubs, it makes sense to turn our attention now to this activity. Considering the term dance is now the main identifier within dance culture and has always been a core activity at raves and other dance events, it is remarkable how little academic interest there has been in dancing. In 1997 Ward commented that although dancing was a central component of raves and therefore a core element of their appeal, none of the previous studies had really explored the significance of this activity. As Malbon (1999: 87) comments “traditionally, dancing in whatever form – ballet, modern, folk, popular – has been neglected by the social sciences which have tended to approach dancing as primitive, carnal and thus unworthy of study”. Dance could also be considered as a liminal activity, existing outside of established social structures and therefore making its study appear less relevant to many social scientists. This however has began to change as authors such as Pini (1997), Malbon (1999) and Jackson (2004) have given the topic consideration in their research, which will be discussed later.

Straw (2001) has considered the differing historical perceptions of dance in Western culture, focusing on how dance has been perceived both as a cultural tradition and therefore a type of bodily discipline, but also as an immoral, unrestrained and undisciplined activity. Past perceptions of dance activities therefore relate to formalised, structured dance styles and the sequences that accompany them as cultured and disciplined virtuous activity. Such styles were perpetuated by the transfer of knowledge and etiquette within the social hierarchy, masking and concealing individuality through the formulaic bodily response to music.
In contrast, other perspectives consider that dancing relates to a completely different set of values that position dancing as, “the very model of social disorder” (Straw 2001: 158). Where dancing is freeform and not formulaically based, it has been perceived as a threat to society’s norms and values, an opportunity for individual expression with disdainful results. Such unregulated dancing was seen as a threat to the fabric of decent society, where the ethos of individual bodily autonomy prevailed over that of the dominant classes and the state. Where dance was perceived as a “non-rational activity” (Ward 1997: 7), it was not governed by normal sensibilities or social rules but by the attitudes and emotions of the dancers and context of the dance in terms of music and place.

In more recent times attitudes towards dance have changed dramatically with the decline of formal, formularised dancing and the emergence of new perceptions of dance and its associated etiquettes. As with all social activity dance is still undoubtedly influenced by etiquette, however the nature of this is variable, depending on the setting of the dance. Prior to the emergence of the rave scene, dancing within clubs was associated with the feminine, women danced with women or with men, but men generally danced very little and very rarely danced without a partner. Rave and dance culture has however served to democratise dancing, liberating men to dance, without demasculinising them (Jackson 2004).

There have only been a handful of studies such as those by Pini (1997), Malbon (1999) and Jackson (2004) in which the processes and functions of dance have received attention as integral components of the dance culture. As Ward (1997: 6) comments, “writing about dance is a paradoxical pursuit; one that involves traversing the ontological faultline that inevitably divides dancing from writing ... dancing is not writing ... [and] writing is simply not dancing”. As Ward’s comments highlight, to write or to talk about dance is very difficult, as you cannot easily or accurately articulate the experience and sense of self achieved through such experiences. However, due to the centrality of dancing to the dance culture and the significance of dance to cultures all over the world, addressing this issue is vital.
A common theme emerging from the literature concerned with dancing in clubs and at raves is the sense of relinquishing individual bodily autonomy to the dancing crowd, "the seeming 'loss' of the individual self to a wider 'body'" (Pini 1997: 119-120). As Malbon (1999: 49) comments this is the point where self identity gives way to a wider identification with the dancing crowd, "a going beyond of individual identities, an experience of being both within yet in some way outside of oneself at once". Malbon refers to this experience as liminality, where in the process of dancing, individuals transcend their normal physical bodily state and sense of self to occupy an in-between state, the most heightened state of which he considers can bring about or initiate unique experiences:

Oceanic experiences might involve feelings of loss (of self, of time, of place, of limitations); feelings of gain (of unity, of 'everythingness', of oneness, of a ideal place, of release); and feelings of 'quasi-physicality' - of some form of discontinuity between the physical and emotional experience of one's own body and surroundings (Malbon 1999: 107).

Malbon does not claim that clubbers reside in oceanic states when dancing, they experience flux between varying degrees of reality awareness, momentary and enduring instances where concepts of self, space and time are subverted and overwhelmed while dancers reside in this state. For many it is the combined influence of drugs and the rhythmical dancing of many individuals together, to the same beat that, temporarily, enables members of dancing crowds to move from their individualised sense of self to become part of a greater whole; creating a sense of "togetherness" which facilitates "the unloading of the burden of reality" (Bauman 1995: 47). Concurrently, whilst burdens of reality become lost during oceanic experiences, there are also strong sensations of gain, where having unleashed the constraints of self, time and space an alternative appreciation of being can be realised. Notions of self, space and time are major governing constraints on individuality and when these are subverted individuals become open and perceptive to wider spheres of identification, with the crowd, the space itself and the entirety of its constituents, leading to feelings of oneness through a totalising appreciation and identification.
with surroundings. “Time, space and sensory input fragmenting and collapsing, yet held together by the repetitive beat; suspended ... being everything and nothing; part of all; complete, yet empty” (Rietveld 2003: 56).

Malbon devotes significant attention to the topic of dancing and the spacings of dancing within clubs, the depth of which is beyond the intended scope of this review. His analysis and discussion of dancing and club culture goes far beyond this quote below, although it gives some indication of his detailed exploration of the complexities of dance:

In the clubbing experience dancing can be about losing control over one’s body and yet somehow gaining a deeper level of control over the body though willingly yielding oneself to this process of relinquishment. Dancing can be about becoming part of and submitting to the dancing crowd, yet also individualising the self through the bodily practices of dancing within that crowd. Dancing can be about expressing oneself to others and constructing one’s own notion of self concurrently. Dancing fuses notions of ‘inside’ (emotions) and ‘outside’ (motions) as the external becomes internalised (Malbon 1999: 91).

Dancing creates a sense of release for participants, where the prevailing ideologies of bodily control and rationalism, so engrained in everyday life, become subsumed in the music and atmosphere of the club (Jackson 2004). Obviously participants generally do not go straight into a club and start dancing, it involves a process of immersion into the environment, getting a feel for the beat and the crowd and tentatively dancing around the edges of the floor before more uninhibited relinquishment occurs. Indeed Jackson (2004) considers the average dancefloor on the average night goes through five stages of development and socio-spatial evolution. Initially people acquaint themselves with a venue and check out the other people in attendance, people congregate around peripheral areas such as bars and the edges of the dancefloor. When people are feeling more comfortable then some may begin dancing around the edges of the dancefloor, as energy levels rise in the club more people will gravitate towards the dancefloor as the crowd begins warming up, in stage four the dancefloor
reaches its climax (its most energetic, crowded, uninhibited) and in stage five the dancefloor begins to thin out as people leave whilst others continue until the house lights come on.

It is important to consider the stages of build up within a club as within these stages there are likely to be different emotions and attitudes towards dancing and whilst dancing. During different stages of the night clubbers will fluctuate between introspection and extroversion, merging in with the crowd and surroundings or standing out and making a statement to other dancers and bystanders. In dancing people are actively contributing to the experience of everyone else (and themselves), for without people dancing clubs seem spiritless and lacking in energy, it is the dancefloor that provides the focus for simultaneous participation, construction and consumption of the clubbing experience.

In terms of the social construction of space, dancing is central to the creation of dance clubs and events as distinct social spaces and as such a fundamental expectation the majority of clubbers have when going out is to dance, have a ‘boogie’ or a ‘stomp’. Dancing enables individuals to submerge themselves and their identity in the mass of the crowd during the peak of the night when the density is high. Conversely dancing enables individuals to attract the attention of others where they then have the opportunity to make some form of statement about themselves; whether this is ‘look at me I’m gorgeous’ or ‘look at me because I don’t care what you think’. Dancing enables the expression and accentuation of individual identity characteristics, whilst also facilitating the process of identifying with others and merging into the mass for those who desire not to stand out. Although dance is often considered as irrational and associated with ecstatic states, whilst these are fleetingly achieved, dancing is more commonly an emotional and social response to the places of dance culture and their qualities.
3.11 Dance music and drugs

Another influence on the atmosphere and processes of identification related to participating in dance events is drugs (Jackson 2004). Drugs not only alter the way in which participants perceive others and the manner in which they interact, they also create a further link between participants who are simultaneously breaking the law and defying the wider norms and values of society in the hedonistic pursuit of altered states of consciousness and sociality. The identities of the majority of participants at dance events are also partially drug induced, therefore making this an essential area for consideration.

As chapter two discussed, much of the early academic, government and media attention attributed to dance culture was due to its illegal status and the role of illegal drugs in it. Numerous authors have touched upon the issue of drugs at some point in their analysis of dance culture, although often this has been no more than a superficial acknowledgement of their presence. As previously mentioned there has been a significant amount of academic analysis of the response of various social institutions particularly the police, government and media to rave culture and the recreational drugs the scene was fuelled by. However much of this analysis focused more on the responses of these institutions to individuals taking drugs and the analysis of these responses; there have been fewer analytical accounts of the role of drugs in dance culture, although a handful of authors have addressed the issue of drugs in greater depth in their analysis of dance culture (Merchant and Macdonald 1994, Malbon 1999, Critcher 2000, Riley et al 2001, Gourley 2004, Jackson 2004).

Jackson (2004: 55) in particular has provided a deeper consideration of the role of drugs in constructing dance clubs as places outside of conventional social spheres commenting on the central role of drugs (alcohol, ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamine, marijuana and psychedelics) "in generating the socio-sensual shifts that mark the club arena out from other forms of public space". He provides a thoughtful analysis of the roles and effects of each of these drugs within club culture, analysing their effects, clubber's attitudes to
them and the role that drugs have played in the development of dance culture and the evolution of the night-club atmosphere. He charts and considers the socio-cultural shift that occurred with the emergence of ecstasy on the nation’s dance-floors.

Ecstasy is acknowledged as a core ingredient in rave culture (Saunders 1993, Merchant and Macdonald 1994, Malbon 1999, Critcher 2000, Riley et al 2001, Gourley 2004, Jackson 2004), with musical preference for dance music constituting an indicator of adolescent drug use (Forsyth et al 1997). In the 2004/5 Mixmag Drugs Survey 93% of respondents had taken ecstasy, with 75% having taken it in the month leading up to the survey. Of the 75% who had taken ecstasy the average usage was twice per month, with the average reader going out 3 times a month. These figures, although only representative of the readers of this magazine who chose to respond to this survey, demonstrate the prevalence of ecstasy within dance culture. The Mixmag survey also collects data on various other drugs used by clubbers and in 2005 cannabis was the second most widely used drug with 65% of clubbers having used it in the past month; cocaine use has risen sharply in its use over the past five years with 84% of clubbers having taken it compared to 36% in 1999; 57% of respondents said they took cocaine in the preceding month. Whilst some have estimated figures of about half a million regular ecstasy users in 1992 (Smith), authors such as Saunders (1993) put the figure much higher in the region of one to five million. However, as with any illegal activity, quantification of drug taking amongst the UK population is fraught with difficulties and therefore all surveys and estimates remain only that.

Because people’s tolerance increases with use and the high demand for ecstasy has led to deterioration in its quality, new drug cocktails are being sought to gain new highs (Jackson 2004). The diversification in drug taking patterns may also be a sign of people’s acknowledgement that in the longer term the detrimental health effects from excessive ecstasy use are as yet relatively unknown. Merchant and Macdonald (1994: 28) mentioned how speed (amphetamine) and cocaine became the dance drug of choice in
many areas and alcohol also made a comeback into the rave scene being "consumed along with other illicit drugs". What is established is that over time as drug users become more confident at using one type of drug, they are more inclined to experiment with a variety of narcotics often in combination. Indeed "the increasing diversity of dance music styles within rave culture has been mirrored by a diffusion of demand for drugs" according to Merchant and Macdonald (1994: 27). Within different social groups and dance scenes there are drug trends where specific substances become more and less popular (Riley et al 2001), however there are no fixed patterns as such for individual genre based scenes, as Jackson (2004: 76-77) comments:

Drugs exist within social networks and these networks have their own rules about what drugs they will or won't take. However, these rules change over time, new drugs are introduced and old ones abandoned as people's relationships with drugs change. The utterly simplistic idea that you have a joint one week and then end up taking heroin because one drug somehow leads to another is ridiculous. Drugs are part of socialising and these social groups dictate the types of drugs people come across.

From the Mixmag survey there is also considerable evidence that growing numbers of clubbers use a variety of drugs, with different drugs becoming more and less popular over the duration of their survey. Having become confident with ecstasy many clubbers begin consuming a wider cocktail of drugs to attain alternative highs, often tailoring cocktails to suit their desires and social settings (Jackson 2004). Such actions pose even greater risks to drug users; this has been demonstrated by the rise in Ecstasy related deaths (deaths in which ecstasy has been part of the drug cocktail consumed). In the past 15 years "there have been over 200 reported deaths in the UK related to ecstasy ... reaching an all time high of 43 in 2001 in England and Wales alone" (Drugscope 2006). In 2002 there were 63 people who "died after taking ecstasy in England and Wales plus a further 20 in Scotland, according to the National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths" (Anon 2004c: 48). What is surprising is that despite these statistics the majority of clubbers continue to consume cocktails of drugs,
often on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis and with little consideration of the potential consequences. The issue behind such behaviour may be partially put down to the societal discourses surrounding drugs, that they may kill you instantly or turn you into a depraved addict (Gourley 2004, Jackson 2004). The problem is that in the overwhelming majority of cases neither is true and therefore many users, having overcome their initial fears, become complacent in their drug taking as it becomes more normalised.

Jackson (2004: 74-75) considers that clubbers go through several stages when using drugs, “discovery, honeymoon, excess [and] reassessment”. The first phase is when participants first take a drug (Jackson notes in his study alcohol was the first drug participants had taken) and upon enjoying their first experiences generally disregard the official stance that drugs are bad. Having overcome their fear of a drug, participants then go through the honeymoon period where they may take the drug more and are most enthusiastic about it. Following this is often a period of excess where there is over indulgence, which often leads to fatigue or flatness in the remainder of the clubber’s life outside of clubbing. Such conditions then lead to a reassessment of the drug when participants may stop taking it altogether or alter their frequency and patterns of drug taking. Gourley (2004: 62) commenting on the use of ecstasy in the dance culture also states that “the drug ecstasy seems to be a substance used intensively for a short period of time, before there is a move to light recreational use”.

The largest problem is that dance culture grew and developed with drugs; they are a significant influence of the alternative associations and attributes of dance clubs (Jackson 2004), but the duration of their presence within UK youth culture and further afield has significantly normalised their use (Gourley 2004). This is not to say that they are normal within society as a whole, but within specific social networks and dance club environments a process of normalisation has occurred (Riley et al 2001). Even as far back as 1994 authors such as Measham et al (1994) and Merchant and Macdonald (1994) were commenting on the normalisation of drug use. Merchant and Macdonald (1994) interviewed clubbers, investigating their
attitudes towards drugs (particularly ecstasy) and the feelings associated with use. These discussions served to highlight the growing trend towards the normalisation of recreational drug use amongst young people, with growing numbers taking ecstasy and younger people also trying it. In addition they provide accounts of those who have taken ecstasy and their feelings and experiences, commenting:

Whilst informants noted that the experience of the drug tended to be dependent on personal mood and aspects of the drug taking environment, they reported generally the effect of Ecstasy on their mental health state (and to some extent social life) had been positive, inducing feelings of empathy, alertness, energy and love (Merchant and Macdonald 1994: 21-22).

Critcher (2000: 154) also addresses the narcotic component of rave culture from the perspective of risk and considers “a central component of the social reaction to rave culture was that the young people involved were at risk”. In particular, society was concerned about the risks associated with altering the normal functions of the body through taking illegally manufactured drugs about which little was known. The main issue was the lack of research on the effects of using ecstasy and what medical conditions it could lead to as its long terms effects are relatively unknown. Whereas many previous youth cultures had a large drug element it was not such a central focus and the drugs were often prescription stimulants and anti depressants, manufactured in laboratory conditions with established long term effects and quality control mechanisms. Rave culture was that much more risky for participants because of the lack of understanding and regulation of the drugs involved. There was also a concern that vast numbers of young people having experienced drugs would become socially dysfunctional drug addicts, although this has since been disproved by many authors (Riley et al 2001, Goulding et al 2002, Goulding and Shankar 2004, Gourley 2004, Jackson 2004), who all acknowledge that the majority of participants are either students or employed and actively engage with wider society.
Critcher draws comparisons with other activities which have an inherent risk such as extreme sports “where danger is built into the activity and risk part of the attraction”, but rejects that ravers “valued the experience of risk” suggesting “for them risk was not part of the activities’ intrinsic appeal” (2000: 156 - 157). He concludes that perspectives and theories of risk and society relate more to the social reaction to rave rather than its appeal to young consumers. There is obviously an element of placing ones’ life in someone else’s hands in other words the manufacturer of the drug, which requires a large element of trust in the manufacture and supply structures within the scene. But a major effect of taking ecstasy is to be more trusting of and open to strangers, with whom the only thing you have in common is taking similar drugs and being at a club/rave. There is an overwhelming assumption amongst clubbers that people would not deliberately manufacture drugs that would endanger their life and as a consequence thousands of clubbers across the UK buy drugs from complete strangers every weekend. On the same premise of trust dealers in clubs also sell to people they do not know and have never seen before on the basis of trust, that they will not report them to the police and that they are not undercover police officers themselves. This again raises the issue of the extent to which individuals identify with others within this group and the process of mutual trust. It must be noted however, as previously mentioned, in the context of dance culture, drug use operates within social scenes and it is generally within more close knit social circles that drugs are distributed and acquired (Gourley 2004, Jackson 2004).

Recreational drugs and their ‘normalisation’ is another issue raised by Critcher (2000: 157), who states that government estimates in 1996 were that “a million Ecstasy tablets were being consumed each week”. This, placed in the context of other drug use makes Ecstasy the third or fourth most popular drug in the UK, with alcohol in first place followed by cannabis then ecstasy or tobacco. Critcher considers that ecstasy has had a dramatic effect on the attitudes of young people to drugs, “marking the transition of drug use from the margins to the centre of youth leisure cultures” (2000: 158). The relationship between dance culture and drugs, particularly
ecstasy and other stimulants is therefore widely established and has been subject to significant investigation. This thesis will obviously address the drug aspect of dance culture; however it does not feature as a key theme or direction of investigation.

3.12 Summary
Throughout this chapter a range of issues have been considered with respect to dance culture and its participants and there are a whole host of issues, which arise from these that present further avenues for research. The concept of subculture as defined by the CCCS, is no longer accepted as adequate in the study of youth cultural groupings, particularly dance culture. Moreover whilst issues of authenticity, credibility, resistance and incorporation still remain pertinent to youth cultural ideologies, viewing youth cultures in terms of such binary oppositions brings limited understanding to such phenomenon and represents a simplification of the processes and forces at play. The interplay between youth ideologies and identity is also still highly relevant and must be incorporated into the analysis of dance culture; however the essentialist nature of the work of scholars such as Thornton requires adaptation to meet the demands of the changing socio-cultural environment. Overlapping these elements are issues of space, liminality and performance which I believe to be potentially very useful tools and theoretical perspectives through which to analyse contemporary youth cultures. To fully explore dance culture therefore requires a cross-disciplinary approach encompassing leisure studies, sociology, social geography, cultural studies and media studies. Chapter four will now address the theoretical perspective and methodology of this thesis.
Chapter 4
Study approach and methods

4:1 Introduction
This chapter will begin by outlining the epistemological perspective of this study and justify the philosophical stance taken, initially considering the two cornerstones of positivism and constructionism, before presenting the rationale for the adoption of a constructionist perspective. Following this it considers the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism utilised in this research in terms of its coherency with constructionism and the research aims. The chapter then goes on to detail the various research methods used to explore the socio-cultural world of dance culture and its participants.

4.2 Epistemology
This section will outline and justify the study’s epistemological approach since it is essential to consider the question of “how we know what we know and to determine the status ascribed to the understandings we reach” (Crotty 1998: 18). There are a variety of potential epistemological approaches open to the researcher, all of which have their unique merits and potential flaws, and lead to different theoretical perspectives and methodological possibilities (Miller and Brewer 2003). It is essential to carefully consider the epistemological perspective of this research project, to ensure it facilitates the research process and provides a meaningful and legitimate outcome. First I will consider the two fundamental cornerstones of positivism and constructionism before I elaborate upon and justify my epistemological stance in the context of this research.

Positivism relates to the scientific research ontology and “subscribes to the application of natural science methods and practice to the social sciences” (Miller and Brewer 2003: 235). The term is derived from positive science and positive philosophy and “finds its basis in something that is posited” (Crotty 1998: 19). Therefore facts and truth are established as given, fixed through scientific research using scientific methods. “Measuring empirical
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phenomena, drawing causal connections between variables, [and] generalising about findings" is the basis of science (Schutt 1996: 190). Positivist research attempts to establish the nature of cause and effect between artefacts of study (variables), using quantitative research methods and statistical analysis to ascertain the nature of the relationship between variables (Black 1999). It attempts to generate laws and principles that govern the nature of relations between social objects similar to the causal relationships established within the natural sciences such as biology and physics. This approach was seen as the only way to truth in social research until the 1950s and 1960s when “developments in the philosophy of science combined with other developments in sociology and in philosophy [began to] erode confidence in the ambition to create an objective method notionally modelled on the quantitative natural sciences” (Cuff et al 1998: 116).

In relation to the social world positivism considers that meaning resides within objects themselves and it is only through objective analysis i.e. discounting the influence of the mind and its experiences, that we can truly understand the nature of researched subjects (Black 1999). Therefore studying objects and events in isolation, identifying all the variable elements and excluding the potential for influence by external factors, is considered the only way to achieving proper scientific validity for those adopting a positivist research epistemology (Cuff et al 1998). Therefore positivism provides “a basis for linking truth to meaning in a way that allows no pathway to genuine knowledge other than that of science” (Crotty 1998: 24). Under this perspective, research and its findings are only considered scientifically meaningful or valid if they can be verified and retested to produce the same results, everything must meet the verification principle if it is to be considered scientific fact or worthy of scholarly attention. Related to the control of variables this approach, in its pursuit of validity, also seeks neutrality, “which refers to the need to make sure research is not being biased by the scholar’s personal or political commitments” (Saukko 2003: 18). This approach is also described as the naturalist approach as it
considers that the laws of nature represent the truest model for conducting scientific research (Miller and Brewer 2003).

In contrast, constructionism is the epistemology opposite in approach and assumptions to positivism. As previously noted this epistemological perspective emerged in the 1920s and 1930s and gained greater currency during the 1950s and 1960s (Cuff et al 1998). Prior to the development of compelling arguments against positivism and for constructionism, those within the social sciences seeking scientific legitimacy had to comply with the theoretical and methodological framework established by the natural sciences, which were subsequently rejected by many within the social sciences (Robson 2002). Constructionism is, as the term suggests, based on the view "that reality is socially constructed" and on this premise there are "multiple realities" that exist in relation to any given social phenomena (Robson 2002: 27). To further elaborate, Crotty (1998: 42) considers constructionism is based on the view that,

all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

The foundations of constructionism concern the central principle that without interpretation things have no meanings, it is only through perception, interaction and experiences that objects and experiences become meaningful. Within this epistemological perspective it follows that people will also interpret things differently and a single object will mean a variety of things to different people, influenced by their culture, personal experiences and the nature of their interaction with the research object (Alasuutari 1998). It is not merely the inherent qualities of the object of study, but how these are situated and contextualised within the social world that is of concern and interest to constructionist researchers (Schutt 1996, Seale 1999).
Constructionism regards qualitative research methods as the best way to research the social world, enabling a more in-depth analysis of the components of the social world and its constituents (Robson 2002). Methods such as interviews, observation and focus groups enable the researcher to investigate individuals' perceptions and attitudes, and to construct a representation of the worlds in which they exist and interact. As Schutt (1996: 434) comments, "the constructionist approach provides a useful way of thinking about how best to make sense of the complexity and subjectivity of the social world".

Thus, for this research study the epistemological perspective of constructionism has been selected over naturalism or positivism, as I consider this to be a more appropriate manner in which to approach the social world (Crotty 1998, Seale 1998, Storey 2001, Saukko 2003). As positivism is specifically concerned with collecting data to examine patterns, and proving or disproving hypothesis to generate specific scientific laws, it is preoccupied with definite and rigid principles, relationships and patterns, assuming there is always an objective truth to be found through the research process (Schutt 2001). However, society is far more fluid than nature, as people have infinite differences in their lived experiences and in their interactions with the world, thus society complies more with the structure of relativism than naturalism (Robson 2002). Due to the number of variables that shape societies and their inhabitants, the scientific principles of positivism grossly oversimplify and dismiss a vast array of variables, which cannot be incorporated into the rigid structure of positivist epistemology and its resulting methodological approaches. Such actions (positivist approaches to society and culture) will lead to unreliable and ill-informed generalisations regarding the nature of society, which are likely to have little application in contemporary social contexts (Storey 2001).

The constant evolution of society and hence peoples' attitudes and perceptions is another issue that positivist approaches fail to account for and attempting to generate causal relationships between social phenomena is highly problematic (Saukko 2003). Very few social trends continue
indefinitely, therefore researchers must accept that their research is only applicable to and representative of a particular period of time and group of subjects who have been studied. The circular nature of society and culture is another important factor which strengthens the adoption of a constructionist epistemology. People, their behaviour and their attitudes shape the social world, whilst the social environment shapes peoples’ behaviour and attitudes (Blumer 1969). This is a constant ongoing circular process; therefore human and social factors (including researchers themselves) must play a central, pivotal role in researching society and culture.

Additionally as there is no differentiation between the subjects of natural and social science in the positivist approach, it fails to account for the feelings and attitudes of the subjects studied (Seale 1998). Yet people and their behaviour are incomparable to the laws of nature, as experience, attitudes and emotions (in addition to social structure and institutions) - all subject to constant change - govern people, their thoughts and actions. Positivism also seeks to examine and test objects or relationships in situations where all the internal and external variables can be identified and controlled, however in human nature these variables are difficult enough to try identify let alone control. Saukko (2003: 19) argues that instead of thinking of validity as a singular objective ‘truth’ social researchers should consider this in terms of “multiple validities [which] suggest that we should approach reality in less simplistically dichotomous (‘true’ or ‘false’; ‘right’ or ‘wrong’; ‘heaven’ or ‘hell’) and more complex terms”. This suggests a gross oversimplification in the scientific method when applied to social and cultural studies, as social phenomena and the factors that influence them exist upon continuums whereby individuals and practices would reside at different points along continuums of similarity and difference, and cause and effect. The nature of the social world is such that attempting to establish causal patterns and binary relationships between social variables is impossible as the diversity of individual attributes makes such causal formulations arbitrary.
The theoretical reasoning for a constructionist epistemology in the study of culture is therefore "that the facts of society and culture belong to a different order from those of nature" (Walsh 1998: 217-218). The study of culture requires a significantly different approach in which humanistic elements play a primary role and cannot be eliminated from the research process. People cannot be studied or understood without considering and taking account of their thought processes and the nature of their interactions within the world, including social structures, which it must be acknowledged, are also subjective (Davies 1999).

4.3 Theoretical perspective
I have adopted the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism, which I believe to be most appropriate to the assumptions of constructionism, the goals of this research and the methodology and methods necessary to achieve these goals. This perspective holds that the social world and our understandings of and interactions with it are largely based on the value and interpretation of symbols and symbolic acts (Cuff et al 1998). Being an extension of constructionism, symbolic interaction proposes that society and its constituents are socially constructed, rather than naturally existing entities. According to Blumer (1969) there are three fundamental principles to the theory of symbolic interactionism. The first principle is that "human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (Blumer 1969: 2). People do not act or react towards things themselves they react to the meaning of those things and if something is deemed not to be meaningful then it may not invoke any reaction at all. Therefore people will react in different ways to the same situation, experience or artefact, depending on its social and cultural significance to them (Hall 1997). This perspective also contends that everything means something to someone, and, illustrates how behaviour considered trivial or insignificant to one individual may be highly significant, offensive or even insulting to another who has been socialised differently. Additionally behaviour considered very normal within one social context can be interpreted as highly bizarre within another context and vice versa.
The second principle of this theory is that the "meaning of such things is derived from, or arise out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" (Blumer 1969: 2). Culture is not something static, it is constantly evolving "as a shared system of meanings, [it] is learned, revised, maintained and defined in the context of people interacting" (Spradley 1980: 9). People from other cultures or social groups place greater importance on certain things perceived by them to be important to their culture and identity that give them greater cultural credibility with their peers (Pountain and Robins 2000). For example, people who consider themselves' to be trendy and socially active may feel compelled to attend every club night held by a particular promoter, just so they can say they went there. People behave in ways they consider socially acceptable within the social contexts that they interact; hence the difference in individual's behaviour patterns in various social settings. People take on different identities within different settings based on the conventions of particular settings and the expectations, norms and values of individuals within them (Goffman 1969). Symbolic interactionism also holds that values and meanings are in a constant state of change and evolution, subject to the experiences and attitudes of people and the interactions and structures of the social world. Due to processes of implementation, feedback, assessment and evaluation, social identities and the meaning of social practices are therefore continually subject to change (Cuff et al 1998).

The third principle of symbolic interactionism is that "meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer 1969: 2). That is people use their cultural knowledge and experience to interpret and judge how to respond to specific incidents and situations. Therefore people will react to the same situation differently, depending on their culture and cultural experiences. This also illustrates how what was 'cool' and in fashion one month may not be considered cool or fashionable later as a result of successive changes and events. So instead of culture being a static set of values that condition behaviour and influence all people of that culture in a particular way it must be interpreted much more flexibly than this. As Cuff et al (1998: 117)
comment regularities and patterns of behaviour in the social world and the relationships between these areas are "conventional" rather than "causal"; they arise from social conventions and interactions, rather than wider laws.

Goffman (1969) also explores issues surrounding social life and the presentation of self as a series of performances occurring on symbolic stages. The symbolic nature of interaction is embodied in the roles that individuals perform within different social settings such as work, the pub, a dinner party and so on. In each of these settings and many more, individuals will take on slightly or sometimes significantly altered roles to those assumed in other scenarios. The roles adopted largely result from social conventions and the individual interpretation of such conventions (the socio-cultural knowledge they have acquired and their perception of how they should respond to such knowledge). Previous experiences of social stages and performances and the processes of evaluation and modification that take place during and following performances also affect the nature of social reality for individuals. Further consideration will be given to Goffman and performance issues in chapter seven of this thesis.

Therefore, for a researcher adopting symbolic interactionism, culture is best considered as:

A set of principles for creating dramas, for writing script, and of course, for recruiting players and audiences ... Culture is not simply a cognitive map that people acquire, in whole or in part, more or less accurately, and then learn to read. People are not just map readers they are map makers. People are cast out into imperfectly charted, continually revised sketch maps. Culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for map making and navigation. Different cultures are like different schools of navigation designed to cope with different terrains and seas (Frake 1977: 6-7).

The construction of the social world is thus the product of the interaction of cultural values and norms within varying social conditions (Valentine 2001). This is an ongoing process of symbolic interaction, whereby different acts, artefacts, words, contexts and responses combine to create varying
perceptions of reality. Symbolic interactionism outlines the processes of participation and evaluation, reflection and amendment that occur continually in our day to day lives, which shape the nature of our interaction with the social world, governed by our interpretation of symbolic acts (Cuff et al 1998).

4:4 Methodology
This section outlines, explains and justifies the methodological approaches adopted in this study. Lazar (1998: 8) defines methodology as:

The fundamental or regulative principles which underlie any discipline (for example, its conception of its subject matter and how that subject matter might be investigated).

In line with my epistemological and theoretical perspective, the methods of the natural sciences have been deemed as inappropriate to the study of social phenomena and a constructionist approach has been adopted which will use qualitative research methods. Qualitative research now has a long history as Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 1) comment, “the work of the ‘Chicago School’ in the 1920s and 1930s established the importance of qualitative inquiry for the study of human group life”. In this study qualitative primary research forms the backbone of the investigation, with research methods originating from the fields of anthropology, sociology, media and cultural studies. Qualitative research:

Is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self ... qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 3).

Ethnography is the term used to describe the research approach and collection of methods used in conjunction to explore people, their lives and
cultures (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). This approach to research is contrary to the scientific approach that seeks to retain neutrality and objectivity in the pursuit of data free from the biases of human intervention (Seale 1998). Ethnography is a means of understanding groups of people by learning from them, studying their behaviour and questioning the significance and meaning behind their actions and words. To understand the participant’s perception of reality, how they see things and what they consider to be important in life are some core objectives of ethnography (Spradley 1980).

As such there is no rigid structure or defined procedure for conducting ethnographic research; the main methods associated with this methodology are fieldwork and participant observation, however these are merely a series of information gathering techniques consisting of different levels of participation in and observation of cultures (Ervin 2000). This approach allows for greater flexibility in the research process, as the types of information gathering techniques used vary, depending on the questions the research is attempting to answer and the contexts in which the researcher can gain access to the participants of the culture. Spradley has theorised extensively on the subject of ethnography, in particular the methodological issues associated with participant observation and ethnographic interviewing. Here he outlines the purpose and some core elements of ethnographic research:

> It reveals what people think and shows us the cultural meanings they use daily. It is the one systematic approach in the social sciences that leads us into those separate realities which others have learned and which they use to make sense out of their worlds (Spradley 1980: vii).

Using ethnographic methods to research cultures and groups within society facilitates analysis and documentation of the specific ways in which people view their social and cultural worlds. Such methods also reveal how individuals interact with elements of their social world, the symbolic nature and elements of their lifestyles and experiences, and how these all
interrelate with each other and the wider society (Ervin 2000). One of the main objectives in carrying out ethnographic style research is:

To step outside our narrow cultural backgrounds, to set aside our socially inherited ethnocentrism, if only for a brief period, and to apprehend the world from the viewpoint of other human beings who live by different meaning systems ... it is a pathway to understanding the cultural differences that make us what we are as human beings (Spradley 1980: vii-viii).

This statement reveals some of the difficulties of carrying out ethnographic research in that the researcher has to be aware of and set aside their preconceptions about life, its purposes and meanings. All things taken for granted have to be put aside and re-evaluated, social norms and values ingrained in the researcher have to be brought to the fore to enable the researcher to be as analytical and reflexive as possible. Therefore the role of the researcher and their influence on the research process is a fundamental issue in ethnography, where the researcher must become fully aware of their own ethnocentricity, in order to prevent themselves from compromising the research findings (Coffey 1999, Davies 1999). The role of the researcher and the need for reflexivity is an issue that will be dealt with in more depth later; however it is necessary at this stage to introduce the methodology of autoethnography. Much the same as autobiography, autoethnography describes the process of someone from within a culture conducting research upon it. In my case, as a participant in dance culture this was an ideal approach to adopt and its implications will be considered in greater detail following this discussion of ethnography.

The core of ethnographic research is based around fieldwork requiring the researcher to immerse themselves in the culture or activities of the group under study. Thus the researcher must engage in various levels of cultural participation for an extended period. The researcher must become active within the culture, “watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions ... collecting whatever data are able to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 1). A
process of constant observation, interaction, reflection and recording is therefore required. "This means participating in activities, asking questions ... watching ceremonies, taking field notes ... observing play, interviewing informants, and hundreds of other things" (Spradley 1980: 3). Emergence in all these activities is essential in order to gain a fully comprehensive and balanced understanding of the lives of different groups and the elements of their cultures.

Walsh (1998: 218) comments "a social group has its own cultural pattern of life – folkways, mores, laws, habits, customs, etiquette, fashions and so on – that as far as members are concerned, are taken for granted, habitual and automatic". This statement highlights some of the difficulties for people studying a culture or group of people they are familiar with, as they must question everything, even what is taken for granted and self-explanatory for the members of that cultural group. However, arguably here Walsh oversimplifies and trivialises many elements of contemporary culture since although individuals are born into cultures, they must gain acceptance within a group, whose customs, etiquette and fashion may require study and refinement before they are considered by others to be a full member of the group (Malbon 1999). In addition, since cultural groups are constantly changing, members have to be aware of these changes and responsive to them, to maintain their cultural status within the group. Thus, although many elements of group cultural behaviour are subconscious and executed without second thought, many other issues, which reinforce group identity, require very conscious and deliberate thought and action (Pountain and Robins 2000).

Therefore, when the individual becomes aware of the unique features, elements, attitudes and values attributed to their social group, how it has evolved and continues to evolve, then they will be able to provide more insight into these issues than outsiders. When people have consciously or subconsciously acquired the various attributes and social knowledge to become a member of a group, upon introspection and careful self-analysis, these issues and processes may be examined and explored in great depth to
produce valuable insights and the researcher can form a resource for the research project (Bochner and Ellis 2002, Miller and Brewer 2003). Therefore consideration of self and self-reflection is central to this research process. It is of vital importance that researchers in the social sciences are reflexive in their research approach and do not attempt to falsely eliminate their influence from the research process. Raising the uses of reflexivity in the physical and biological sciences, Davies (1999) stresses the need for it in social research, due to the interrelationship between the researcher and the social world, the influence of the researcher and research process on findings is both more probable and less predictable.

Davies (1999: 3-4) considers reflexivity is central to ethnographic research, stating that due to the nature of the participant researcher relationship “the complexities introduced by the self-consciousness of the objects of research have even greater scope”. Due to the exposure to, and contact with the research participants, and the duration spent in the research setting/s necessitated by ethnographic style research, it is impossible to consider the researcher as having no effect or influence on the research process and its findings. The difficulty is assessing how the researcher influences the behaviour of the research participants, which simply through their presence is inevitable, and if this leads to distorted behaviour and false inferences on behalf of the researcher.

Since I am already a participant in dance culture this has reduced reactivity, which is associated with the presence of researchers in different social settings (Atkinson et al 2001) and facilitated sincerity in participant’s responses and behaviour. However reflexivity concerns more than recognising the “researcher’s affect on data”, it also considers “the more active role of the researcher in the actual production of those data” (Davies 1999: 8). The researcher must carefully scrutinise every element of their thoughts and actions, to acknowledge their influence and use their knowledge and experience to inform and enhance their research. Davies (1999: 8) comments that instead of making “naïve attempts to objectify the research encounter”, researchers must accept their influence on the
research process and ensure it is “acknowledged, explored and put to creative use”. This is another reason why I have chosen to follow a constructionist approach rather than a scientific one, as they seek to eliminate the influence of the researcher on the research rather than accepting and exploiting it.

Having briefly outlined and considered the manner in which researchers can explore culture through implementing an ethnographic research methodology and highlighting some of the benefits and challenges of such an approach, this chapter will now further consider how to approach cultural research through ethnography after a brief outline of the research process. On the following page I outline the research process in the format of a table to provide an overview of the methods used, the timing of their employment, the locations and sources utilised for the research and the sample size and numbers of people involved. Following this I then elaborate further upon the requirements and challenges associated with the various methods used within this research.
Table 4:1 Overview of the research process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Location/s and sources</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>September 2001 – May 2006</td>
<td>Dance festivals, Nightclubs, Parties, After parties</td>
<td>5, 32, 24, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>June 2002 – September 2005</td>
<td>After events</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>June 2003</td>
<td>After event</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet discussions</td>
<td>September 2001 – September 2004</td>
<td>Drum and Bass Arena, Mixmag.net, Gum.net, Dogs on Acid, Global Underground, Ministry Of Sound</td>
<td>35, 40, 37, 10, 3, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse analysis</td>
<td>July 2004 – November 2005</td>
<td>Mixmag, Knowledge, DJ, M8</td>
<td>8 articles, 6 articles, 5 articles, 5 articles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Approaching culture through ethnography

Spradley (1980: 5) highlights ‘three fundamental aspects’ in the study of different human cultures: “what people do, what people know and the things they make and use”. These elements, when learned and shared as common traits or characteristics within a group or population are described as ‘cultural behaviour’, knowledge and artefacts. Spradley refers to cultural knowledge often simply as culture, and defines culture as “the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behaviour” (1980: 6). Cultural artefacts are the common objects and material elements of culture such as art forms and also cover some of the means of disseminating cultural knowledge such as rituals and texts. Ethnographic observation therefore does not simply concern people’s behaviour; it is also about interpreting the meaning of their behaviour and the causes behind such patterns and processes. Merely registering the objects (artefacts) of a particular culture is also not sufficient for their understanding; these too require analysis to reveal their true significance and cultural worth.

Spradley (1980: 7) and others such as Edward Hall (1959 and 1966) consider that “cultural knowledge exists at two levels of consciousness”. ‘Explicit culture’ constitutes a proportion of our knowledge; this is culture at a level most people can discuss with relative ease and which people are generally aware of. However a significant proportion of cultural knowledge is ‘tactic’, this generally operates without our awareness within the subconscious part of our minds. Hall raises the issue that spatial perceptions and distances for different cultures are part of their tactic culture. Hall cited in Spradley (1980: 7-8) comments:

All of us have acquired thousands of spatial clues about how close to stand to others, how to arrange furniture, when to touch others, and when to feel cramped inside of a room. Without realising our tactic culture is operating, we begin to feel uneasy when someone from another culture stands too close, breathes on us when talking, touches us, or when we find furniture arranged in the centre of the room rather than around the edges.
Ethnography is designed to reveal both the explicit and tactic elements of culture to discover the true extent of the cultural differences between groups of people and the reasoning for these differences. This concept of culture has also taken much from the theory of symbolic interactionism, which seeks to explain all human behaviour in terms of the interactions that occur in societies or groups all having a meaning.

The examination of culture is a complex task that requires significant analysis of all the elements of that culture (behaviour, knowledge and artefacts). To truly understand different cultures requires the researcher to get into that culture and into the heads of its constituents. To simply observe culture from the outside does not reveal the meanings behind different cultural elements. Lofland (1971) states a number of requirements for researchers reporting on cultures; primarily he raises the need for proximity to the culture under examination. The researcher should be, “close in the physical sense...over some significant period of time and variety of circumstances”. They should develop “closeness in the social sense of intimacy and confidentiality” and gain “access to the activities of the set of people through their entire round of life” (Lofland 1971: 3). All these points are pertinent to ensure cultures are explored accurately, and so the researcher can appreciate the cultural perspectives of those being studied. Without closeness in all these senses cultural inferences made would be unreliable and are likely to be closer to the researcher’s preconceived perceptions of that culture rather than those of its constituents. Jones (1996) emphasises that participant observation is about learning from others and not about testing preconceived ideas of what others may be like.

The process of ethnographic research entails a number of methods. The primary ones being participant observation (a number of different activities and levels of participation including some of the following methods); key informant interviews; focus groups and other group interviewing techniques; analysing cultural objects; analysing discourse; analysing conversation and analysing literary texts; analysing rituals and proxemics.
(Ervin 2000, Seale 1998). Within this research project I have used participant observation, interviews, focus groups, Internet research and discourse analysis. I shall now deal with each of these methods in turn following my justification for a mixed approach.

4.5.1 Justification for a mixed approach

Through using a mixed approach I have benefited from the merits associated with all of the methods to be discussed below, whilst reducing the impact of the weaknesses associated with each individual method, as no single method is perfect (Ritchie and Goeldner 1994, Seale 1998, Edmunds 1999, Ervin 2000, Mann and Stewart 2000). When studying a cultural group and their practices to utilise a single method such as interviews or observation would lead to a limited insight and understanding. The methodology of ethnography entails the use of multiple methods to develop a deeper insight into the mechanics and norms and values of particular cultures. This combination of methods also enabled a more thorough investigation into this subject considering the time and financial constraints, for example, whilst online research has a number of weaknesses it enabled access to a far wider range of participants in comparison to only using face to face methods. Additionally this facilitated further consideration of the effectiveness and methodological issues surrounding the use of computer mediated communication in qualitative research, an area that has not been explored significantly (Mann and Stewart 2000). I shall now discuss each method in greater depth, to explore their research potential.

4.5.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is the most commonly cited format for ethnographic research. Ervin (2000: 142) comments that participant observation:

> Is an omnibus strategy, an approach that contains a variety of information gathering techniques that involve various forms of observation – from unobtrusive ones to full-scale participation.
The ultimate purpose of participant observation is not to simply report on a culture, but as Jones (1996: 45) describes, observations should be used to “arrive at some hypothesis about the social and behavioural processes operating in the setting you observe”. Therefore participant observation should lead to insights concerning the behaviour, motivations, attitudes and perceptions of people within the culture in question. Spradley (1980) considers there to be six major differences between the ordinary participant and the participant observer. These are ‘dual purpose’, ‘explicit awareness’, ‘wide angle lens’, ‘the insider/outsider experience’, ‘introspection’ and ‘record keeping’.

Dual purpose relates to the issue that the participant observer comes to any situation with the two purposes to participate and to observe, whilst the ordinary participant simply comes to participate (Ervin 2000). Consequently participant observation requires the researcher to note the various elements of that setting, as well as interacting within it. This entails watching and recording all the events, interactions and participants within this situation as well as the setting itself (Fetterman 1998). Explicit awareness, linked to dual purpose, refers to the vast amounts of information and stimuli in the environment around us that we generally block out to prevent ‘information overload’. In comparison the participant observer “seeks to become explicitly aware of things usually blocked out to avoid overload” (Spradley 1980: 55). Thus they have to observe and consider many things they may not generally notice or analyse through raising their awareness of the details and interactions that occur within given situations.

Wide angle lens again refers to the need to increase the scope of attention in research situations. Whereas people generally perceive a small amount of information regarding a situation, related to their purpose for being there, the participant observer must take in as broad a range of information as possible in the research setting, aiming to reveal the tactic elements of the situation by looking at the sights, sounds, atmosphere, proxemcs, people’s reactions to certain events and behaviour and so on (Alasuutari 1998). Nothing can be classed as trivial to the researcher when engaged in
ethnographic observation, which differentiates them from the ordinary participant whose presence is motivated by some purpose or goal, on which they selectively assimilate information. Everything must be considered in the process of participant observation; to enable the most accurate understanding of the situations encountered (Robson 2002).

The insider/outsider experience is also a defining element of participant observation; a normal participant is an insider, a part of the situation, thus the meaning of the event is ascertained through active engagement. However the participant observer has to be both within and outside the events under observation (Robson 2002). As an insider they will encounter many of the emotions experienced by ordinary participants and as an outsider they have to be aware of their own behaviour, attitudes and emotions and those of the others in the setting. Of course it is difficult to be both all the time and the researcher is likely to experience greater and lesser degrees of both during their research, fluctuating between degrees of observation and participation (Walsh 1998).

Introspection is a part of the insider/outsider experience, which, although an element of everyday life, generally occurs during or after dramatic, unexpected or traumatic experiences or events (Spradley 1980). However as a participant observer the researcher must be far more introspective than they normally would be, situations and experiences taken for granted require analysis to reveal the emotions and attitudes arising from them (Bochner and Ellis 2002). Such action is essential to understand situations and events that cannot simply be taken at face value, therefore higher levels of introspection are essential to gaining the most from the insider/outsider experience. Record keeping is an obvious difference between the normal participant and the participant observer who “will keep a detailed record of both objective observations and subjective feelings” (Spradley 1980: 58). This is essential to ensure all observations and inferences made are not forgotten and to allow cross comparisons with similar situations at a later date when more information has been gathered (Robson 2002).
4.5.2.1 Levels of Participant observation

Various authors including Walsh (1998) and Robson (2002) identify different levels of participant observation primarily distinguishing between overt and covert, but also between the ‘complete participant’, ‘complete observer’, ‘participant as observer’, ‘observer as participant’ and ‘marginal native’. The complete participant and the complete observer are the two opposite ends of the observation/participation spectrum, both have numerous weaknesses in their ability to generate and record meaningfully deep and reliable data. The complete participant necessitates a covert approach, which whilst raising ethical issues with this approach, also places constraints upon the researcher when they are covertly observing particular group/social situations or cultures (Robson 2002). Walsh (1998) and Robson (2002) consider that due to the necessity to adopt a role, to fulfil the complete participant position, the researcher must then comply with others expectations of this role, which restricts the potential for their inquiries.

I would take issue with Walsh and Robson on this as to be a complete participant does not necessarily entail a covert approach or deception of others for in my case I am already a participant in dance music culture. I favour more Spradley’s views (1980: 61) who considers ‘complete participation’ to be the “highest level of involvement” and this approach is taken when the researcher is studying a situation “in which they are already ordinary participants”. Therefore Spradley’s definition differs from Walsh, as under his I would be classed as a complete participant as I am already engaged in dance music culture. However this situation is not without its problems as some circumstances may create problems and tensions in their observation, as it is essential to be able to step back from everything and interpret situations fully, this may be difficult to do due to my level of social and emotional involvement. As mentioned earlier I had to maintain a wide-angle lens and high levels of introspection in order to ensure vital elements of this culture that I take for granted were not eclipsed from my investigations and analysis.
Due to the fragmentation within the dance music scene, most commonly due to generic preferences, but also club preferences and geographical constraints, I can be no more than a participant observer in many situations. Such is the size, diversity and complexity of what comes under the umbrella term dance culture that there are numerous club scenes that I have no experience of at all and within these I would not be classed as a complete participant. Observing these scenes that are new to myself and contrasting them with those I am more familiar with, has lent a more analytical and critical approach to my observations. Seeing and experiencing new elements of dance culture have also made me reflect on the differences between sub-scenes and how these have emerged. Therefore although I am a participant in dance culture I believe this has facilitated engagement in more complex analysis, leading to more insightful findings in the research process.

The complete observer or non participant has no interaction with the group being studied, observing them at a distance and through the different media that represents, supports and informs them. This type of observation is effective in situations where participation is not possible, but valuable information is still obtainable (Spradley 1980, Robson 2002). Another benefit of this approach is that it eliminates the issue of 'reactivity', as those being studied are not aware of it. However Walsh (1998: 222) comments that it “introduces the potential problem of ethnocentrism” if the researcher has no interactions with their subjects then they are likely to misunderstand the meaning and significance of their actions. This issue was not a problem in my case and is really only applicable to those studying groups they are unfamiliar with. Due to my level of involvement within this culture, however, I did face the issue of being too close rather than being distanced from it, although, as mentioned above, participating in a range of experiences including those I am less familiar with facilitated a more analytical and critical approach. Moreover, being as reflexive as possible also assisted in overcoming issues associated with being too close to the culture in question (Bochner and Ellis 2002).
Passive participation is the next level up beyond non participation. Here the researcher is visible within the research setting but again is solely there for the purpose of observation and has no interaction with those being studied. This can lead to valuable insights into “patterns of cultural behaviour” (Spradley 1980: 59) and can help the researcher progress to higher levels of participation. Walsh’s (1998) definition of ‘observer as participant’ is also similar to what Spradley describes as ‘moderate participation’. This refers to a level where the relationship between participation and observation is skewed in the direction of observation. The researcher is involved to a degree in the activities of those being studied but their participation is limited as their purpose and attention is more focused on observing what is going on, rather than being part of it (Robson 2002). Fluctuating between being an active and a passive participant also helped overcome issues associated with being too close to the culture by simply stepping back to a more observational position.

Participant as observer is also very similar to active participation as Spradley (1980: 60) describes it: “The active participant seeks to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance but to more fully learn the cultural rules for behaviour”. Here the emphasis is placed on participating and ‘social interaction’ “in order to produce a relationship of rapport and trust” (Walsh 1998: 222). This level of interaction is where some of the greatest insights into a culture can be gained and how the researcher can begin to view things from the perspective of those within that culture. Through actively participating in the cultural activities of a group the researcher can then experience what it is like to be involved in such events. However Walsh (1998) also raises the danger of subject reactivity with this level of involvement, therefore it requires tact and discretion on behalf of the researcher.

A further key issue in the decision whether to do overt or covert observation is the willingness of gatekeepers to allow access to the subjects. However there is also the issue of the degree of influence the researcher may have on the subjects if they know they are being researched and what the
purpose of the research is. In reality these clearly defined categories become blurred as the researcher may begin at one end of the spectrum then progress through differing levels of observation and participation. As their knowledge grows and they seek to pursue different avenues of investigation within the culture, this will often entail greater or lesser degrees of participation and observation. Davies (1999: 72) comments:

These four roles are sometimes conceived as if on a scale measuring the degree of acceptance by the people being studied, gradually achieved in the course of long-term fieldwork.

Therefore the degree of observation and participation may in some circumstances be determined by the subjects and in others by the researcher. However Rainbow (1977: 79-80) illustrates that the relationship between participation and observation is often neither linear nor logical:

Observation ... is the governing term of the pair, since it situates the anthropologist's activities. However much one moves in the direction of participation, it is always the case that one is both an outsider and an observer ... In the dialect between the poles of observation and participation, participation changes the anthropologist and leads him to new observation.

This statement demonstrates much about the relationship between observation and participation and how it changes over time. Different points in the research process require varying approaches depending on the knowledge of the researcher and the issues under investigation. However this statement does not take account of auto-ethnographers. Such people will always be participants, but have to distance themselves at times also to enable comprehensive observation and interpretation of the realities and meanings for participants in that culture. This is to say that we can be aware of the influence of participation in forming our perceptions of the world and the events that take place within it (Lockford 2002). As the human mind is not a science laboratory or a computer, the issue of personal experience will always be present in ethnographic work and it is the
responsibility of the ethnographer to utilise this source of information rather than to attempt to isolate from it in the misguided pursuit of objectivity, to say that a person can process such information with complete objectivity is a serious misconception of human nature. As Lockford states:

Culture, then, is not to be regarded as something we have or something we go to, but rather as the event or events that we cultivate; that is to say, culture is collectively constituted through the construction, the deconstruction, and the reconstruction of the edifices in which we physically, as well as spiritually, imaginatively, and psychologically, dwell (2002: 77).

4.5.2.2 Opportunities for participant observation

At an unobtrusive level a culture or group may be studied through a number of means depending on the situations and contexts in which they are visible. For example an unobtrusive way of studying clubbers was watching the behaviour of individuals in nightclubs and other events. Being a clubber myself this constituted covert observation as notes were not openly taken. Within a club there were several different areas in which behaviour was studied leading to different revelations. The dance floor is the most obvious place to observe; however equally as important are areas like the entry queue, bars, chill out rooms and the halls and stairways where many people congregate. Such forms of observation revealed a number of things concerning spatial distances, formalities, body language, dress styles and fashion, club and dance floor etiquette, the consumption of substances, the contribution of queuing to the club experience (building up anticipation), atmospheric preferences and positive experience stimulators. Catching snippets of conversations also revealed insights into individuals’ perceptions concerning dance music and club culture. However such observation could not reveal many of the other issues which this investigation sought to explore. In addition, in many situations the owners of the club or the promoter would not have consented to research being carried out overtly, which necessitated a covert approach within such contexts.
Another means of participant observation was going on trips with groups of clubbers, to raves and other dance music events. These situations provided opportunities for talking to participants and building trust with them through spending time in their presence at such events. These events also provided the opportunity for talking to people before, during and after their dance music experiences. Additionally in the process of participant observation I had numerous conversations and verbal interactions with other participants, these helped inform the interviews through raising awareness of issues important to clubbers. So this project is an in-depth ethnographic study utilising the approaches, methods and techniques as prescribed by Spradley (1980), Denzin (1997) Ward (1998) and Davies (1999).

4.5.3 Interviews

Part of participant observation that enables significant insights into cultural behaviour and practices are key informant interviews, focus groups and other group interviewing techniques. One problem associated with the use of interviews is that the subjects can be removed from their ordinary setting and they are vulnerable to interviewer influence. However Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 140) comment, “the artificiality of the interview when compared with ‘normal’ events in the setting may allow us to understand how participants would behave in other circumstances”. Interviews were conducted with participants in dance culture, with participants selected through snowballing to gain a sample. The interviews were semi structured and unstructured using a list of issues arising from the literature review and my own knowledge as prompts. Semi structured interviews are conversations where the interviewer steers the interviewee around a range of predefined topics or subject areas, whilst also providing them with the opportunity to bring in issues relevant to themselves. This element was used to investigate participants’ personal preferences and their motivations for participating in dance culture. Unstructured interviews are “a free form of conversation in which the interviewer probes the general nature of the problem he is interested in and asks questions about it” (Ritchie and Goeldner 1994: 100). This method was used to establish what factors and
events are considered significant for them and those most important to the continued success of dance music culture.

Seale (1998: 202) comments that interviews allow deeper analysis of issues “such as the interviewees inner state – the reasoning behind their actions and feelings”. Mann and Stewart (2000) consider that the semi-structured approach allows participants to elaborate on areas significant to them, whilst enabling the researcher to direct the topics of conversation around the key themes they are investigating. One can then probe further into different areas depending on their relevance to the individual being interviewed.

Structured interviews are “more uniform and rigid, in this type of interview the questions, their sequence and the wording are fixed” (Ritchie and Goeldner 1994: 100). Structured interviews, bearing many similarities to questionnaires, have been subject to criticisms by ethnographers for imposing the researcher’s conceptual framework upon interviewees (Spradley 1980). This type of interview leaves very little opportunity for the participants to comment upon issues that are not raised by the interviewer and the interviewer no flexibility to probe into areas outside the interview schedule. Therefore semi-structured interviews enabled respondents to comment on their personal preferences and their motivation for participation as well as their attitudes and opinions on other issues. The unstructured interviews were also used to establish what factors and events are considered significant for them and those most important to them.

Interview approaches were preferred to questionnaires in this study as I wanted to gain an understanding of the issues seen as relevant by the participants, rather than placing a conceptual framework within which their responses had to be located. The use of questionnaires is also contingent with positivist epistemologies and quantitative research methodologies and is unsuitable for this research. This is also consistent with a constructionist approach, as it facilitates greater opportunity for contributions from research participants and enables them to raise and discuss issues that the
researcher may not have considered. In contrast positivist approaches only consider and tackle the issues identified by the researcher within the research design and limits the ability to generate new insights that the researcher may not have previously considered (Ritchie and Goeldner 1994).

The disadvantages of this method are that it is more time consuming and therefore potentially more expensive - carrying out interviews, then transcribing and analysing them. Another potential criticism of interviewing is the issue of interviewer bias whereby the interviewer can subtly influence the responses of participants through the nature of their questioning, their body language and facial expressions and the tone of their voice when questioning, probing and acknowledging responses. However through the reflective approach that I took to this project I have tried to counter such problems by continually assessing my own role and position within the research.

4.5.4 Focus groups
As raised above, no matter how unstructured the interview, there remain concerns about interviewer control and balance. Indeed in the 1930s concerns amongst social scientists regarding closed, fixed response styles of interviewing based on fixed questions and a response frame for locating answers led to the development of focus groups. Although interviews are very useful format for the analysis of information and the generation of specific statistics concerning certain issues, a number of researchers became unhappy about the reliability of the information they generated. Since the interviewer had to draw up all the questions, some suggested that the interviewee had no control over the interview process to reflect their actual views if they differed from the interview framework. Krueger and Casey (2000) comment that Rice (1931) was one of the first to express concern about the use of the closed response format of interviewing. Rice (1931: 561) commented:
A defect of the interview for the purposes of fact finding in scientific research, then, is that the questioner takes the lead. That is, the subject plays a more or less passive role. Information or points of view of the highest value may not be disclosed because the direction given to the interview by the questioner leads away from them. In short, data obtained from an interview are as likely to embody the preconceived ideas of the interviewer as the attitudes of the subject interviewed.

This further illustrates the benefits of conducting focus groups in ethnographic research where significant information could potentially be excluded due to researcher oversights in the conduct of interviews. This issue may be compounded when the interviewer is closely involved with the research topic and therefore this is another means of overcoming the issue of interviewer bias by providing participants with a greater opportunity to offer their own views on a wider range of issues.

Focus groups are typically composed of six to ten people with knowledge of a particular area gathered for a face to face discussion on a topic (Edmunds 1999). Krueger and Casey (2000: 5) comment that focus groups are:

A carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment ... Group members influence each other by responding to the ideas and comments of others.

Focus groups are generally used for "testing concepts ... products and messages" and as a method it "is exploratory, with its intent being to provide an understanding of perceptions, feelings, attitudes and motivations" (Edmunds 1999: 2-3). Krueger and Casey (2000: 4) also consider, "it is a way to better understand how people feel, or think about an issue, product or service". The nature of focus groups (being composed of people sharing a common interest or experience) and the fact they may never see one another again also encourages openness and honesty in their responses (Krueger and Casey 2000).
Having a clearly defined and specified recruiting or participant profile is essential to the success and outcomes of the research process. In order to do this Mann and Stewart (1999) state there are several fundamental questions, which must be answered: Whom should I speak with? Who/what groups constitute the whole population being researched? How can these groups be represented proportionally by the sample participating? Who will be able to answer questions the best? Krueger and Casey (2000: 4) comment that participants in a focus group should be “selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group”. In terms of recruiting participants into the research process there is often some form of incentive or co-operation fee to attract individuals to attend the groups (Edmunds 1999). For this research it was not possible to offer co-operation fees or material gifts, so the focus group participants were offered the opportunity to be taken to and from a major dance event as an incentive and the focus group was conducted following this experience. As suggested by Seale (1998) snowballing is a very effective means of recruiting participants in difficult to reach or controversial populations and this was the method used for this research.

There are a number of debates over the optimum size of focus groups. Whilst the traditional focus group is composed of 8-10 people, mini focus groups are typically composed of 5-6 people and maxi-groups have 10-12 people. Mini-groups are thought to benefit through placing “more emphasis on the topic and less on polling the participants” (Edmunds 1999: 19). These enable deeper analysis and investigation of the factors and issues under consideration, by reducing the time taken to establish consensus of opinion on each area of discussion. However a number of benefits are also raised in relation to larger groups in terms of the validity of results and the ability to contextualise findings. Templeton (1994: 158) states that the variety of opinions expressed in a larger group setting “makes each individual member of the group more aware of the singularity of his or her own repertoire of assumptions and responses. [And] The moderator, too, sees each individual more clearly, as she reacts to a fuller range of other panellists’ responses”.

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Thus many moderators see larger groups as a benefit to the discussion as it broadens the potential differences of opinion, perception and attitude, generating a greater wealth of data, whilst making it easier for the moderator to contextualise the comments of individuals. Edmunds (1999: 19) conversely comments that “mini groups allow greater observational opportunities - more chances to do hands on testing than is possible in larger groups”. Given the reduced number of participants and the same time frame, smaller groups can generate substantially more useful and productive results. Krueger and Casey (2000) also consider that when dealing with complex topics 10-12 people is too many and that smaller groups are generally preferable. Another benefit of mini focus groups is the reduced costs associated with them, due to the need for fewer participants, although proponents of maxi-groups also state these are more cost effective, due to the economies of scale they enable (Edmunds 1999, Templeton 1994).

Templeton (1994: 158) also raises the issue of anonymity, in that larger groups permit less attention and focus on each individual, "so that the risks of deviating from particular perceptions and values expressed by others in the group are lessened", therefore facilitating greater openness in responses, as participants feel less self-conscious, due to the number of people and the variety of opinions within them. However, Krueger and Casey (2000) mention that group dynamics can be effected, when people who want to express their opinions about something do not have the opportunity to do so, this can lead to discontent and certain aspects being missed out, thus compromising the integrity of the results. The conclusion reached by Templeton (1994) is that the preferred size of focus groups is largely determined by the personality and past experiences of the moderator. Other authors state that the optimum group size depends on the complexity of the issue being discussed, Edmunds (1999) and Krueger and Casey (2000: 74) note that more complex and technical issues are best discussed between fewer people:
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If the questions are meant to gain understanding of people’s experiences, the researcher typically wants more in-depth insights. This is usually best accomplished with smaller groups. Also, smaller groups are preferable when the participants have a great deal to share about the topic or have had intense or lengthy experiences with the topic of discussion.

For this study a smaller focus group was selected as having greater benefits in terms of providing greater insight into the views of participants and giving each participant more opportunities to contribute to the process.

Another issue of concern involves focus group location; the focus group venue needs to be an accessible and convenient location; additionally a relaxed and informative atmosphere is necessary to facilitate open responses from participants. The need for a ‘permissive environment’ is stressed by Krueger and Casey (2000: 4) “that encourages participants to share perceptions and points of view, without pressurising participants to vote or reach consensus”. The location of the focus group for this research was selected for neutrality and geographic convenience. The venue selected was a room in my family home, which was geographically central for the research participants, free and more informal and relaxed than a hired venue would have been.

Developing a guide encompassing all the topics to be covered by the discussion is also a prerequisite to conducting focus groups, much the same as when conducting semi-structured interviews, to ensure the focus group addresses all the areas considered pertinent to the topic a schedule was essential (Robson 2002). This consisted of the topics and issues for consideration, some specific questions and additional issues and points that may be raised to provoke further discussion (Edmunds 1999). Monitoring and recording the groups was also essential to facilitate the best possible outcome from the analysis of the groups’ discussions. In many situations focus groups are video taped and audio taped as backup, this enables analysis of the responses of participants both verbally and visually, however it also means there must be another person present to operate the
equipment and equipment to operate. Many people may also feel considerably less comfortable being videoed in comparison to audio recording, which could also affect the outcome of the process. Therefore due to the resources required and the potential influence on participants I opted for the audio recording rather than video.

4.5.5 Internet research
In the course of this study I also wanted to explore the use of the Internet as a research tool in social and cultural research. Being as dance culture embraces new technology I considered this would be a valuable addition to this study. Despite the research that has been conducted into the various aspects of the Internet and the online communities it fosters, “the suitability of the Internet for conducting research remains relatively unexplored ... [and] there has been little systematic analysis of how the Internet might be incorporated into qualitative research practices” (Mann and Stewart 2000:4). Although this is a relatively unexplored area of qualitative research, it provided an extra opportunity for participant observation within a different sphere of cultural activity. In addition, as the Internet is considered as a place where “marginalised social groups ... can socialise without inhibition”, and is central to the development of contemporary subcultures (Mann and Stewart 2000:20), it was essential to incorporate it in some form into this study.

After investigating the possibilities and implications of different types of communication it was decided that using asynchronous communication in the form of Internet message boards would be preferable for the purposes of this research. The major advantage with message boards was that there are many of them and I could initiate discussions on particular topics, contribute to and stimulate other discussions and simply observe discussions. This meant I had varying degrees of influence over topics, although once a topic was initiated it was completely open as to how others wished to contribute and orientate the nature of their contributions. This again facilitates greater participant control over their views and enables them to respond within their own perceptual frameworks. The nature of
message boards also meant that I could initiate a topic or monitor one over an extended period of time, therefore enabling contributions from interested parties over that time frame. There is however the potential ethical consideration that these individuals were sometimes unaware that I was a researcher, although I did attempt to make this clear. For these ethical reasons I have not actually directly quoted any of the material from Internet chat rooms in this thesis, although it has helped inform the process.

As there are a number of benefits and potential problems when conducting online discussions, if used in isolation these issues would need detailed consideration to ensure they do not compromise the integrity of the research. Indeed I feel Internet research alone would not be appropriate in researching dance culture, however for this investigation the Internet research aspect is only a component of the participant observation, another means of viewing this culture from a different perspective and gaining the views of more participants.

4.5.6 Research analysis issues

As the nature of research methods and the process of research analysis are intrinsically linked, it is essential at this stage to consider research analysis issues. The nature in which research is conducted and recorded is the initial determining factor in the analytical process; this dictates the data available to the researcher and the format of this data. Following the collection of data the processes and procedures for analysing and interpreting this data then become a defining factor in the constitution of the research findings, as the nature in which the data is interpreted and analysed will be a determining factor in establishing the research findings. This section gives further consideration to these issues.

Lofland (1971: 4) states that the collation and recording of ethnographic research "should contain a significant amount of pure description of action, people, activities and the like". Such information leads to a greater understanding of the way things unfold within cultures and the nature of interactions that characterise events. When such accounts are recorded,
they can be examined in depth at a later date, to generate understanding of the nature of and motivations for the interactions that take place within cultural groups in different settings and circumstances (Walsh 1998). Lofland also emphasises the use of direct quotations commenting, “to fully capture the reality of a place ... the reality of face-to-faceness that permits most fully knowing is the reality of spoken messages and gestures” (1971: 4). Such reporting allows the participants to describe and relate to their worlds in their own terms, which is fundamental to successful and reliable accounts of cultures (Bochner and Ellis 2002). To simply paraphrase all the statements of the subjects can lead to a loss of significant information and false inferences being made. Therefore to record conversations with participants (where possible) is most effective, as this can capture emotions through the emphasis placed on different words and the manner in which events are discussed (Atkinson et al 2001). However in the process of participant observation, it is not possible to record all conversations and in many instances the most I was able to do was make brief field notes on the main points/issues raised following the conversation. The reality of ethnography is that differing levels of participation and observation are engaged in at varying times and circumstances and the degree of participation or observation in addition to the research setting largely determines the recording methods available (Ervin 2000).

All formal interviews were audio recorded and anonymity was offered to participants. Recording interviews is essential to ensure nothing is missed in the analysis and discussion, as it is impossible to capture everything through notes and memory. Such an approach facilitates greater fluidity in the interview process and reduces the time needed for them, which helps maintain the goodwill of respondents. This also enables the researcher to take notes of the non-verbal communications during the process to assess the strength of feelings and attitudes. Note taking is also an essential part of ethnographic research and participant observation (Spradley 1980); this involved making notes before, during and after field trips. Noting personal issues for myself, interactions with others (verbal and non verbal) and other
issues, points and perspectives that appeared pertinent on various occasions provided a record to refer to throughout the research process.

In terms of analysis of interview, focus group and field study materials I picked out key themes highlighted within each area by participants and used linguistic repertoires and discourse analysis to explore these issues in greater depth where possible. Further consideration is given to discourse analysis and linguistic repertoires in the next section on analysing cultural objects and texts.

4.5.7 Analysing cultural objects

In exploring a cultural phenomenon such as dance culture I felt it was not enough to simply explore events and participants, as alone they are only able to reveal partial cultural insights. Part of my interest lies in the role of the media in constructing and informing the nature of contemporary dance culture. Whilst I have attempted to explore this with participants such efforts yielded limited results, therefore it was necessary to subject the media to further sustained analysis and discussion. Such an approach requires a completely different method of engagement and analytical process to those previously discussed. I feel a sustained analysis of the media is particularly relevant here because, whilst other studies (Thornton 1995, Malbon 1999 and Jackson 2004) have referred to the significance of the media, little has been done to explore the tone, nature and substance of the dance media. This section now considers the value of cultural objects and texts before discussing the practicalities of researching the dance music media.

Analysing cultural objects can bring many issues to light concerning the attitudes and perceptions of those involved in a specific culture and the manner in which their social world is constructed. Cultural objects consist of a variety of things, indeed Ervin (2000) considers that many different objects and events can be read as cultural texts. “This phrase uses the metaphor of reading a book to argue that we can treat a vast range of social artefacts and events as if they were readable texts” (Slater 1998: 234).
Therefore this method encompasses a vast array of information sources from music to events and indeed anything meaningful or significant to the culture in question. This is not limited to things produced specifically to represent or communicate cultural meanings and encompasses elements such as dress and representative media.

The specific media associated with and consumed by a group or culture can also reveal many issues concerning cultural behaviour and the forces that shape it. For example, magazines, TV and the Internet can be analysed and studied to reveal some of the possible motivators within the culture and issues surrounding fashion, tastes, preferences and ideologies. The media and society are intricately inter-linked and interdependent to the extent that “media texts are part of our world: they are social phenomenon and are often part of the debates about society going on in the world” (Stokes 2003: 54). Within most cultures there is a wealth of literature available for examination ranging from informally orientated insider accounts, to commercially orientated books, magazines and government publications. It is suggested that many insights can be obtained through studying such sources:

They can be a source of 'sensitising concepts' (Blumer 1954): they can suggest distinctive ways in which their authors, or the people reported in them, organise their experiences, the sorts of imagery and 'situated vocabularies' (Mills 1940) they employ, the routine events, and the troubles and reactions, they encounter (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 160).

4.5.7.1 Content analysis

In the process of analysing cultural texts a number of methods are available to researchers depending on the research objectives and the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of the researcher. Indeed various methods suggest various epistemological perspectives. For example content analysis is one means of analysing cultural texts originating from positivist epistemologies. Content analysis takes a quantitative approach to textual analysis and is concerned with categorising terms and themes and
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counting the frequency of appearance of sought data within specific texts. Fundamentally, as with most quantitative research, content analysis must emerge from a research question and has limited exploratory capabilities, as Carney (1973: 284) states "content analysis gets the answer to the question to which it is applied". There are also requirements for a statistically valid sample, based on quantitative methodology (Ritchie and Goeldner 1994) and a precise definition of the "recording unit" (Robson 2002: 353). Aside from the categories of measurement the recording unit must also be carefully established in terms of words, paragraphs, images and so forth, to determine what constitutes a valid unit of measurement. While very appropriate to assessing the quantity of coverage attributed to specific elements within a media publication for example sport, politics, gossip and so forth, content analysis reveals less about the nature of the discourses constructed by the media and the means through which discourse based agendas are conveyed and promoted within specific media vehicles. In addition its quantitative nature and the epistemological perspective on which it is grounded make it unsuitable for this research.

4.5.7.2 Semiotics

Semiotics is another means of analysing cultural artefacts or cultural texts; this method "argues that elements of a text derive their meaning from their interrelation within a code rather than looking at them as discrete entities to be counted" (Slater 1998: 238). Semiotics is concerned with the generation of meaning through signs, representing a "theory of signs and symbols, especially the nature and relationship of signs in language" and as such it is a method of analysing "signs in language" (Turner 1982: 20-21). Semiotics seeks to trace the origins of meaning within signs and systems of signs focusing more on the processes involved in the generation of meaning within texts rather than the intentions of the text's creator or its audience reception. Although authors such as Turner (1982) consider semiotics as primarily related to the study of language, others such as Williamson (1978), Hall (1997) and Slater (1998) consider it applicable to the study of all signs within systems of cultural signification. Hall (1997) and Slater (1998: 234) consider that anything, which bears meaning within a culture,
can be read as a cultural text using the methods of semiotics, indeed cultural texts are not necessarily restricted to things created to convey meaning, “the way people dress, the foods they chose to eat...can all be read as cultural texts”.

Semiotics does not take things at their face value but looks deep into the combinations of symbols apparent and suggested, to try to discover their intended and actual meaning and significance (Storey 2001). It analyses how different elements come together to form an interpretable and influential whole. Semiotics seeks to identify and contextualise symbols, discovering their meaning through their positioning with and relationship to other symbols. As Slater (1998: 238) comments:

Words do not derive their meaning either from the psychological intentions of individual speakers, or from the things the words describe. Rather their meanings arise from their place in a system of signs and their relations of difference or sequence with other terms in the system.

The meaning and cultural significance of language can be approached by breaking down words, images and objects into several categorisations, thus a word or image becomes a sign, which is broken down into two components: the signifier and the signified (Robson 2002). The signifier is the image or sound of the word and applies to signs whether in written or verbal form. The signified is the meaning of the sign to recipients upon hearing or seeing the sign, the ideas and images associated with the signifier (Williamson 1978). Signs gain much of their significance and meaning through their relationships to other signs and their location within systems of signification. Therefore not only do we understand and interpret signs due to what they are, but also due to what they are not in relation to other signs (Saukko 2003). Significance is thus created through differentiation between the signified meanings of signs, and their location and contextualization within given situations. This means that the meaning of signs is highly dependent on social and cultural values and norms. As Slater (1998: 239) states, “the relationship between signified and signifier is
a conventional social or cultural one, one that is internal to the system of meaning operating in a particular culture at a particular time.”

Williamson (1978) also raises another aspect of signs, that of their referent: this is the objectified embodiment of the sign, in its material, physical form. The referent is external to the sign and as such the usage of signs is not directly determined by their referents, but by the knowledge and perspectives of those using the sign (Hall 1997). Therefore relating to constructionist epistemology, it is partially through the use of language that we construct and shape our social worlds, whilst our social worlds also shape and construct our use of language. As Slater (1998: 239) comments, “languages do not neutrally reflect or mirror or correspond to the objective world, but rather different languages produce a different sense of the world”.

Signs can also be broken down into two further categories or “systems of signification: denotation and connotation” (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 5). Denotation refers to the widely accepted and understood interpretation of signs within a specific culture, i.e. “the descriptive and literal level of meaning generated by signs and shared by virtually all members of a culture” (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 5). Connotation therefore relates to the placement and connection of signifiers “within wider cultural codes of meaning” (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 5), whilst denotation concerns literal meanings, what is visible within an image, what is apparent about an object and what particular words define. Connotation is concerned with feelings and/or ideas, wider cultural beliefs and ideological codes and perspectives suggested by particular words, objects, images and combinations of these (Hall 1997).

In terms of advertising and marketing products, signs are used to provide value, character, attributes and emotional qualities to products that do not inherently contain these properties (Williamson 1978). Therefore products are linked with landscapes, objects, people and sounds that have both denoted and connoted value to individuals, cultural groups and wider
cultures, and occupy a prominent although often subconscious position in people’s psyche (Morgan and Pritchard 1998, 2000). With established connections to attitudes, emotions, values, and characteristics, various signs can evoke rapid recollection of these properties within people’s minds. Through associating or correlating products with particular properties through their positioning within systems of signs, they can take on whole new meanings in terms of their value, character, attributes and emotional significance (Williamson 1978, Morgan and Pritchard 1998, 2000). Such processes not only take place within the world of marketing and advertising, but also continually operate in the wider social world.

Barker and Galasinski (2001: 6) also refer to the work of Williamson (1978) and her analysis of advertising images stating:

Objects in advertisements are signifiers of meaning that we decode in the context of known cultural systems, associating products in adverts with other cultural ‘goods’. While an image of a particular product may denote only beer or perfume it is made to connote ‘male fun’ or ‘female sexuality’ so that advertising creates a world of differences between products and lifestyles which we ‘buy into’.

Commenting on the role of imagery in advertising Morgan and Pritchard (1998: 25) also comment, “images not only reflect the prevailing cultural values of a society, drawing upon current images and stereotypes, but also play a vital role in shaping these values through their contribution to the process of socialisation”. This demonstrates the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism in practice, with cultural texts reflecting and constructing cultures and cultures in turn reflecting and evolving through the influence of cultural texts.

4.5.7.3 Discourse analysis
Related to the analysis and interpretation of texts is the method of discourse analysis, which “takes its place within a larger body of social and cultural research that is concerned with the production of meaning through talk and text” (Tonkiss 1998: 246). Discourse analysis seeks to analyse the
presentation of opinions, views and facts, through deconstructing and analysing the use of language, particularly with regards to combinations of terms, points of reference, points of contrast and social contexts. Although bearing commonalities with semiotics, discourse analysis is also significantly different with its directional focus to reveal "relations of power not relations of meaning" (Foucault 1980: 115). Discourse analysis seeks to investigate systems and processes of representation, the social construction of events, activities and phenomena, which essentially requires contextualisation and historical specificity (Hall 1997). In criticising semiotics for its lack of consideration for the receivers of specific signs as, "they take no account of the interpretations placed upon them by their audiences" authors such as Strinati (1995: 113) also further the case for using discourse analysis. It is essential to consider the role of the audience in the interpretation of cultural texts, for it is through this interaction between text and receiver that meaning is generated for each individual.

In considering the role of discourse and its analysis, this quote from Hall (1997: 44) outlines the scope of what he and authors such as Foucault consider discourse to encompass, and demonstrates how the analysis of texts can reveal much about the values, norms and ideologies of cultural groups. Discourse:

constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way a topic can be meaningfully talked and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. Just as discourse 'rules in' certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic.

From this it is apparent how all-encompassing and influential discourse is in the construction, evolution and manipulation of social realities. Foucault and Hall (amongst others) consider it is through the confluence of written, spoken and performed actions that ways of knowing about objects are realised. It is through the meeting and mixing of a myriad of cultural texts
(texts defined as anything that can be interpreted as having meaning) that we think we know what we see. This is the outcome of the symbolic interactions that take place within the totality of cultural life. But discourse is much more influential than merely shaping the manner in which objects and issues are perceived at individual and cultural levels for there are fundamental repercussions arising from the nature of perception (Foucault 1980). Perception relates to what can be seen, to what we are aware of, to how we understand, “the cognition of fact or truth...knowledge acquired through the senses” and the “intuitive judgement” that takes place during our interactions and interpretations of life (Landau 1997: 537).

It is through discourse that specific processes of cognition occur upon interaction with certain objects, people and spaces and depending on the discourses individuals have been exposed to, the nature of such interactions will differ. The nature of social reality is therefore dependant upon the awareness of individuals of the range of discourses pertaining to specific subjects and the judgements they make concerning them. As Foucault (1980) and Hall (1997: 44) argue, because discourse determines our cognition of “objects of ... knowledge”, it correspondingly regulates the discussion of such topics and the conduct of individuals, groups and societies in relation to them. In affecting the nature of knowing about topics, means that it also affects the nature of being in relation to topics, thus determining their position in the social world and the manner in which social interactions can take place around such topics.

As advocates of discourse analysis argue, the power of discourse is in its multi-textual nature, the extent to which it is woven into the fabric of society and social groupings (Foucault 1980, Hall 1997, Saukko 2003). That is, discourse is constructed and validated through written texts and social performances (Goffman 1969). It lives and breathes through the myriad of influences and factors that constitute contemporary society. Different strands of discourse are continually being compounded and reconstituted, contested and revised, destroyed and reconstructed, distorted and exploited, rejected and rejuvenated and this has taken place within the
human species since the beginning of time. Thus today (in a contemporary western context) discourses exist beyond the control of any individual or group, but under the influence of a myriad of individuals, groups and organisations which all have an interest in their evolution (Cuff et al 1998).

The theoretical underpinning of discourse analysis is therefore that "language is seen not simply as a neutral medium for communicating information, but as a domain in which our knowledge of the social world is actively shaped" (Tonkiss 1998: 246). So central is language to the creation and dissemination of cultural knowledge and norms that Barker and Galanski (2001: 1) consider language to be "the central means and medium by which we understand the world and construct culture". The connotations of the significance of language therefore mean that language does not objectively and impartially represent a given situation or social circumstance, but often reflects the wider cultural and political influences and objectives of its generator (Baldwin et al 1999; Barker and Galanski 2001, Stokes 2003). Indeed a central argument of cultural studies is that:

Language is relational in character ... signs have no direct referents in an independent objective world but generate meaning through their relationships to other signs organised into syntagmatically and paradigmatically structured codes. Binary relations between signs ... are not stable, rather, meaning is unstable and slides down the infinite play of signifiers (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 2).

'Encoding' messages enables the conveyors of language to construct their discourses in ways conducive to leading recipients' interpretations in one direction or another, the outcome of which is also dependent upon the 'decoding' of such communications by the receiver (Lewis 2002). The outcome of the decoding process will also vary, influenced by factors such as education, social background, lived experience, referent groups, social and cultural interests (the other discourses individuals have previously been exposed to). However, in relation to magazine analysis, as most media is targeted at specific groups within society, (this being particularly true of lifestyle magazines), the audience often derives what Lewis (2002: 137)
describes as the "dominant or preferred reading ... whereby audience members draw on their knowledge of culture, cultural values and cultural norms," to gain a similar interpretation. It is probable in such cases that such recipients are also already at least partially aware of and sympathetic to the prevailing discursive standpoints of such media vehicles (Barker 2000).

To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus culture depends on participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and 'making sense' of the world, in broadly similar ways (Hall 1997: 2).

The nature of media discourses therefore has a major impact upon the generation, dispersion and maintenance of specific cultural trends and issues, through influencing society's perceptions, attitudes and awareness of such events (Hall 1997). Indeed much of the societal emphasis on political correctness has arrived through analysing the implications of previously common terms used and widely socially accepted in the discourses surrounding issues such as sexuality and disabilities. Such analysis has given rise to terms like 'people with disabilities' who were previously described as 'disabled people', in this instance where previously the disability was placed before the person, now the emphasis is placed on the person rather than the disability. Therefore small changes to the ordering of combinations of words can have huge impacts on power relations between influential factors in any given situation (Saukko 2003).

Power relations are a key consideration for cultural researchers, playing a pivotal role in the dissemination and maintenance of cultural norms and values. For example Barker and Galasinski (2001: 25) comment:

Ideologies are structures of signification that constitute social relations in and through power...Power is not simply the glue that holds the social together, or the coercive force which subordinates one set of people to another, though it
certainly is this, but the processes that generate and enable any form of social action.

The portrayal of events, issues and individuals in the media is inherently selective, in terms of which elements are fore grounded and how these issues are embodied in text and images (Briggs and Cobby 1998, Barker 2000). Barker (2000) discusses a number of models applied to the construction of television news coverage and composition, two of which (the pluralistic and hegemonic) can potentially be applied to a range of other media. The plural model proposes "market forces lead to a plurality of outlets and to a multiplicity of voices addressing different audiences" (Barker 2000: 261). This model considers that the professionalism of reporters and the interests of their target markets overshadow those of the owners in terms of their media reporting style and content. However in comparison to the hegemonic model, the pluralistic model appears somewhat simplistic. The hegemonic model, whilst recognising that the world is socially constructed through "a multiplicity of streams of meaning, [contests] there is...a strand of meanings which can reasonably be called ascendant or dominant" (Barker 2000: 262). The processes of constructing, preserving and promoting these dominant ideologies is commonly referred to as hegemony (Hebdige 1979), demonstrating the conflicts and negotiations that occur in the construction of media discourses (Saukko 2003).

Within the hegemonic model, media discourses are actually the product of discourses of media practice, the knowledge and conventions of how things should be done, the rules and boundaries of such activities. Within these discourses reside the issue of what is worthy of coverage, the conventions of such coverage and the sources that validate their reporting on particular topics (Bell and Garrett 1998). A consequence arising from such issues is that "the media draw off and constitute consensual assumptions about the world in a process of agenda setting" (Barker 2000: 263). Therefore analysis of media discourses reveals their cultural agendas, in terms of the ordering of specific cultural elements, which receive emphasis as major themes, the manner in which such themes are conveyed and those which
are relegated to the background or silenced (Strinati 1995). Within the theoretical parameters of this model the media are huge contributors to the maintenance of power relations within and between cultural groups due to the discourses surrounding their practice including agendas, conventions of reporting and the sources and methods of validation sought. Therefore, it is unquestionable that the media consumed by a specific group will be key to determining the values and knowledge of its consumers and their corresponding perception of reality (Hall 1997).

Barker and Galasinski (2001: 67-68) consider text to be ‘multifunctional’ with “three such functions”; these being “the ideational, the interpersonal [and] the textual”. The ‘ideational’ relates to the ability of texts to “refer to realities ‘outside’ of the speaker, enabling her/him to render intelligible their experience of the world ... the ideational function also refers to the internal world of speakers, their cognitions, emotions, perceptions and acts of speaking and understanding ... [it] is responsible for the texts ‘representational faculties’. The interpersonal function refers to the interaction between the speaker and the addressee by means of the text” (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 68). This function relates to the manner in which narrators can indirectly and subtly communicate their opinions about the issues and topics they address, whilst maintaining the perception of the text as autonomous. As the title also suggests the interpersonal function relates to the relationships between addressee and addressee. Through the means, style and nature of communication, the power and hence the social relations between the communicator and the receiver are generated; these factors initiate the relationship the speaker wishes to establish with his or her audience. “Finally language serves a textual function by which elements of it are responsible for making discourses appear ‘as text’ while signalling its relevance to the context in which it appears” (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 68). This function relates to the ability of language within textual discourses to reflect, relate to and cohere with the reality of the context with which they correlate. It is what facilitates the composition of language into comprehensible textual discourses of the environment and worlds to which they relate.
Another significant consideration in the analysis of textual discourses is their intertextual nature, whereby additional meaning is generated through "the interdependent ways in which texts stand in relation to each other" (Your Dictionary 2003). As language is interpreted in the context of the signs and systems of signification within which it is placed within individual texts, so are texts related to other texts within the social world (Fairclough 1992). "That is, intertextuality signals the accumulation and generation of meaning across texts where all meanings depend on other meanings" (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 69). Thus no text stands alone as completely independent or original but is influenced, both in its generation and interpretation, by the myriad of cultural texts available (Foucault 1980). As more textual evidence emerges regarding specific theories, issues or events this can lead to greater understanding and credibility of preceding texts or they may generate further questioning of preceding ideologies. This issue also indicates that the generation of new texts can lead to the reinterpretation of existing ones, and therefore that the interpretation and meaning of texts is variable over time: fashion is a prime example of such occurrences (Barker 2002).

Intertextuality is therefore a key means of generating meaning and points of relation and contrast within cultural and media discourses, without such a function, texts would be meaningless and discourses could not exist (Hall 1997). The nature of the sources used in the process of intertextuality is of great interest and importance in the analysis of texts as these can aid the investigation of their interpersonal and ideational functions. Even though ideational and interpersonal factors may not be explicitly revealed through texts, the intertextual referents aid the exposition of these agendas.

This investigation uses some of the perspectives and tools of semiotics (signs, signifiers, signifieds and referents, denotation and connotation) to aid the analysis of the discourses of the dance culture media. Therefore I investigate and analyse the use of signs within the context of ideologies of dance culture and wider cultural codes, particularly giving attention to the denotations and connotations of the terminology used and their wider
implications within the context of dance culture. Such a process has revealed some of the discursive agendas of the dance music media to gain a better understanding of the manner in which they inform the participants of dance culture and influence the wider codes of conduct and behaviour, norms and values within dance culture.

4.5.7.3.1 Carrying out discourse analysis

The initial step in carrying out discourse analysis requires the selection of the data sources (Tonkiss 1998, Stokes 2003). In terms of this investigation three key dance culture publications were selected Mixmag, DJ and Knowledge. These publications serve different sections of the dance culture market in terms of genres, participation and accessibility. With each magazine I investigated their agendas in relation to the construction and portrayal of events and the construction and the portrayal of DJs. To aid this goal a number of articles and features were selected from each publication for deeper analysis and consideration.

Discourse analysis is typically a non-linear method, requiring a circular approach to the data (familiarisation with the text, analysis, extraction of key points, re-reading the text and so forth) rather than a single reading leading to results (Saukko 2003). Therefore, after selecting specific elements, familiarisation is the next step, reading through features several times, before beginning to rewrite the feature from an analytical perspective. In analysing texts the chosen approach was to decipher the key themes within the text, then analyse it in detail to reveal how such portrayals are constructed and authenticated within the context of the text and the wider culture to which it corresponds (Tonkiss 1998). In line with semiotic analysis, particular emphasis and consideration was given to the emotive and connotative nature of the descriptive terms used in the portrayal of various aspects of dance culture. Investigating definitions and the denotations and connotations of such definitions within the specific contexts of their application was a key feature of my approach, which has aided my understanding of the role of the dance media in the social construction of dance culture.
Bell and Garrett (1998) consider the ideologies of discourse to serve three primary criteria: social functions, cognitive structures and discursive expression and reproduction. The social functions of ideologies consider the reasoning for the development and use of ideologies and the role they play in the coordination and control of social groups. "Given this social role of ideologies, it is of course true that many ideologies develop precisely in order to sustain, legitimate or manage group conflicts, as well as relationships of power and dominance" (Bell and Garrett 1998: 24). This element is intertwined with the issue of cognitive structures, complementing and supporting the management of the social functions of groups. Cognitive structures provide a more structured means of informing and managing the social functions of groups in terms of the norms and values, attitudes and opinions, knowledge and perceptions of group members. These are also the structures and discourses that maintain power relations within groups. Discursive expression and reproduction therefore relates to the means through which such ideologies are constructed and conveyed, the nature of the language used, terms and points of reference and experiential sources utilised throughout the process (Bell and Garrett 1998). All of these issues must be continually considered in the analysis of texts and the decoding of discourse.

Consistent with the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism the role of the media in not only constructing, but also perpetuating and occasionally challenging the socio-cultural constitution of dance culture is also a key feature of interest within this analysis. Investigating the extent to which the media serves to inform and to reinforce the cultural hierarchy was a theme explored in the analysis, although such discourses are not overt, but covert in such texts. Indeed a major interest in discourse from authors such as Foucault (1980) is the role that it plays in the construction of social reality and the manner and nature by which social reality is constructed through discursive practices. Authors such as Foucault (1980) and Hall (1997) consider that the myriad of social discourses are the driving factor behind the nature of social reality at any given point in time and are
representative of and largely control the totality of actions within a given cultural sphere acted upon by particular discursive formations.

This is not to say that discourse is set in stone and fixed, it is anything but, and the continual evolution of cultural norms, values and practices within societies is evidence of this (Valentine 2001). However certain cultural communication vehicles have a greater propensity to influence discursive practices through the sphere of their influence and the nature of their existence (Suakko 2003). Indeed it could be said in terms of the media, wider discourses are prevalent which establish the credibility of the media, their authoritative nature and the manner in which their contents should be interpreted and perceived (Bell and Garrett 1998). However this is an issue that individual media vehicles must continually struggle with in terms of their editorial content and the nature of their reporting, the nature of which is fundamentally determined by the target recipients and the prevailing discourses within these groups (Hall 1997). For this reason the nature of the reporting of a single event will differ greatly between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers and between left and right wing publications, because there must be a certain degree of conformity to the social realities of the receivers who constitute their target market.

The conduct of discourse analysis therefore entails much “sorting, coding and analysing” data (Tonkiss 1998: 253), reading texts, highlighting key themes and descriptive processes and then deconstructing these to facilitate a fuller understanding of their ideological role within this specific culture. Therefore there must be a continual effort when considering the construction of texts to relate these to external realities and events to reveal the “interrelationships between discourse and wider social structures” (Wooffitt 2005: 139). Tonkiss also stresses the importance of “looking for variation in the text” (1998: 255), “reading for emphasis and detail” (1998: 257) and “attending to silences” (1998: 258). Other issues for consideration in the analysis of discourse concern factors such as equilibrium; as Stokes (2003: 70) states within certain contexts it is relevant to “identify the ‘equilibrium’ at the beginning and at the end of the
text”. Do particular texts readdress and alter power relations and if so how do such functions operate and why are they constructed to operate in such a manner? However as discourse scholars such as Schiffrin (1994), Howarth (2000), Bell and Garrett (1998) and Wooffitt (2005) all state there is no one set methodological approach to conducting discourse analysis due to the complexity of its nature.

Although I have already considered it in some detail, I shall briefly need to return to the processes involved in the analysis of visual texts (images), as some of this is also helpful in interpreting written texts. Describing the text is also the starting point for visual texts, entailing a thorough examination and description of the written and visual ideas and elements of the texts. Stokes (2003: 74) considers this initial stage of analysis should:

Focus on the denotation – where is the setting? – is it urban or exotic? Domestic interior or wild countryside? How many models are there? Describe their pose...discuss text and its relationship to image; is colour used? How? Try to stick to description of the literal image and text, or what is denoted by the images.

After describing texts in a very literal sense it is then possible to consider the meaning of texts through interpretation. Interpreting the texts requires analysis and discussion of “the meanings and implications of each separate sign individually and then collectively” (Stokes 2003: 74-75). It is at this stage where the connotations of the images and language used must be analysed for their symbolic significance and how the connotations of image and language relate. One must question whether these elements generate the same significance alone or how else they may be interpreted in such a context. Such a process enables the extraction of cultural codes for instance “what kinds of cultural knowledge do you need to know to understand the text? How are the images [and language] drawing on our cultural knowledge to help us create particular kinds of meaning?” (Stokes 2003: 75). These forms of cultural knowledge must also be related to the target audience for specific texts and whether they are likely to understand such presentational approaches. Having conducted such a process you are
then able to produce generalizations about the nature of the texts, the types of messages they are trying to convey and the manner in which such communications are conducted.

4.6 Ethics

Ethics is a primary concern for research conduct and analysis issues and an essential consideration for social researchers, particularly those studying human subjects. However it is not just in relation to the subjects that ethical considerations have to be given. Ervin (2000) states that anthropologists and social science researchers have a duty to a variety of publics including the community or culture being researched, the client or employer of the researcher, their profession and the general public. Although the ultimate purpose of all research is to generate knowledge and insights through accurate and truthful information, this goal cannot be pursued at all costs (Ritchie and Goeldner 1994). Just as researchers have a duty to provide truthful accounts of their subjects, they also have a duty to their subjects to treat them respectfully and ensure no harm comes to them as a result of their activities and the findings of their research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, Davies 1999). Therefore much of the focus of ethical debates concerns the actions of the researcher and their effect on the research sample and the other members or groups within the population being studied.

Coffey (1999: 74) comments, that "questions of ethics are particularly salient to the consequences, dissemination and publishing of research". Therefore key dimensions of ethics in the research process concern the immediate and repercussive consequences for participants, informing the public accurately and the nature in which findings are presented. It is imperative that the publishing of this research does not adversely effect the population in question, therefore, as this research covers personal and in some cases controversial issues, participant anonymity must be maintained for all subjects, (this is true even though this research is unlikely to be used by any organisations, which may affect the participants negatively). In terms of the dissemination and publishing of this research this thesis is not
intended for commercial publication. However if it was to be published, its nature and content are unlikely to cause negative consequences for dance culture, moreover the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of this research suggest that this research is intended to provided cultural insights, rather than claiming to present a representative account of this culture in its entirety.

The issue of ethics can be seen as very sensitive and sometimes controversial. In addition there is always the issue of compromise, as to what extent different elements of the research can be compromised. Barnes (1982: 22-23) comments, “ethical and intellectual compromise is an intrinsic characteristic of social research”. Changes to be more ethical can compromise the intellectual validity of research and vice versa. For example providing subjects with lots of information about the research may influence their responses, which can place the findings in question (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). However withholding information about the purpose of a study may ensure participants’ comments are more genuine, but it has to be questioned if such action (deception/withholding information) is ethically sound and justifiable? If the withholding of information will have no consequences for the research subjects, then it may be justifiable for them not to be informed or to only be partially informed. However if participation in the research may impact upon individual participants, then they must be informed of this potential risk. The extent to which participants are informed is where the balance must be struck, to ensure they are informed, whilst minimising reactivity to this information.

Compromises must be made between commitment to the people one is studying and impartiality; between openness and secrecy; between honesty and deception; and among the pursuit of scientific knowledge, the public’s right to know, and the individuals right to privacy and protection (Hicks and Gwynne 1996: 84).

Informed consent is defined by the British Sociological Association (1996) cited in Davies (1999: 46) in the following terms:
As far as possible sociological research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied. This implies a responsibility on the sociologist to explain as fully as possible, and in terms meaningful to the participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be disseminated.

Informed consent is the most significant and sometimes the most controversial aspect of ethics in the research process (Ervin 2000). As a stranger in a social setting a researcher may take a long time to gain the trust of others. Additionally there are many instances where the researcher would either not be accepted (either by gatekeepers or the actual subjects) or if their purpose for being there was known then people would behave differently. In such circumstances there are obvious benefits (for the researcher) of adopting a covert approach, however deception can often create more problems for the researcher than it solves, as the researcher may have to pretend to be someone they are not. Jones (1996: 66) comments that in some circumstances deception is “justifiable when no alternative means of investigation is possible and when risks to those being observed are minimal”. Jones (1996: 66) also mentions how informed consent is not necessary when people “are not identified” and when you are observing “public behaviour” in social settings. However for people engaged in a single setting for a long period of time, deception is not considered acceptable as it violates the trust placed on the researcher by the various people they befriend and is blatantly a form of exploitation.

The notion of complete informed consent can be difficult to achieve however when one considers how the focus of research can change over its duration. Although participants may be informed of the objectives of the research at its outset these may change during the process depending on what information is brought to light (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, Davies 1999). These scholars suggest that like the participation/observation spectrum, there are varying degrees of informed consent and that whilst some of the participants may be informed of the whole picture others may receive a partial explanation of the researcher’s purpose.
There are two major difficulties in achieving informed consent from participants; primarily there is the issue of presenting the research to potential participants in a digestible and significant format that will evoke their interest and stimulate their co-operation. Secondly there is the issue of the effects of informing participants on the research findings (Davies 1999). Therefore the terminology used when explaining the purpose of research must be relevant to the audience and one must be careful not to use words with double meanings. Additionally the researcher must be careful not to express their views surrounding the issues under investigation, as this may generate participant reactivity.

In terms of my own research project, I hold differing positions on informed consent at different stages, depending on the methods being used. As mentioned above informed consent and participant observation are directly linked and when a covert observational position is being taken informed consent is impossible. The covert stages of this research were more aimed at observing general behaviour, actions and responses to specific stimuli rather than directly approaching individuals and gaining their opinions. Therefore I considered this to be ethically acceptable as individuals’ anonymity will be protected and there will be no risks or repercussions for such individuals from being observed. As stated above, when observing public behaviour in social settings it is generally perceived as ethically sound to do this covertly, however when enduring relationships are entered into, to retain a covert approach becomes unethical.

When I moved to a more participatory approach a greater degree of informed consent was sought from those involved and the purpose of the research was revealed at this stage. My discussions over the nature and purpose of the research generated a significant amount of interest amongst the research population and there have been no hostile reactions. Therefore I consider such disclosures of information have facilitated the research process and actually encouraged openness of responses. However in saying this, as Ervin (2000) points out, when you just have brief encounters with people informed consent is difficult and it can seriously
detract from the spontaneity of conversation. I considered the best policy with regard to this issue was to reveal more about the research as encounters became longer and more involved. This way I did not deceive the participants but the conversation followed more of a natural pattern, revealing more about the research as the participants revealed more concerning their own attitudes and opinions. Through adopting this approach greater spontaneity was retained within the research process, ensuring interactions were as natural as possible, whilst maintaining high ethical standards.

The interview stage of the research process required the greatest degree of informed consent. Here it was essential to inform the participants of the exact nature and purpose of the research; however I had to be exceptionally careful not to influence the responses of participants through this process (Ervin 2000). This required me to explain what I was researching and how this research will be used, whilst not divulging any ideas I had about the research outcomes, as this may have affected the reliability of the outcome. Again it was envisaged that such disclosures of information would also help participants understand the orientation of the research, leading to more relevant information, without creating a perceptual framework which would constrain their answers.

Privacy is another major ethical dimension of carrying out research and as Jones (1996: 85) comments, “the key to privacy ... is that individuals must be able to choose how much or how little to reveal about themselves ... privacy means control over access to intimate areas of the individual’s self and intimate information about the individual and his or her actions”. In this context intimate refers to “those things he or she loves, values, and/or cares about” (Jones 1996: 85). Therefore Jones considers many public acts and behaviour as ethically sound to observe, however he considers that to record people (using a video) in social situations where they can be identified later is unethical. For certain types of research the need for privacy is greater and in many situations the repercussions for participants of being identified could be severe. For example research on people in
prominent public positions of power, or simply professionals could raise controversial findings and others may then try to identify these individuals to expose them and their opinions or actions. However the nature of this research is such that the likelihood of people being identified is extremely low as no visual or audio footage will be made public and personal details and participant profiles will be excluded from the published research findings.

In this study all participants spoken to directly were given pseudonyms to protect their identity and to facilitate openness in their responses. Although this is not always considered vital, participants should always be given the option to remain anonymous. Davies (1999) notes that, even where participants are not named themselves, others who know them well may identify them through direct quotations due to their dialect and mannerisms. Therefore I had to be careful to assure complete anonymity to participants, as I have used extensive direct quotations in the research findings.

4.7 Summary
This chapter has presented and justified the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods used within this thesis. In determining the epistemological perspective of this research the two cornerstones of positivism and constructionism were explored and constructionism was identified as the preferred approach. Taking into account the relative and constructed nature of social reality and the area under investigation, constructionism appeared the natural choice as it provides for a more flexible and diverse methodology. As this research is exploratory rather than designed to test specific hypothesis, a positivist approach would have restricted this potential and entailed a quantitative rather than a qualitative approach. Symbolic interactionism was chosen as the theoretical perspective for this research, as it was deemed most appropriate to the epistemological perspective and the research aims. In justifying the adoption of this perspective, symbolic interactionism was explored, to reveal the complex factors influencing individuals’ perceptions
and interactions with the social world and the meanings they ascribe to actions and artefacts as a result.

In the methodology section the nature and history of qualitative research was outlined, before the methodology of ethnography was introduced, as the most appropriate due to its origins in researching cultures and cultural groupings. I then explored the issues involved in researching culture through ethnography in more depth and related its approach to symbolic interactionism. In discussing an ethnographic approach I also began to build the case for using participant observation as a research method, as many scholars argue that the only way to develop deep understanding of cultural groups is to spend a significant amount of time with them, observing their actions and interactions.

Participant observation was then discussed in greater depth, revealing its complex and multi-faceted nature as an omnibus strategy, which entails not only observation, but also interviews, focus groups and analysis of cultural texts. As part of this I also explored the different levels of participation and observation from the complete participant to the complete observer and the changing emphasis on participation and observation between the two ends of the spectrum. I then discussed the challenges and benefits of differing levels of participation and observation and the different research possibilities they present.

As interviews are a key feature of participant observation I then explored the role of interviews in greater depth in terms of how they enable deeper exploration of issues with individuals. The range of interview approaches was explored and the chosen methods of semi-structured and unstructured interviews justified. Focus groups were then addressed in terms of their history, how they would benefit this research and the methodological issues associated with their use.

Due to the desire to incorporate as wide a range of research methods as reasonably possible, the role of internet research was also explored and the
selection of message boards as a useful area for participant observation justified. Following my discussion of research analysis issues I then explored the issues and approaches involved in textual analysis, considering content analysis, semiotics and discourse analysis. The rationale for selecting discourse analysis was then presented based on the role of discourse in the construction, evolution and manipulation of social realities and the understanding its analysis could bring in relation to the participants who inhabit them.

The final section of the chapter discussed the area of ethics and considered the responsibilities of researchers to both their research participants and the wider public. This section also examined the compromises that must be made in the research process in order to adhere to best ethical practice, whilst also achieving the aims of the research. I discussed how in some circumstances informed consent was essential, however in other situations it was simply not viable and was ethically justifiable.

This chapter has thus discussed the rationale for adopting particular research approaches and discarding others and has also outlined the structure of the research process. The following chapter will begin the presentation and discussion of the research findings, starting with an exploration of the preferences and motivations of clubbers.
Chapter 5
Exploring participant motivations and preferences

5.1 Introduction
Attitudes and motivations lie at the heart of ethnographic investigations and are central to understanding the dynamics of cultural groups. Through investigations of attitudes and motivations we are able to expose the cultural worlds of social groups and gain a deeper appreciation of the cultural forces at play within them. Analysis of the attitudes and motivations of the participants in dance culture was a key objective of this research project and this chapter seeks to widen our understanding of dance culture through an exploration of this area. There are a variety of reasons why people participate in dance music culture, which lead them to engage in the culture at many different levels. Dance music has become extremely popular over the past decade and a half and the numerous subgroups that have emerged from the initial rave scene mean that there are now many musical and fashion styles that appeal to a wide range of people under the umbrella term of dance music culture.

Nine key themes emerge from the fieldwork under the broad heading of clubbing preferences and motivations. The first of these (section 5.2) relates to travelling to events and the relationship between distance and perceptions and expectations of places (so that the act of travel was found to have a significant impact on event experiences). Related to this is the second theme which is the physical qualities of events including size and aesthetics (section 5.3). Although bigger was often perceived as better, there was not always a direct correlation between size and enjoyment of the experience. The impact of other people on experiences at events was also a pertinent point and relates to the role of crowds and the appeal of different sized events. The third area of interest is the role of dress and how it is used to influence and facilitate role performances within different clubbing spaces (section 5.4). The fourth theme was that of drugs which also facilitate the performance of different roles within clubbing spaces and contribute substantially to the alternative norms and values of dance music.
events (section 5.5). The fifth issue to emerge was the cultural status of dance culture and its participants’ sense of being associated with those outside traditional or ‘straight culture’ (section 5.6).

The sixth area addressed in the chapter is dance itself. Dance has received little significant scholarly attention and section 5.7 seeks to expand discussion of this topic. The seventh theme relates to the participants’ sense of being associated with something vibrant, empowering and embracing behavioural values outside those of mainstream culture (section 5.8). Dance music events provide environments where individuals can assume alternative roles or reject others entirely; most importantly they are unrestricted by the codes of conduct and behaviour which stifle individuality and spontaneity in everyday life. The eighth section investigates the influence of a number of media vehicles (primarily radio, magazines, the Internet and flyers) on participation in and perceptions of individual events (section 5.9). Although the influence of the media was evident this was an area which many participants were unwilling to discuss in significant depth. Finally the role of DJs and their music was also a key issue in relation to attracting crowds to and creating atmospheres within events and thus the role of DJs as a focal point of dance events is discussed in section 5.10.

5.2 The significance of travel

Since its emergence in the late 1980s, participation in rave and dance music culture has required many of its adherents to travel distances to attend first raves and then later clubs. In the early days of the acid house scene many participants travelled great distances to attend raves and parties. This was largely due to the perceived uniqueness of these events and the low levels of supply that existed at this time. Because there were few events each weekend this enhanced their sense of occasion and meant that participants were willing to travel long distances. In addition, there was also the added incentive of meeting new likeminded people from other parts of the country through random encounters, which also heightened the sense of being a long way from home.
Chapter 5: Exploring participant motivations and preferences

Indeed much of my own initial involvement with dance events often required several hours travelling, usually to some remote location in west, mid or south Wales where the illegal party or rave was being held. Leaving the familiar surroundings of my locality and going somewhere new always created a tense air of anticipation, excitement and nervousness. Not knowing what to expect, or what encounters the night ahead would bring were always a major part of the appeal. Travelling late at night, to a destination such as a car park in a forest, by a reservoir or some remote smallholding or manor house to party created a unique feeling. Such events ranged from a single sound system to several; a basic array of lights to sophisticated lasers; possibly including a makeshift café and bar and involving anything from several hundred to several thousand revellers, depending on how far the word had spread about the party. These individuals were all there to meet new people and to have fun, but most importantly to be a part of something that may never happen again. These events brought people together from across the UK to party in remote areas of the countryside where the powers of the criminal justice bill had not yet reached.

The intangibility of dance events also draws people from further afield, as with any intangible service you must be at the site of production to fully experience them; whilst their heterogeneity also means that they can never be duplicated. Furthermore, the greater the complexity and magnitude of an event, the greater the potential for diverse and powerful experiences and the implications of this are that large and ‘one-off’ events have greater appeal and geographic pull, as they are more likely to lead to unique and special experiences. Although in theory a clubber can never duplicate the experiences of any given dance music event, there are often more similarities than differences between regular club events in comparison to larger, less frequent and one off events. Therefore clubs that people attend regularly become more routine, predictable and as a result less exciting, which in turn reduces the strength of their appeal and increases the attractiveness of the unknown. Thus it is a constant challenge for event promoters to ensure that their products remain fresh and interesting to maintain their appeal to customers.
This section will now examine the significance of travel and geography in dance culture by analysing my participants’ comments made during my fieldwork. When discussing her experience of attending a major dance festival I asked A Girl (pseudonym adopted by interviewee) how she felt about going clubbing locally compared to going further afield. She responded by saying that “travelling to clubs and events is more exciting than going somewhere local ... although the journey is sometimes a chore, it’s always exciting going somewhere new and different”. This reveals just how much travel can heighten the enjoyment of dance music experiences. This is partly because going on a journey as part of the overall experience requires more commitment and therefore participants acquire the mind set that the event is worth the effort – building further anticipation and excitement. It also seems to relate to the thrill of seeking out new and less familiar experiences, which are generally to be found further from home (Aitchison et al 2000, Urry 2002). This echoes part of the original rave ethos where ravers travelled hundreds of miles in order to attend a rave; indeed this is how Thornton (1995) distinguished between raves and club events, suggesting that clubs are static venues, whilst raves occur in a diversity of locations from leisure centres to abandoned warehouses. Therefore travelling to events, meeting new people and becoming involved in new experiences in different locations all emerge as part of the appeal of clubbing.

The sense of being away from familiar surroundings also has an effect on individuals’ self-consciousness and conformity to social roles (Shields 1991, Valentine 2001). In different settings individuals are able to credibly and comfortably perform roles different to those expected of them in everyday life, as the parameters and conventions of social conduct are shifted (Goffman 1969). A pertinent example of this is holiday behaviour and etiquette, which it must be noted, varies from destination to destination. When on holiday, we may be less inhibited and restrained by our social norms and values and more likely to display greater spontaneity and emotion. Acts and interactions deemed unconventional or inappropriate in everyday settings can become normal, expected and accepted whilst on holiday (Doorne and Ateljevic 2005). In fact, it has been said that vacation
"places are chosen ... because there is an anticipation ... of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered" (Urry 2002: 3).

People have expectations not only of specific places and how they will make them feel, but also of how they can experience and interact with places which are both geographically and psychologically distant from those of their everyday lives. Since space is socially constructed, specific spaces (such as clubs and events sites) acquire social meanings through the discourses that surround them and the manner in which they are accessed and developed (Valentine 2001, Pritchard and Morgan 2006). Moreover, in addition to the issue of 'other places' and the changes to sense of self, acquired with distance from our normal environment, there is also the notion of variety, achieved through consuming a greater diversity of experiences. Any given geographical area can only offer a limited amount of events and by increasing the distance they are willing to travel participants are increasing their potential range of experiences; indeed experiencing points of contrast is considered a strong motivation for many forms of experiential consumption such as tourism (McIntosh et al 1995).

When I asked one of my participants whether he frequented the same clubs on a weekly or monthly basis, or whether he actively sought out a variety of places, he replied:

For me variety is better, I try not to go to the same ones too often, once a month is generally more than enough depending on who is playing and which club it is. I used to go to the same club every month for quite a long time but then I got so bored of the place I couldn’t face going there again for years! (Mr Curious)

Such comments demonstrate how clubbers can become bored and discontented with going to the same club as this ‘normalises’ the experience. Although many clubbers do have a very strong bond with particular events and venues (displaying loyalty to the unique atmosphere created by a particular blend of people), there is always the urge to seek out and experience other clubs and events. As much of the focus of clubbing
is on the experiential aspects of consumption, over familiarity with a specific venue can dampen sensitivity to surroundings and therefore reduce participant appreciation of the event. In this participant’s view, as with many others in my study, becoming too familiar with a venue or event makes it more routine and even in this environment routine leads to less spontaneity, which can also inhibit the clubbing experience.

When discussing travelling to events another respondent commented “I don’t often travel to clubs due to lack of transport and financial resources, but I would be willing to travel to clubs if they were worth it. I would consider travelling up to 150 miles is okay for a really special club” (Mr Z). This comment illustrates how travelling distances to seek out new experiences is considered relatively normal within dance culture, especially if the destination is seen as special. For most people in the UK 150 miles is a considerable distance to travel for leisure and they would generally only do so for events perceived as particularly important or unique. The UK Day Visits Survey notes that the average travel time for a day out is one hour including the return journey, whilst the “average distance traveled for trips varied by destination: town/city (13.2 miles), countryside (18.7 miles), seaside/coast (30.5 miles)” (Countryside Agency 2004). This raises a number of issues concerning clubbers’ perceptions of dance music. Firstly it indicates how much participants distinguish between events, with various events perceived as being so different and unique that they are worth the long distances travelled. Secondly, it indicates the importance of dance events to participants and endorses that experiencing major events and high profile clubs is a symbolic demonstration of an individuals’ level of cultural participation and cultural capital.

Such themes are clearly illustrated in the comments of Ms Thoughtful (another participant) on the Gatecrasher Summer Sound System event. She said that “travelling to Gatecrasher was fun and interesting as I enjoy travelling to new places, the distance was not a problem being a passenger. I had a feeling of curious excitement travelling to and queuing up to get into the event, being uncertain of what to expect was nice and exciting”. Here
she is obviously aware that the journey itself made a major contribution to the whole experience, echoing the situation in tourism experiences:

The experience of passing through an ever-changing landscape enables the traveller to catch glimpses of places to which he or she has no lasting commitment. The journey can be regarded not simply as a means to an end but as a source of pleasure derived from a sense of freedom through travel (Aitchison et al 2000: 29).

The journey constitutes an experience in itself, seeing new and unfamiliar places, fleeting encounters with distant towns and places you may never see again. It creates a visual narrative of the passage from one state of being to another, a time of transition, contemplation, conversation and expectation. In this respect the journey could be considered as a rite of passage into the liminal zone that is the dance event (see figure 5.1).

It seems then that it is the anticipation of the unexpected and the search for novel, out-of-the ordinary and new experiences that forms a major part of the appeal of many dance music events. This is a characteristic trait of human nature, but particularly amongst young people, many of whom are driven by the desire to seek out new and different experiences as a means of mental and emotional stimulation and personal development (Epstein 1998, Aronson 2003). Travelling to distant places can take people outside of their comfort zone, as they are unfamiliar with the surroundings and unsure of what is to come (Aitchison et al 2000). This is an appeal of many different leisure activities and also bears similarities with processes of initiation or rites of passage within tribal cultures when individuals move from one life stage or state of being to another (Turner 1982).

This sense of journey was clearly evident amongst those I interviewed who had attended the Godskitchen Global Gathering (2002). Many had travelled several hundred miles to the event, which heightened their sense of occasion:

Travelling to it felt like it was, um, pilgrimage you know a, a what's the word, top of the mountain and back vision quest
almost, like, like a full circle. You're going to go out, you’re going to get an acquired result, do certain things, come back, come full circle and return, with the medicine or with the energy or with the... change (Robin Hood).

Such comments reveal how travelling to certain events has religious and spiritual overtones for some participants. Their journey can often be physically and mentally demanding, but since that journey is part of a greater whole, their discomfort is contextualised as a part of the experience, much like in pilgrimages, where pilgrims often endure physical discomfort and hardship as part of their journey. The body is pushed and the mind challenged in the act of expressing commitment to one’s religion (Singh 2004) and as Gonzales (2003: 449) comments on a specific pilgrimage “in order to comply with tradition, pilgrims are required to walk at least 100km, or to ride 200km by bike or on horseback”. In this instance those who travel by motorised transport are not considered ‘true’ pilgrims, as they have not fully participated in the whole experience where not merely the travel but also the mode of travel is central to the overall experience.

Figure 5.1 Journey’s end
Scholars such as Gonzales (2003) and Singh (2004) also stress the attraction of religious sites and pilgrimages to tourists and again this bears some similarities to dance culture in that while for many individuals dance events constitute a pilgrimage, for others they are more representative of a tourist experience. Whilst the tourist simply visits sites to gaze at the phenomenon and spectacle, to be able to say they have been to and witnessed particular events, their relationship with places and the people who inhabit them are typically more detached (see figure 5.2). But for the devout followers it is the entirety of the experience and not simply the spectacle that is of significance, yet as Gonzales (2003: 450) comments, “pilgrims attract other kinds of travellers who try to emulate them”.

The second way in which dance events have religious overtones is in the importance of such events within dance music culture, the hype they receive beforehand and the number of participants gathered in one place. For some people travelling to and attending events are the dance music equivalents of pilgrimages or major religious festivals. Whilst for people with
strong religious beliefs participation in pilgrimages or visits to sacred sites adds further value and meaning to their lives, so too does attending major dance events for participants. Participation in pilgrimages brings expectations of spiritual fulfilment, enlightenment and change, likewise, participation in dance events can, for many participants, provide opportunities for “learning about ourselves and others” (Robin Hood). Indeed in investigating the motivations and experiences of pilgrims in northern Spain, Slavin (2003: 1) comments, “their motivations are often vague and rarely expressed in religious terms, yet many are eloquent in speaking of their journey as spiritual”. This demonstrates how many individuals who do not consider themselves part of any particular religious faith participate in a range of activities as a source of spiritual fulfillment.

So, just as I have already suggested that dance events can be conceptualised as liminal spaces, so attending the events can also be described as a rite of passage as discussed by Arnold Van Gennep (1961). The rites of passage relate to the ritual processes that individuals and groups undergo in the acquisition of new social statuses, or processes of seasonal change. The rites of passage contain three phases: separation, transition and incorporation. The separation phase entails a “detachment of the ritual subjects ... from their previous social statuses” (Turner 1982: 24), where individuals, cultural groups or whole societies move from one set of cultural and social values to another, a shift which is also often accompanied by a physical movement in space. The transition phase marks a time (and space) of ambiguity and uncertainty outside the influence of social rules and roles. Here individuals (and groups) occupy an alternative social and spatial realm, “an intensive bonding ‘communitas’ is experienced, and there is direct experience of the sacred or supernatural” (Urry 2002: 11). The incorporation phase represents the reintegration of individuals within the wider society, often with enhanced and relatively defined social status. At the level of a group or culture transition means “they have been ritually prepared for a whole series of changes in the nature of the cultural and ecological activities to be undertaken and of the relationships they will then have with others” (Turner 1982: 25).
Such rites of passage bear remarkable similarities to the emotions expressed by many of the dance culture participants I interviewed. Separation clearly relates to leaving home and moving outside of the normal places of everyday life. This process facilitates the abandonment of daily social roles and the "loss of social coordinates"; when the transition from one state of being to another is facilitated through travel (Shields 1991: 83). With the rites of passage ‘transition’ could be applied to both travelling to events and the actual events themselves, as in both these contexts normal social roles are suspended, communitas are developed and experienced and spiritual experiences can be gained. The journey also acts as a time of transition, helping participants move away from day-to-day ways of being to a more energetic, expressive, open, reflexive and contemplative state in preparation for the event to come.

As M (another participant attending Godskitchen Global Gathering) commented:

I quite like long journeys to somewhere it makes it feel a bit more special ... you know if you’re just travelling down the road it’s sort of, you’re there before you’ve got the head space on for being in it. Whereas if you’re going half way across the country by the time you get there, you’re generally ready for it and ... and ready to put in a bit more.

This participant again reiterates the importance of travelling distances to dance music events, noting that it helps him to attain the right mental state for immersing himself as fully as possible into the event and adopting a more enthusiastic and energetic approach, which heightens his enjoyment.

The journey also constitutes a bonding with fellow travellers, which is further reinforced through the actual event experience itself. Communitas is used to describe a special type of bond between travellers and participants in rites of passage (Urry 2002, Slavin 2003). Such notions also relate to communal relationships in which individuals are more “inclined to give ... in response to the other’s need” with less expectation of directly gaining something in return - “they are relaxed about it and have faith that, over the long haul, some semblance of equity will fall into place” (Aronson 2003:}
313). Spending time in a common space and sharing a sense of purpose often makes people more caring and supportive of other participants, even when they have nothing to gain from such actions apart from an enhanced sense of self and the warmth that comes with generosity.

The incorporation phase in a typical rite of passage is perhaps less obviously applicable to dance culture. There is no fixed status derived from having attended such events although, as in a pilgrimage individuals feel a greater sense of belonging to a specific group by attending large-scale events. This in turn may also enhance their social standing and cultural capital with their peers, although not in mainstream society. It seems then, that the processes of incorporation are also applicable to dance events. Forming closer bonds with certain individuals and becoming more accustomed to communitas and the type of interaction facilitated by such social formations can lead to closer relationships with friends and family outside of dance events, although arguably this is a more gradual process arising through repeated attendance and communitas rather than from one-off events.

Attending dance events, particularly large-scale events which require long distance travel, could therefore certainly be considered as a rite of passage for many young people in contemporary society. It allows them to question and move away from societal norms, values and roles into new liminal social dimensions which they experience as they travel to and participate in dance events. The liminal properties of the dance events themselves will be further considered in chapter seven; however it is essential at this point to highlight one further point relating to the role of liminal places and practices in the development of wider society. Turner (1982: 28) comments that liminal situations constitute:

settings in which new models, symbols, paradigms, etc., arise – as the seedbeds of cultural creativity ... these new symbols and constructions then feedback into the “central” economic and politico-legal domains and arenas, supplying them with goals, aspirations, incentives, structural models and raisons d’être.
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Just as the counter culture of the 1960s and 1970s has had a profound influence on subsequent generations so too will dance culture, however change will always also be resisted as the “the struggle between tradition and innovation” continues (Debord 1994: 130).

5.3 Size matters – visual spectacle and the role of crowds

This next section will now consider the nature of the spectacle that the participants witness at the end of their travels - the climax of their journey and the culmination of their efforts (Vukonic 1996). I have already noted that “clubbing is an arena of production as much as consumption because in the last instance only the crowd can make the night” (Jackson 2004: 52). As with many religious events such as pilgrimages it is the gathering of large numbers of people in one place that serves to heighten and create the sense of occasion. As Cuff et al (1998: 75) comment in relation to Durkheim’s theories of religion “the essential feature of religion is its association with the notion of the sacred, that is of something quite special to be treated with exceptional levels of awe and respect”. In our context here, the sacred may be symbols, places, objects and people who are perceived with awe and respect, in contrast to the profane (Durkheim 1961). A critical feature of these distinctions is their separate nature, “for example, changes in dress, attitude and manner can be required of people when what they are doing involves them in contact with the sacred” (Cuff et al 1998: 76). Such distinctions are closely connected to issues of collective conscience and collective worship, where individuals congregate to perform religious rituals to “express their faith in common values and beliefs” (Haralambos and Holborn 2004: 407).

Given this, dance events could constitute the churches and cathedrals of dance culture, places where individuals converge to worship and admire the sacred and practice their values and beliefs, expressing their devotion at the end of their pilgrimage. To take this analogy further, we could say that smaller, more local and familiar clubs are the churches and chapels of dance culture (serving as regular places of worship and participation), whilst superclubs and festivals are the equivalent of cathedrals and major religious events, experienced less frequently or in the case of many clubbers possibly
not at all. Just as many religious people never manage to engage with the pinnacle of worship for their religion this is also the case for many clubbers, whilst others will attend all the events they can - travelling far and wide to express their devotion and achieve spiritual fulfilment (Vukonic 1996).

Figure 5.3 Dance events and the cathedralesque

As with all experiential events, especially where emphasis is placed upon gathering for the spectacle, it is the synergy between the crowds, the overall size of the event and the lighting and the music that generates atmosphere (figure 5.3). This is particularly true of dance music events where a major element of their appeal is the atmosphere, which is largely created by the concentration of likeminded individuals within a relatively confined space - in addition to the music and lighting (Fraser 1993, Malbon 1999, Jackson 2004). From the initial point of physical contact with any dance music event (which is usually the door or the queue), the role of crowds is highly significant. If a clubber arrives at an event to find few
crowds or queues it is immediately a cause for concern. Crowds provide an early indication of the quality and popularity of any event: larger crowds promise a good night ahead, whilst small crowds suggest a lack of interest. In addition crowds also create a queuing process which can be an event in itself, building excitement and tension. Queuing undoubtedly adds to the overall event experience by building anticipation and by creating time for clubbers to enter into the spirit of what is to come as well as making them feel they are part of something special which has attracted so many others.

Crowds and club size were key themes in my discussions of the clubbing preferences of my participants. There is often a preference towards "larger clubs due to the spectacle and atmosphere created by having more people" (A Girl). This particular individual considered that larger clubs in general promised better nights out and that engaging in the same activity in the same place at the same time as hundreds or thousands of others generates a sense of connectedness and purpose (figure 5.4). Certainly, the presence of others dancing in large numbers has been said to create a feeling of a coherent whole, interconnected by the ritual of dance (Pini 1997) and it seems that in dance clubs participants generally feel carried away by the power of the crowd and atmosphere such communal energy generates.
A second interviewee, Ms Thoughtful also commented “I prefer medium to large clubs, with an open plan rather than smaller more closed and claustrophobic clubs. Clubs with view points and balconies are better as you can see the people dancing and view the club from a different angle”. This demonstrates the significance of club layout and how that can permit a greater appreciation of the event as a whole. Seeing crowds from above adds an extra dimension to the visual aesthetics of club environments, and illustrates the pleasure experienced by clubbers watching others dance. Just like Urry’s (2002: 126) voyeur or flaneur, individuals within large clubs are able to “move about unnoticed, observing and being observed” but rarely “interacting with those encountered”. The difference between open plan and enclosed venues also contrasts the sense of confinement experienced by participants within small crowded venues with the sense of freedom experienced within larger venues.

I would argue that the feelings of freedom and confinement experienced in different venues relate not only to the physical aspects of these sites but also to the mindsets these different spaces create:

The shift in habitus that can arise from clubbing alters people’s perception ... they glimpse alternative ‘wants’ and so re-order their perception of self in relation to these newly discovered ‘wants’, rather than in relation to the wants, desires and socially sanctioned trajectories which reside in the habitus (Jackson 2004: 163).

For some, the physical proximity and intimacy of smaller venues restricts the sense of liberation they may experience elsewhere but for yet others there might be more comfort and freedom in these very same intimate venues. I would thus contend that freedom and restraint can be experienced in venues of various sizes; however it is easier to be less inhibited in the anonymous, larger venues. Liberation is a central ideology of dance culture and therefore the actual environment must create physical and psychological space that in turn promotes an aura of freedom and expression rather than confinement and suppression.
Thus, another of my participants commented they would prefer to be “in a big space full of people, but a small space full, is better than a large space half empty” (Mr Z). Again this shows the important role of others in creating the overall experience at dance events where there is an optimum person to space ratio, a critical mass that is central in generating the positive atmosphere within club environments. Just as in many religious ceremonies, participants ‘feed off’ one another through verbal and visual gestures creating a “collective excitation and amplification” (Harris 2005: 57) which builds energy levels within the participants and in the club in general. It is these conditions which are conducive to the creation of the oceanic and ecstatic experiences I discussed earlier (Pini 1997, Malbon 1999) which are described by my participants as a key appeal of dance events (figure 5.5). Without sufficient numbers and crowd concentration it is generally difficult to generate and more importantly to sustain the levels of enthusiasm necessary for the process of amplification. Referring to the work of Durkheim, Giddens (2001: 537) comments how “ceremonials take individuals away from the concerns of profane life into an elevated sphere”. In dance culture it is often the critical mass or density of people that is central to individuals obtaining the desired outcomes from such ceremonies.

Figure 5.5 Oceanic moments
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Whilst the actual size of the venues, the visual spectacle and the crowds were all important themes which emerged from the interviews, a further theme related to special occasions and hedonism, thus Mr Curious commented:

I prefer bigger clubs for special nights out, special occasions or when the urge comes for a big night out to get off it.... But smaller clubs are also good and there is less of an urge to take drugs, because these nights are less of an occasion.

This particular clubber states how he thinks that on special occasions and for big nights out larger clubs provide more appropriate settings for hedonistic indulgence, as at larger venues more people means less focus on the individual. This promotes a greater sense of anonymity, which in turn leads to an altered awareness of self and environment (Urry 2002), facilitating the achievement of ecstatic and oceanic experiences, where clubbers flux between states of self and identification with the dancing crowd. Commenting on the achievement of such experiences Malbon (1999: 108-109) argues it is:

The sense of in-betweeness or liminality that characterises clubbing ... the sensory onslaught that can act to effectively remove any figure of reference ... notions of loss (of differences between self and others, of space and time, of words, images and the senses) as well as gain (of unity, of timelessness and eternity, of control, joy, contact and ineffability).

It could also be said that large numbers of people at events provide confirmation and has an affirming effect on all those in attendance through symbolising the cultural significance and hence the greater cultural worth of a given event. Having greater cultural worth bestows more importance on an event which is seen as really 'special'. There is also the suggestion that people may take more drugs at bigger events and clubs, as they are seen as more of an occasion. At the same time they are also likely to be attended on special occasions which are themselves times of celebration when people are more likely to become intoxicated.
A recurring theme amongst all the participants was that “the visual spectacle of bigger clubs (better lighting, visuals, larger crowds) and the atmosphere created by lots of people often makes for a better night out” (Mr Curious). Another participant commented “I prefer places with good décor when promoters put an effort into putting on a show rather than just sound system and set of decks. Good décor means creating an atmosphere where the focus is not only on music and decks” (Mr Z). However he also commented that the “sound system is one of the most important factors in making a good night”. Such comments not only highlight the role of visual spectacle (see figure 5.6), but also confirm the impact of others as part of the clubbing experience.

Figure 5.6 Sensory stimulation

The experience of clubbing is multidimensional and polysensual, clubbers have come to expect far more from dance music experiences than music and a few flashing lights, it is an entire sensory experience they are seeking: aurally, visually, socially and mentally. Such events are
experienced through our bodies, which constitute the “boundary between 
self and other ... in a literal physiological” and “social sense”, constituting a 
“personal space” and “sensual organ” and therefore the nature of the space 
which the body occupies is central to notions of being and perceiving 
(Valentine 2001: 15). Amongst the interviewees there was an 
overwhelming preference for clubs which satisfied the senses, for example 
with a diversity of lighting and colour - both were considered very 
important in creating an atmosphere. The role of lighting in creating moods 
and generating atmospheres is well established (Fraser 1993) and in terms 
of dance music experiences there is a wide range of lighting available to add 
to the atmosphere of events. It is only the promoter’s budget and the size 
of the venue that restricts potential, however consumers have very high 
expectations in terms of lighting and sound quality and these must be met. 
To Ms Thoughtful “visual spectacle is one of most important factors in going 
out clubbing as well as the preferences of friends. Music is not particularly 
important to me as I have a diverse taste in music and no preferences for 
any particular style”.

Here, in these discussions of spectacle we again see echoes of the flaneur’s 
‘gaze’ (Urry 2002), where the opportunity to watch is a primary 
motivational factor in the experiential consumption. As Vukonic (1996) and 
Urry (2002) demonstrate, humans have a history of seeking spectacles, 
which, through the influence of a variety of cultural discourses, acquire 
symbolic significance that motivates their consumption. The quest for 
subjects, spaces and symbols on which to gaze could therefore be 
considered engrained in the psyche. As a result of prevailing discourses and 
other socio-cultural influences within societies and social groups, individuals 
seek the gazes they perceive to be most appealing and here participants in 
dance culture are no different in their quest for the consumption of 
spectacles. The nature of the spectacles sought in this case are those most 
visually outstanding, where the event offers the promise of the achievement 
of altered states. The audio-visual components sought after in the ultimate 
gaze are therefore those most sophisticated and technologically advanced at 
any given time. Many participants like to see technology exploited to its 
maximum potential, in order to push their experiential boundaries in terms
of audio-visual perception, which in turn bring about other changes in their state of consciousness. Such complex visual spectacles could also be considered as a visually symbolic of the hyper reality that dance culture discourses espouse.

It has been suggested by Thornton (1995) that clubs appeal to many young people because they provide environments that are completely removed and detached from everyday life. Distinguishing between clubs and pubs Thornton (1995) comments that whilst much pub décor and styling is based around familiar and homely settings, club environments seek to emphasise the surreal and unfamiliar. Placing emphasis on such aspects in the construction of space also supports the conceptualisation of dance events as liminal spaces, whereby the physical constitution of clubs impacts upon their social conventions. Therefore clubbers prefer unique environments which combine vast amounts of sensory input with visually pleasing and stimulating surroundings - hence the prevalence of increasingly sophisticated lighting and atmospherics at dance music and live entertainment events. These elements provide not only entertainment but help situate clubbing environments as highly distinctive from other entertainment zones, which adds to the potential to escape from everyday life in such places.

To conclude this section, it emerges that crowds are a very important aspect of club experiences as they create a sense of anonymity. Interestingly issues of anonymity are also important to the flaneur and to those who perceive themselves (or their activities) to be on the margins of society: "the anonymity of the crowd provided asylum for those on the margins of society who were able to move around unnoticed, observing and being observed" (Urry 2002: 126). As one participant Mr Z commented: "you can lose yourself in the crowd rather than being self conscious of others watching you". Clearly, immersion in dancing crowds can lead to 'ecstatic' moments, which is a major appeal of dance music experiences (Malbon 1998). Of course, as leisure services such as clubbing are produced and consumed simultaneously they experience inseparability (Kotler et al 1998) as staff and customers form part of the experience for
other clubbers and the presence of others directly impacts upon the experiences of individuals. At the same time the “energy of others dancing gives you more energy and enthusiasm yourself” (Mr Curious). A significant element of the appeal of clubs is often the perception of the type of people one will find inside the venue. If these are seen to be like-minded people the club may appeal, if they are perceived as very different, the club may hold no appeal.

Finally, in relation to the physical layout and size of the event spaces, numerous interviewees commented how they liked venues which offer a range of different areas with their own themes and atmospheres. Ms Thoughtful commented:

> It is important to have different areas to sit down and socialise in without the music being too loud to talk. Clubs with several floors are also better as they are more interesting and you don’t have to spend the whole night in one room. I don’t like places without anywhere to sit and chill out.

These comments reflect how during a night out clubbers like to experience different settings, musical genres, and atmospheres. Such layouts enable participants to dance to a variety of music or to sit down and socialise depending on how they are feeling and their energy levels. Indeed in many clubs there is too much emphasis on spaces for dancing and too little attention given to the needs of clubbers to have quieter spaces to sit and socialise. As we have seen, socialising is a key element of clubbing and in many club environments most of the socialising occurs in the corridors and spaces between dance areas, zones which also form a key part of the clubbing experience as liminal spaces within liminal spaces.

### 5.4 Dress and role performance

Music and fashion have always gone hand in hand and youth cultures have generally been defined through their identifiable music and fashion tastes (Hebdige 1979, Thornton and Gelder 1997). Such characteristics provide group cohesion, foster a sense of togetherness and also create an air of exclusivity, defining who is and is not ‘cool’ or ‘in the know’ (Muggleton
2000). This in turn helps perpetuate the feeling of uniqueness experienced by participants who are part of such cultures. In this research dress codes emerged as a key part of club culture and impacted on why certain clubbers do not visit some types of clubs. This is a complex area with many different themes arising from the analysis.

Clothes are a central element of individual identity performance, representing a visual statement of how individuals perceive themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others. As Hall (1997: 37) states “clothes also double up as signs. They construct a meaning and carry a message”. This is because clothes act as signifiers and certain styles and combinations are linked with specific socially constructed concepts such as fashionable, cool, formal and informal (Brydon and Neissen 1998). Therefore at different times and in different places, depending how one wishes to be perceived and how one perceives the role being performed in a given setting, different styles and combinations of clothing are adopted to convey a specific persona to a specific audience (Schechner 2003). The connotations of clothing also mean that different audiences will interpret clothing in different ways in terms of its appeal and its appropriateness for certain occasions. As Baldwin et al (2004: 290) state:

Fashion itself has a customary basis. It exemplifies a dual tension ... between differentiation and affiliation. On the one hand the fashionable individual wants to stand out from the crowd and appear special. On the other hand, by dressing in a certain style the individual is displaying a kinship with other similarly fashionable individuals.

Clothing styles thus serve as a means of demonstrating both differentiation and affiliation, enabling us to display different aspects of our identities on different occasions and in different settings.

The enforcement of dress codes at dance venues was disliked by many participants in this study as reminiscent of traditional nightclub practices. Conversely, the promotion of unique and interesting dress styles was seen as a part of the appeal of many of the large festival type events. Whilst fancy dress and ‘themed’ dress events were seen to enhance clubbing
experiences by allowing people to dress differently from their mundane attire and thus smoothing their transition into different personas, other dress codes were often seen as creating an atmosphere of pretentiousness and exclusivity. By restricting the clothing that can be worn to specific clubs promoters and owners are making a statement about the types of people they will allow and effectively restricting those identities which can be performed within them. Clubs with a dress code are also perceived to discourage new participants and those wishing to sample and experience other dance scenes. Without adequate knowledge of certain clubs’ dress codes, many clubbers fear the embarrassment of being rejected at the door.

Thornton (1995) argues that dance music cultures are ‘taste cultures’ and club scenes revolve around individual musical styles and their fashion and style associations. Therefore clubbers involved in a particular scene will be familiar with the dress etiquette at particular clubs and what to expect of dress codes such as “fresh and funky club wear” “cool”, “glamorous”, “smart casual” and “no effort no entry” (which are open to much interpretation). Others not familiar with such clubs may dress inappropriately and be refused entry on the basis of their lack of effort or understanding of this particular scene. Such processes foster further exclusivity in clubbing and also increase the value of insider knowledge, enhancing the cultural credibility of those ‘in the know’ and those ‘cool’ enough to gain access – features common to all subcultures (Muggleton 2000). Yet, this is far from the original ethos of the rave culture of the late 1980s and early 1990s which firmly rejected any dress codes and positively embraced choice and diversity in dress. Although the majority of dance events still have no dress codes, their appearance is symbolic of how dance music culture has fragmented into many separate and independent scenes, with different values placed upon identity expression and conformity.

Dance music culture and rave culture evolved from the warehouse party scene (discussed in chapter two) and was a backlash against the commercialised music and environments supplied by the mainstream entertainment industry at that time (Crosgrove 1989). However dance music has in turn become integrated into the mainstream night-time
entertainment industry, with many events being held in large leisure complexes, in national venues and in clubs owned by transnational organizations. As part of this process, many promoters now enforce dress codes at their clubs, which takes the modern dance scene even further away from its roots. As we have seen then, whilst there were once no such restrictions at any rave or dance music event, as the scene has grown and diversified so have clubs and promoters sought different ways to attract clubbers in an increasingly competitive and sophisticated market. Of course clubs differentiate themselves through their musical policies and the DJs who perform there, but in catering for today’s taste cultures many have also taken this further step to secure their positions and gain greater cultural capital.

It is suggested that people consume products they believe reflect their status and self-perception (Kaiser 1990) and since the clubbing scene is now so diverse, there is considerable demand for such measures which mean that promoters can further segment the market (Kotler et al 1998). This has resulted in the current diversity of dress codes, which encourage fancy dress, interesting costumes, glamorous or sexy clothing, no trainers or sports wear, etc. At the same time, the inseparability of production and consumption in such leisure experiences means that the presence of attractively and outrageously dressed people also contributes to the overall spectacle of the experience for many. Moreover, dress codes create greater homogeneity of attire, which in turn creates more anonymity and a sense of belonging. Dress codes that promote unusual dress styles also contribute to people ‘letting go’ and assuming different roles within the club environment as they enable the performance of roles distinctly different to those of everyday life.

On one level then, dress codes (and such measures) could simply be interpreted as another means of attracting specific audiences and generating and building brand images in a highly competitive and volatile market. However they constitute far more than this as they allow individuals the opportunity to experiment with methods of self-presentation and provide environments in which such experimentation can take place. The
range of dress styles on view in the Gatecrasher Arena at the Gatecrasher Summer Sound System is illustrative of this. There were a large number of people dressed in psychedelic, day glow colours at this event and many of the men wore futuristic or space-age tops and trousers, with what appeared to be protective body panels on arms, legs and often chests. Others sported fluorescent tops or trousers, fluffy tops, skirts and large fluffy boots whilst many people wore clothing with the Gatecrasher logo and yet others had clothing displaying other dance brands (see figure 5.7). It must however be noted that the majority of people in this arena were dressed in more mundane and less distinctive clothing - such as jeans, t-shirts and trainers, the most common clubbing uniform - illustrating the desire for anonymity and to blend in amongst most participants.

Figure 5.7 Role performances and brand affiliations

The dress styles at this event are reflective of the different participants in trance and hard trance scenes, particularly the followers of the Gatecrasher club brand. The numbers of people wearing branded Gatecrasher clothing illustrates their affiliation to this brand, reflective of its role as an element of their self-identity and lifestyle. Gatecrasher is one of the biggest brands in
dance culture and their display of its logo on their clothing demonstrates these individuals' active embodiment of the brands' values. There are very few clubs that achieve this level of recognition, whereby clubbers want to wear clothing bearing the club brand logo - some of which is actually customized and home-made.

Such distinctive dress styles were also much in evidence at another event I attended as part of my fieldwork. Here, in the Tidy Trax arena, many participants wore outfits incorporating day glow colours and clothing such as hot pants and fluffy leg warmers were very popular. Interestingly, fewer people wore the Tidy Trax logo on any of their clothing, which suggests that this brand does not as strong a following at the time of writing. In most other respects, however, the dress styles in the Gatecrasher and Tidy Trax arenas shared much in common, as one would expect since these two events attract participants from similar music scenes. At the time of writing these scenes are also the most popular and commercialised genres of dance culture in the UK. Both arenas featured futuristic, fast, techno music (trance and hard house) and the majority of their crowds are younger (generally aged 17-24) than the average for other dance genres. The clothing worn by their participants are also reflective of the musical style and aesthetics, being loud and technologically- and futuristically-orientated as well as being vibrant and youthful.

Whilst the Gatecrasher brand may be particularly visible in this respect, there seems to be a trend within the most commercialised sections of dance culture towards brand endorsement amongst clubbers. I noted from the various festivals I attended for my fieldwork during the summers of 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 and from the media coverage of dance culture, that there is a higher propensity amongst participants in the trance, hard trance and hard house scenes to visibly demonstrate their affiliation to particular brands. In addition to those wearing the Gatecrasher brand, many individuals at the two events described above wore clothing featuring brands such as Sundissential and Godskitchen. Many of these articles were also hand made, a further illustration of the extent to which many clubbers wish to embody their affiliation to these brands. Although clubbers at other
festivals also occasionally actively emphasised their affiliations to particular genres and scenes, it was the hard house and cyber 'look' that was the most visually distinctive.

In the context of this discussion on dress and affiliations, it is interesting to note that my interviews and observations reveal that people watching is a major appeal of these different events, particularly the larger events. In particular, many of my participants commented on the enjoyment and amusement they derived from observing the dress of others (figure 5.8). Talking about the Gatecrasher Summer Sound System A Girl said that: “one of my favourite elements was all the costumed people in their day glo and fancy dress outfits” which she found both “interesting and funny”. Similarly, speaking of Godskitchen Global Gathering in a focus group, another participant Unknown said, “I quite enjoyed the people watching,
that was fun, a lot of them were quite funny”. When I asked her to elaborate on this she replied that it was the day-glo costumes and fancy dress which she found funny:

Yeah, some of them were dressed up, some of them I was like, I can’t believe you’re wearing that and the people [laughs] like all the bloody girls, that seemed to think their arses were acceptable for fucking G-strings and like hot-pants.

When asked if she was shocked or surprised by people’s dress she replied:

No, it didn’t shock me, it did a bit, I kind of expected it, but not to that extent it was like, I don’t know, it’s not how many or how much was revealed. Maybe it’s just I’m used to looking at those sort of trousers on that person on a flyer or something and you see it on someone else and it’s like you really shouldn’t have done that [everyone in the room starts laughing]. No but I think it’s cool that they made the effort, ‘cos I felt quite boring, you know it’s quite cool that they dressed up so fair play to them, but a lot of them really shouldn’t have worn what they did wear [laughs]. Bitch, bitch, bitch [laughs].

At this stage others within the focus group interjected and one, Johnny T commented “Your perception of that then has changed and I still believe that those big tents were ram packed with young people who were enjoying themselves”. He continued:

but because of my experience of what I do, when I enjoy myself in relationship with dance music has changed because it has developed and grown, I don’t look back at what they’re doing and see it as anything else but their first experience which they are loving.

At this point a second focus group participant, Robin Hood agreed and said: “Exactly I look at people in the shorts and think, go spirit, wicked, [people laugh and agree] like I’m so glad to be alive”.

This extract from one of the focus groups’ conversations illustrates the difference between the perceptions of older and younger participants in dance music culture and between participants in different scenes. Whilst
many of the younger people were prepared to attend this event dressed in very revealing and brightly coloured clothes, some of the older participants were shocked, intrigued and in some cases greatly amused by their choice of clothing. This was largely because of the alternative contexts in which these individuals participate in dance culture, where other roles and performances prevail. It also illustrates the level of self-confidence and ultimately the lack of attention to others’ opinions, which such young people gain through their membership of this youth culture. It is their identity within their given group which they value and hold important, regardless of others’ opinions of their style, they remain dedicated to their culture, its ideologies and its aesthetics.

5.5 Altered states
Drugs and music have been fellow travellers in most youth subcultures including the hippies of the sixties and seventies (associated with cannabis and LSD), mods and rockers (associated with amphetamine) and punks (associated with heroin). Many members of these subcultures also used alcohol and tobacco, but since these are legal drugs the participants and authorities did not consider them controversial. Dancing and taking illegal drugs have remained a central element of youth culture throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Indeed it could be said that human beings, particularly young people have an almost innate desire to alter their physical and mental states whether it is through caffeine, alcohol, tobacco or other legal and illegal substances (Walton 2001). As Huxley (1959: 51-52) comments, the notion “that humanity at large will ever be able to dispense with Artificial Paradises seems very unlikely ... the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves if only for a few moments, is and has always been one of the principle appetites of the soul”. Young (1971: 78) also considered the social role of drugs and he described alcohol as a “vehicle” where part of its function is to facilitate the “transition from the world of formal values to the world of subterranean values”, much the same as many other psychotrophic drugs. These allow people to step into new worlds where other norms take precedent over the behavioural conventions of the everyday. Interestingly, Young (1971) stresses that within these worlds there are also conventions to which individuals are expected to
adhere and limits to acceptable behaviour, thus he considers that drug taking does not entail an escape from reality, but to step into a different type of reality.

Contemporary dance music culture has considerable associations with drugs. Initially amphetamine and alcohol fuelled the warehouse party scene, before ecstasy (MDMA) took over as the drug of choice. Now clubbers use a cocktail of drugs including alcohol, amphetamine, cocaine, ecstasy, GHB and more recently methamphetamine. Much of the controversy around the rave movement when it first emerged was concerned with the central role of illegal drugs and their unknown side effects. Fifteen years on and drugs still play such a major element in the consumption of dance music experiences that many of the clubbers I interviewed would not consider going to many events without drugs. Dance music, clubbing and drugs go hand in hand and taking drugs is so much the norm within dance culture that it is unusual meeting clubbers who do not take drugs.

My conversations with clubbers suggest that people are inclined to take drugs or to take more drugs at bigger clubs or events, as they are considered a special occasion. It seems then that people seek to get more intoxicated when celebrating special occasions and may seek a more stimulating environment for this. Drug culture and dance music culture are most certainly intertwined; it is a moot point whether people take drugs because they are going to dance clubs and events or whether they go to those events in order to take drugs. The use of illegal drugs was not a central focus of this research but it does seem that the combination of the two creates even more intense leisure experiences and opportunities for escapism from everyday life and its norms and values; this is what motivates people to participate in dance music culture and to consume drugs.

The following is an extract from my field notes written after travelling by coach to a dance music festival in the summer of 2002:
Despite it being eleven in the morning and the warnings on the coach tickets that no illegal substances are to be consumed on the bus, it doesn’t take long before they come out! Various people are now smoking cannabis, drinking beer and someone has even brought a board for doing lines of cocaine on. All of this is done openly as if taken for granted that no one will disapprove and there will be no legal repercussions of such actions. It is presumed that everyone else on the bus is the same, all into the same thing and there are no outsiders present. As the coach gets closer to the event tensions on the bus rise, with people worrying about how thoroughly they will be searched and how to conceal the smell of drugs from the sniffer dogs. Some people even selotape packages of about 5 pills (ecstasy) ready to stick up their behinds in the toilets at the service station. Deodorant is being passed around also for people to conceal the smell of drugs and sweat (coach is very hot).

These field observations illustrate not only the central role of drugs, but also the assumption of how accepted they are amongst participants in dance music culture. It also highlights how aware clubbers are of the illegal status of drug possession and consumption, and where they consider themselves to be at risk and where they consider there is little or no risk. Many of their fears about gaining entry to the festival were justified as there was a large police presence around the festival perimeter and police with trained dogs searching for drugs near the entrance. I did not see anyone being arrested or taken away by the police although I did hear several reports of people throwing their cannabis away for fear of it being found and being denied admittance to the event. This illustrates how the perceived risk of being found with this drug (which is more easily identified by dogs than other drugs) was seen to be greater than the perceived benefits of taking it.

There was a significant amount of nervousness over entering events with personal drugs. Despite information from event organisers making it clear that there would be police dogs and random searches at the entrance at particular events and that anyone caught would be denied access, this did not put people off taking in drugs (although not in their pockets). When I asked about this individuals made comments such as “it’s the chance you take and I believe in my own protection” (John), and “if you’re a person, an individual, the universe respects that … if you’re just looking after yourself,
they are looking for people who are trying to make money" (Rob). These comments reveal how the majority of clubbers feel they are doing no harm by taking illegal drugs for their own personal use, providing they are not making money from selling them to others. Many others simply talked to me about the sense of relief and arrival when they had got through the gates, as if a weight was lifted having negotiated entry in possession of illegal substances.

When I asked one of my participants about this (she wants to be referred to simply as 'A Girl') she replied:

> It’s getting to be a bigger and bigger scene, everyone I know goes clubbing and does drugs (drugs ninety nine percent). Drugs like ecstasy and sometimes cocaine are very important and I wouldn’t consider [going to] an event such as Gatecrasher without drugs. I do go out to clubs and not take drugs, just have a few drinks instead (alcohol), but I only drink when I’m not having pills, if I’m taking pills I just drink water.

When I asked about the proportion of the time she does pills when going out to clubs she replied “about eighty percent of the time”. When I enquired about the morality of taking drugs she commented: “I don’t think there is anything morally wrong with taking drugs, although I am always apprehensive before taking pills”. She thought that dance music and clubbing had a sustainable future - “clubbing is going to become even more popular, as lots of people are getting into it all the time” - but that it was also becoming more reliant on drugs: “drugs could cause problems in the future if ecstasy is found to be very damaging, this could stop lots of people going clubbing. But new drugs may come about to replace it anyway and the whole thing will probably carry on going”.

When I asked another of my interviewees - Mr Z - about drugs and their role in club culture he considered them to be a major part of going out clubbing: “I wouldn’t want to go to an event like this if I didn’t have pills or coke or something to keep me going all night, it wouldn’t be the same without them”. In contrast, another participant, Miss Thoughtful does not
take any drugs apart from alcohol occasionally, although she did smoke cannabis regularly between the ages of 15 and 17. She told me that taking drugs like Ecstasy “is not worth the risk and I wouldn’t relax taking it anyway”.

5.6 Dance music and youth culture

Since its emergence in the warehouse parties and acid house, dance music has become hugely popular and so in turn has clubbing as a leisure activity, a means of socialising and as a lifestyle or lifestyle statement. Its explosive growth alone is testament to the importance of dance culture to a generation of young people. At the same time, as I’ve previously highlighted, the media (both niche and mass), have also played a significant role in the development of dance culture. Its status within youth culture is also partially the result of the proliferation of different genre-based scenes and the various fashion styles that accompany them. The diversity of scenes under the umbrella term dance culture means that there is a broad range of music to suit a variety of tastes. Involvement in dance culture operates on several levels; at the micro level participants are part of smaller, more specialist and unique scenes whilst in a wider context they are also part of the overall cultural phenomenon of dance culture. Therefore involvement in dance music cultures makes participants feel part of something big and all-embracing whilst also being part of something smaller, more unique and requiring more specialist, privileged knowledge. Indeed commentators such as Thornton (1995) and Barker (2000) consider that many people participate in youth cultures to attain higher levels of social status and subcultural capital. In addition there is a suggestion that participation in youth cultures creates a sense of belonging to something unique and ‘outside’ the norms and values of wider society, which also holds great appeal for many young adults (Muggleton 2000).

Modern day dance music culture is a culture of contradictions and there are a vast diversity of opinions and attitudes amongst its participants. Some fully embrace its eclectic nature and others single-mindedly support one scene; whilst some participants fiercely defend the integrity and independence of their individual scenes many also embrace dance music
culture as a whole. Indeed it is the opportunities for embracing dance music culture as a whole that provide many participants with the most memorable and enriching experiences.

Many people comment on the emotions and excitement they experience queuing to enter events and clubs, especially large festival type events. "Queuing up to access the site and to enter Gatecrasher generated a feeling of excitement and anticipation, seeing all the other people there I felt I was about to take part in something special and significant" (Jack). Such sentiments illustrate the importance of attending dance events to many participants and how they come to feel more involved in dance culture in its entirety through experiencing large events. This was certainly something I felt myself at large events, the feeling that I was part of something much bigger than the genre-based scenes, which I generally frequent. Although the scene I was 'into' was national and I knew there are a large number of people involved in dance culture, I gained a real appreciation of dance culture and a sense of being part of something even more significant from attending large scale events.

The sensation of taking part, of real involvement, of contributing to an event where you are one amongst thousands coming together to participate in and to create the event, is an exhilarating experience. This is a major facet of large scale dance events for many people - the whole process of participating in and therefore constructing the experience with thousands of others. Being part of a cultural celebration on such a scale is both a liberating and affirming experience. The same can also be said of attending club events: they liberate you from your other identities and consolidate your identification with dance culture and its participants. Events provide a deeper sense of what it means to you to be a participant and what it really means to participate in the simultaneous construction and consumption of events.

There were numerous reasons why people had chosen to go to the 2002 Godskitchen Global Gathering festival (one of the events in my sample), all related to its size, the diversity of its music and participants and the
publicity buzz surrounding it. Everyone wanted to experience an event of this size, to be a part of something big and experiencing it with friends was a major part of the events’ appeal (figure 5.9) Dancing was also a key theme, with the event seen as an opportunity to enjoy dancing to various musical styles, to “see what people were getting into and to be in a place with so many similarly minded people (having fun, dancing and taking drugs)” (Johnny T).

5.9 The eclectic nature of dance festivals

Such findings echo Thornton’s (1995: 111) conceptualisation of dance cultures as taste cultures, where people seek out others of similar tastes, which invokes notions of “the rightness and naturalness of the crowds in which they have had good experiences”. Over a decade later this is something which is still a major attraction of dance scenes. Clearly being in the same place as similarly minded people is a key attraction for Johnny T. To spend time in the company of others who also place value on dancing, having fun and taking drugs is a release for many people who in the confines of their everyday life function within a conventional set of norms and values. Dance music events provide an alternative environment where
different values take priority over the more mundane elements that are prioritised in everyday life. Also whilst activities such as drug-taking must be hidden in everyday life, within dance environments they can be discussed openly, even with complete strangers. Being around others with similar values explains the openness of many participants in dance culture and their friendliness towards others and the generally non-violent nature of dance events (in comparison to conventional pubs and clubs). This is something I will return to in the final section of this chapter.

The communal nature of the dance culture also has a strong spiritual dimension. In describing his feelings about travelling to Godskitchen Global Gathering (a large festival type event) Robin Hood used terms such as ‘pilgrimage’ and ‘vision quest’ which have religious and cultural connotations, highlighting that attendance for this individual is driven by far more than purely hedonistic motivations. In his words, he attended “to get an acquired result [and] come back... full circle... with the medicine... the energy or... the change”. This illustrates how certain individuals consider such events to be life and soul enhancing, a form of ‘medicine’ in contemporary society that provides positive energy to enlighten and potentially change them spiritually. Many people feel compelled to go on pilgrimages to express their religious devotion, level of spirituality and feel closer to their god, so for many participants in dance culture attending major dance events can perform a similar life changing function.

On a different note peer pressure also plays a major role in attracting clubbers to events as clubbing is something most people enjoy with friends. There are many events I would have attended but did not simply because I could not find others to go with me, whilst there are other events I would not have attended if friends had not been going already. As Mr Z commented, “the fact that someone was driving to Gatecrasher was a major pull factor as well as peer pressure from friends and my girlfriend who was going”. For Ms Thoughtful peer pressure and the fact that transport was available were the main influences in her decision to attend Gatecrasher Summer Sound System: “Friends’ recommendations that the event would
be really good and the festival type atmosphere (the mixture of things to do other than just dance) were the major reasons for going”.

These comments demonstrate the social aspect of clubbing; it is the participation in these events with friends that constitutes a significant element of their appeal. For many, clubbing also forms a bonding and friendship enhancing function as experiencing different events with friends brings a closer connection through having shared more life experiences and the often substance-fuelled discussions that ensue. From my observations, it seems that the empathetic effects of ecstasy contribute in many cases to the development of closer friendship bonds through increasing the openness of individuals, as they become far less inhibited than in everyday life. Indeed for many they receive more pleasure from their post-clubbing socialising than they do from the dance events themselves.

The comments of M (another participant in my research) reinforce this social aspect of the event. He commented that he did not go looking for events, but chose where to go based on where his friends were going and what he perceived events to be like. His comments indicated that he often sought new experiences: “I think it’s worth trying anything that you haven’t experienced”. He also said that timing was a very important factor in determining his decision whether to attend specific events:

This specific event was similar, good timing, I wanted to go out, I knew people who were going to it and it sounded like it was going to be a really interesting event. I wanted to do something that was big this summer, there had been quite a few options to go to and this one just seemed like the right one.

He made his decision on the basis of the timing and because his friends were going:

and just the general feel of what it seemed to be like ... I mean there was advertising, I’d heard the name crop up in quite a few different places, so that in itself is ... you know draws you're attention to it a bit and the fact that several different people mentioned it at different times. I mean you
hear it, you've heard it being talked about amongst your friends, you've seen it in the odd ... magazine or hear it on radio 1 ... and them things, sort of join together culminating...being something that’s interesting and worth taking a look at.

Robin Hood also commented that for him the major attraction of Godskitchen Global Gathering was “the energy surrounding it”. The comments of M and Robin Hood both illustrate how friends and the media influence peoples’ perceptions of different events and create a vibrant perception of events. Hearing about events through a variety of different sources increases peoples’ awareness of them and combines to emphasise their importance within dance music culture, by making them seem like events no self-respecting clubber would miss (figure 5.10).

![Figure 5.10 The ‘buzz’ surrounding dance events](image)

It also emerged from the interviews that some people are far more selective about their participation and involvement in dance music culture, whilst others have wider tastes. Thus Miss Thoughtful commented that she did not really visit more than three arenas at an event where there were seven, as the majority of the people she was with were “cliquey” and were not
willing to spend time in them. On reflection she said "I wish I'd gone off on my own and spent more time in the other arenas". Many participants have very set ideas regarding their preferences and are not willing to engage with other genres or visit the arenas where other styles are being performed to hear them in their intended settings and appreciate them fully. Aronson (2003) describes these processes of group affiliations and differentiation as in-group and out-group effects. The implications of such practices are that individuals often perceive groups that they are not familiar with as more homogenous and undifferentiated whilst perceiving their own group as more diverse and interesting. The effects of this are that those within a group (in-group) are perceived as more worthy of attention than those in the out-group.

Certainly for my interviewees, a major part of the appeal of dance music cultures is the feeling of being part of something big which is at the same time diverse and outside of the homogenous mainstream of popular culture. The energy and atmosphere generated by such a varied collection of people with a shared sense of purpose is a very uplifting experience for many. "It's just sort of the energy around the whole thing isn't it that sort of attracts you to it, not any specific thing like, that DJs there I've got to go, its not that sort of thing is it. It's the whole thing that's the attraction" (Robin Hood). Clearly it is the social aspects of clubbing that appeal to many; they enjoy a multiplicity of experiences with friends, share in the notions of freedom and expression attributed to this culture with its alternative norms and values and as a result bond.

5.7 Beats and bodies
Dancing and music are obviously a fundamental appeal of participation in dance culture and dance music events. The appeal of dancing and the feelings associated with immersion in music have already received attention from scholars such as Malbon (1999), Takahashi and Olavson (2003) and Jackson (2004). However all of these authors highlight the lack of academic attention to dance, partially due to the difficulties of writing about an activity that is physical, social and emotional. As Pini (1997: 114) comments "something about dance, then, can be seen to resist easy
incorporation into existing linguistic classifications and for this reason it has often been seen as representing an ‘other’ language; one which ... lies beyond the phallocentric limits of rationalism”. This marginal position of dance, its existence beyond the limits of rationalism and its constitution as an ‘other’ language, also potentially explains its appeal. The absence of a language around dance opens it up to individual interpretations and purely bodily responses, facilitating flexibility and bodily autonomy for individual dancers (see figure 5.11). Although the physical practices of dance can often be very socially influenced and constructed, the mental processes, the thoughts and emotions that accompany dancing, are free of the discourses associated with much other physical activity. When you are dancing, your mind is free to think and feel, to engage or switch off; to think of anything or nothing is the choice of the dancer:

Raving is fundamentally about dancing, about becoming lost in the music and in one’s body. The rhythm of bass, percussion, and monotonous electronic riffs directly target the body and produces in the dancers extraordinary states of consciousness (Takahashi and Olaveson 2003: 82).

For many participants it is the feeling of ‘losing yourself on the dance floor’ (although very much a cliché) that is a major attraction of attending dance events. Common themes which emerged in the course of my research were notions of dancing at raves and clubs as “about going on a journey” (Kim), transcending the everyday and the mundane to inhabit and experience new places mentally, physically and socially. Often, it is seen as the role of the DJ to take participants on a journey “into their own bodies, [and] into their consciousness” (Takahashi and Olaveson 2003: 82). Through the sensory experiences that dance music experiences and dancing embrace, participants are able to experience altered states of consciousness, of loss and of gain, but often what is equally important is that the dance floor provides a space in which to play with music, with self and with others.

Dancing provides the opportunity to play and to achieve a release from normal physical states, whilst also facilitating the transition to altered states of consciousness. Play is a central element of children’s behaviour and
development, but something the norms and values of our society say is generally inappropriate for adults apart from where play is structured to the rules of a game. However it is when playing without rules that we are allowed the greatest degree of personal autonomy and that is what dancing constitutes for many, a form of play on the dance floor. This may be introspective play or extroverted play depending on your mood, your surroundings and the actions of others. However it is the opportunity for unstructured physical interaction with music that provides a significant psycho-emotional release and hence part of the appeal of clubbing.

Figure 5.11 Liminality and flux in the dancing crowd

The following comment about dancing as central to the events is illustrative of the views expressed by many of my participants. Reflecting on his feelings experienced at a festival, Johnny T commented (after a long pause):

I felt high [laughs]. I like dancing, dancing always brings a, a ... a feeling of homecoming and just of ... of ... beingness and nothingness, I don't have to think about anything. Um, ... I didn't feel uncomfortable at all ... most of the time ... I ... was feeling very good, in fact [laughs] and um ... There were
occasions of it was positively quite disgusting that a man of my age should really be having such a good time [he laughs very loudly, as do others in the group].

Dancing is something very difficult to express and to talk about, but for me (as a dancer) this quote encapsulates it very well. Here Johnny T discusses how at ease he feels when dancing; he doesn’t have to think about anything and gains a feeling of homecoming whilst dancing. The notion of homecoming is interesting as it signifies that he feels he is where he belongs when dancing, that for him, dancing is a natural state which brings him closer to his ‘true’ self. He also talks of ‘beingness’, which indicates a real sense of appreciating the moment, of being at one and living for the moment. Being oneself and living for the moment also brings a feeling of truth, that dancing can enable you to feel true to yourself, which is also accompanied by feelings of relinquishment and catharsis. Contemporary life is so full of distractions, thoughts and worries about the past, the present and the future, that simply to be, to appreciate the moment (and not even to think about it), for nothing else to matter is highly liberating. Of course, beingness also has echoes of childlike sentiments, of a lack of concern for the past or the future and a real sense of being in the present.

In a similar way, the participants’ feelings of ‘nothingness’ also suggest a sense of being somewhere else, of being outside oneself and being far apart from the outside world in a liminal state of mind. As with beingness, nothingness is also the sense of being in the moment, without actually being at all. You are there dancing but somehow at the same time you are not; time appears to hold no value, hours can be minutes and minutes can be hours, the world flies past as it stands still. You are surrounded by people, by bodies, whilst concurrently being alone, fluctuating between notions of the conscious mind and the tactile body, between thinking and feeling. Your head is in your heart, which is distributed throughout your entire body as your pulse races and surges to the music and the movement of the body. Dancing provides liberation for the body and the soul, freeing you from the mundane practices of bodily management, “it unleashes the Dionysian body from the Apollonian constraints imposed upon it in the everyday world” (Jackson 2004: 15). On the dance floor the formalised and
rationalised body of the everyday is freed to experience alternative ways of being, acting and receiving, inhabiting space in an altered perceptual and responsive condition.

Issues of altered states and dancing are often conceptualised in terms of escapism and although they do constitute a form of shift from conventional ways of being, it is perhaps more insightful to understand such notions as escape to alternative ways of perceiving and being as opposed to an escape from everyday life. Thus participants embrace the moment, fluctuating between notions of inside and outside the self and the realities of the outside world. Such notions of beingness and nothingness also echo the work of authors such as Pini (1997) and Malbon (1999), who suggest that in dance our sense of self gives way to a feeling of nothingness as we merge with the consciousness of the dancing crowd.

The vibe or the energy often cited as a critical element of the appeal of dance events is also partially induced by dancing (in addition to the music, the lighting, the density of people and the drugs). In a sense dancing represents the physical embodiment of the music through the crowd and it is the mass of moving bodies that provide dance events with such a dynamic and energised atmosphere. Through dancing the crowd not only feel the energy flowing through them, but are also actively involved in the generation of that energy. Dancing thus forms part of the symbiotic link between individuals, the crowd and the music, that provides clubs with their dynamic and expressive atmosphere.

Despite all the comments which participants made about the importance of visual spectacle, the music emerges as the most important factor in their experiences. With respect to the visuals at a major festival John (2003) commented "I wasn't visually over impressed with the décor in the tents, just because it wasn't really to my style all of them. But then it didn't matter really because I didn't go for that, I just went for dancing and the music". Likewise A Girl (2002) said when discussing a festival: "I saw five of the arenas, there was a good layout inside all the arenas I saw, especially the Gatecrasher main arena. The visual effects here made a big difference
and the variety of effects was also really good”. She did not differentiate significantly between the various arenas revealing that it was the music, the DJs and the opportunity to dance rather than the visual spectacle that created the enjoyment and pleasure for her at this event. And so it is clear that dancing is a significant motivation for participation in dance culture. Dancing although difficult to articulate, provides a physical and psychological release for participants, helping them feel simultaneously closer to themselves and others. It is in order to dance that most people go to clubs and other events and despite all the attraction of the visual spectacle and the high value placed upon it, if the music does not make people want to dance they are unlikely to gain as much enjoyment from a specific club or event.

5.8 Behavioural values and associations
As previously discussed in section 5.6, part of the appeal of dance music culture is the plethora of its individual genre-based scenes, all of which coexist in a hybrid symbiotic relationship. Dance culture is a culture of diversity, a culture formed from the myriad organisations, institutions and individuals that create and consume its eclectic cultural products. Although I have touched on the issue of behavioural values and norms earlier in this thesis, its importance in motivating participation is such that it merits its own section here. This section thus considers how acceptance and belonging and the behavioural values and associations of dance culture shape and influence participation.

A common appeal of dance music culture is the sense of being at ease amongst hundreds or even thousands of complete strangers; of being accepted and accepting others for who they are and whatever they are wearing and not judging others or being judged by others. The three central tenants of early rave ideology - 'peace, love and unity' - continue to play a considerable role in the ideology of contemporary dance culture, although the extent to which this original philosophy is embraced varies between participants and across scenes. This said, violence is considered unacceptable and unnecessary and there is generally a pacifist element to dance culture (Jackson 2004). This has the effect of making participants
feel more at ease in dance clubs than in mainstream clubs where the threat of alcohol-fuelled violence is perceived to be significantly higher. This is not to say that violence never occurs in dance events, but it is infrequent.

Likewise the discourses of open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance (the modern day equivalents of love and unity) are widely upheld within many dance subcultures, although the extent to which they are embraced is debatable. Whilst many of my participants considered themselves to posses these traits, many exclusively participate in one scene and eschewed others as culturally and/or aesthetically inferior. This is a particularly common phenomenon within Internet communities centred on one genre-based scene, with many displaying contempt for participants in other scenes, particularly those deemed to be more commercial. This was particularly true of the more underground genres, whose participants displayed greater distain for the most commercial genres. However these narrow views are not necessarily typical of all participants, as many participants I encountered actively embraced open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance, participating in a variety of dance scenes and respecting the tastes of others. Yet such is the nature of musical taste and the diversity of musical aesthetics within dance culture that there are many genres that individual participants did not appreciate and during the course of my research I did not encounter one individual who liked every genre and subgenre of dance music.

Despite the fact that many participants do not fully embrace the notion of open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance the fact that they consider themselves to embrace this ideology does seem to have a significant impact on the mindset of the typical clubber and therefore on the atmosphere of the typical dance event. The fact people consider themselves and others in dance culture to adhere to this ideology permits them to express themselves as they wish and engage in less conventional social interactions. This mindset therefore also contributes towards creating the relaxed feeling many people associate with dance events and their feeling of being at ease amongst strangers.
Such discourses of acceptance and belonging are also confirmed by the shared tastes of people within dancing crowds (Thornton 1995). To be dancing to the same music in the same location demonstrates a shared cultural knowledge and a shared understanding and appreciation of that knowledge. Such shared attributes play a central role in the feeling of acceptance and belonging often associated with club culture. In western society there is such a rich diversity of social and cultural trends and activities, that to participate in any activity demonstrates a link with other participants. Therefore the more subversive or unusual the activity and the more cultural knowledge required to access and participate in it, the greater the link and commonality between its participants (Muggleton 2000). Being part of a niche cultural activity, where the access to knowledge is also privileged and specialised therefore creates a sense of acceptance and belonging quite different to many other social situations clubbers encounter.

On a purely visual level the cohesion of the group and their common bonds are manifested in their similar fashion preferences. As already discussed above (section 5.5) both the presence and absence of dress codes can instil a greater sense of acceptance and belonging for different individuals. For clubs and events that have no dress codes this is symbolic of their openness to everyone regardless of their appearance and many people feel more welcomed in clubs which simply accept who they are and how they appear. However as Jackson (2004) points out, in many clubs with no dress code there is often still an overwhelming homology amongst the crowds. The presentation of self will be addressed in greater depth in chapter six and it is suffice here to note that people dress in a manner that conveys elements of their identity. If individuals are not permitted freedom of dress in order to conform to a specific dress code, this is likely to constrain their feelings of acceptance within a given space, whilst when individuals have greater freedom of expression they will have a greater sense of acceptance and belonging.

Conversely, however, there are also circumstances when dress codes can create leisure environments in which people experience a greater sense of acceptance and belonging. The performance of specific roles can engender
a feeling of acceptance and even liberation and dress codes can facilitate an atmosphere of acceptance for people with a variety of specialist tastes and desires. Dress codes can also underline the exclusivity of an event and clothing is a powerful indicator of the roles being played at any given time and is directly related to issues such as self perception and desired conventions of social interaction (Kaiser 1990, Hall 1997). Clothing therefore plays a major role in determining the ways in which we interact with others and creates shared codes of presentation and interpretation leading to greater feelings of comfort, acceptance and belonging within different settings. Fetish clubs are a prime example of dress-restricted environments, which promote acceptance and belonging. Such policies create a space where very unconventional clothes can be worn without fear of persecution or ridicule and where participants can experiment with their individual identity. Within such contexts, dress codes have considerable potential to impose an alternative set of norms and values in a social setting.

Whilst some participants consider the exclusivity of certain club events a negative factor, it can also promote notions of acceptance and belonging. Obtaining entry to a venue that is difficult to access furthers the notion that those within have been accepted, that they belong within that space, whilst those rejected do not. There is the sense that these are places of shared tastes and shared knowledge which have attracted individuals and provided them with the necessary cultural knowledge and capital to negotiate entry. This extended narrative of Robin Hood is worth quoting at length. After a long pause, he says this of the feelings he experienced at a festival type event:

"um [long pause] I ... definitely experienced what I set out to experience, which was ... to dance as myself, and ... and to mix with like people, to be in a place and be able to look around and see thousands and thousands and thousands of people in all directions that ... just that streak of enjoyment ... what Johnny T was saying. That streak of ... enjoying themselves even though, sometimes, maybe straighter society would, would ... shun that. In, in a 14 hour straight dance, straight event is, you know, it's a long haul and so, just that, just that freedom almost, that ... appreciation of"
Chapter 5: Exploring participant motivations and preferences

This extended quote reveals participants’ concerns over acceptance and belonging and the alternative value systems that many participants associate with dance events. The first point is that this participant set out to experience being himself. His comment “to dance as myself” suggests the naturalness of his dancing, being at ease with the surroundings and being true to himself. There was no need for conformity or concern for others’ opinions. The simultaneous awareness of self without consciousness of self enables dancers to focus on enjoyment and being in the moment. Interestingly, Jackson (2004) suggests that in our day-to-day lives people are often suspicious of those of us who are happy, as it is not the norm in Western society. Thus, clubs and dance events provide settings for the open expression of happiness and enjoyment, which is greeted with enthusiasm rather than scepticism.

Robin Hood’s comments about mixing with like-minded people also demonstrate how this participant gains a sense of belonging through
participation in dance culture. He mentioned the sense of being shunned by straight society but being accepted amongst other clubbers. Interestingly, he also talks of a rural-urban divide, as although clubbing is primarily an urban pastime there are many rural dwellers who also go clubbing. However whilst many people feel anonymous in the city, clubbers from rural areas often perceive themselves as more conspicuous within their native environment and going clubbing relieves this sense of alienation from society. Discussing his emotions at a festival type event Johnny T (at 40 the oldest clubber I interviewed) commented:

There were occasions of it was positively quite disgusting that a man of my age should really be having such a good time. And I was pleased in the techno tent because at least one of the DJs was a good ten years older than me and he played extremely well and it's nice to see that experience still counts. If you live the lifestyle that I lead then there aren't as many role models around as there are in straight culture to know exactly where your path is leading you and in fact if you're involved in drug culture you're quite often confronted with casualties ... and that might start. Which is, an even more yet a scary proposition, so to be able to see people who are still working very positively, with their craft and with their art, it's ... comforting really, is an easy way of putting it. So yeah I felt comforted and I felt that it was, it was good.

This quote is also illustrative of the sense of comfort that many people experience through participating in dance events. It stresses the sense of differentiation many people see between themselves as participants in dance culture and wider society. For instance, commenting on a previous event Unknown stated:

they were generally like a really nice crowd and everyone was really friendly ... um ... a lot of them were the type of people, that you would never really meet or mix with, in your kind of day to day world and its only at those kind of things that you actually talk to them for a long period of time where as you generally wouldn't and that was quite cool, I quite like doing that.

Many of the participants talked in this way about the social atmosphere and norms of dance events, just as the previous quote demonstrates how the
interactions at dance events are significantly different from those in everyday life. The openness of the participants at many events facilitates an alternative sociality where participants are free to share experiences with others and engage in social encounters they would not otherwise have (figure 5.12).

Figure 5.12 The social nature of dance events

Another comment made by Unknown about a festival experience also alludes to this:

Um the best bit was ... um, I quite enjoyed it when I was really, really fucked and I just ... kind of found I was on my own for an hour [laughs] I ended up walking around and getting lost ... really stupidly ... in a really stupid place and I knew where I was but I really couldn’t be fucked then [laughs very loudly]. It was good because I was kind of on my own and really taking it in and just wandering around looking at people and people looking at me weirdly because I think I look weird [laughs loudly again] it was just funny [she laughs as do others in the room]. I just had to laugh at myself it was quite funny.

Here she highlights a time she was on her own at a festival event, which for many might be a frightening or daunting experience during an event of this size (there was a gathering of about 40,000 people). Despite temporarily
losing her friends and bearings, she describes this as a good experience for her, as she was able to take in the whole surroundings and wander around at will. She also describes how she was “really, really fucked” at this time, referring to the effects of the drugs she had taken. It is surprising how she construes being highly intoxicated alone at an event of this size as a positive experience. I believe these comments illustrate the centrality of drugs in these experiences and also how at ease and comfortable participants are within crowds of up to 40,000 strangers during dance music experiences (figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13 Lost in the night

5.9 Media messages

The media has a profound effect on contemporary society particularly in creating its norms, values, activities and ideals (see for example, Brigs and Cobley 1998, Giddens 2001). As highlighted in chapter two there are a number of magazines, radio stations and web sites which constitute the most up-to-date media formats in dance music culture. These, along with other advertising media (for example flyers, posters, emails and CDs), play a major role in developing peoples’ perceptions of dance culture as a whole and its various genre-based scenes (Thornton 1995). One would assume that they are also therefore central to the process of attracting people to
events and this section is intended to provide an overview of how the media draw attention to events.

Dance culture magazines, radio stations and websites play a major role in constructing the cultural values of dance culture, generating demand for dance events, carrying event information and creating 'a buzz' around specific venues and events. Although these vehicles operate with commercial objectives and have vested interests in the sustenance of dance culture they are generally perceived by participants as highly credible information sources. By contrast, promoter-generated communications (whether in the format of web pages or advertising) are seen as less credible as they are intended to convey positive images of brands and events with the aim of attracting customers. In this section I analyse the participants' comments on the role of marketing and the media in shaping their behaviour.

As may be expected amongst a group who see themselves as peripheral to mainstream society, the participants were reluctant to acknowledge the influence of the media on their cultural knowledge and participation patterns. The majority of them preferred to imagine themselves beyond the manipulative sphere of the media, independent in their thoughts and actions. It is part of the prevailing ideology of youth cultures and subcultures that knowledge is acquired through actual participation and immersion in the culture, through lived experience rather than secondary information sources (Thornton 1995, Muggleton 2000), even though media "coverage frames and disseminates subcultures as events worthy of attention" (Barker 2000: 337). As a result, there is often a refusal at a personal and interpersonal level to recognise that the media plays an influential role in constructing their cultural world. The implications of this are that I gained very little insight into this area; indeed, with so many participants reluctant to acknowledge the influence of the media it was often difficult to pursue this line of inquiry. Therefore this section will focus on the processes participants went through in deciding to attend specific events and will tease out key themes and issues surrounding advertising and the media in the process.
As one may expect there is a correlation between media coverage and the geographical catchment area of specific events. If an event attracts an international, national or regional crowd then it is more likely to appear in and receive coverage from the national and regional media. Conversely if an event only attracts a local crowd it is highly unlikely to feature in national or regional media, except in the clubs listing section of magazines. Therefore on a more local and regional level it is local magazines, club listings, micro media (flyers, posters, etc.) and word of mouth that exert the greatest influence on participation. The higher the profile of the event the more attention it attracts from the media, therefore it is the festival type events and the national and regional club brands that the media are more likely to influence.

In the case of Gatecrasher Summer Sound System, A Girl (2002) saw adverts in Knowledge magazine and Mixmag promoting the event and she was attracted to the event because of the number of arenas and particularly because of the line up of DJs. However she admitted that she was unfamiliar with most of the names in the advert apart from those in Drum and Bass Arena. The fact that she was familiar with many of the DJs in the Drum and Bass Arena was the primary attraction: of those performing there she had heard some before, whilst she knew others through word of mouth, features in magazines and club advertising. She chose this particular event for its festival atmosphere and since she was celebrating finishing her end-of-year university exams. She was also aware of the brand and had been to the Gatecrasher club itself once before (although she said that this had been a disappointing experience).

For Mr Z (2002) the use of the Valve sound system at a particular event was the main factor in his decision to attend it as he considered the “sound system [is] one of the most important factors in making a good night”. This participant had seen and heard the Valve sound system before and had since read a feature about it in Knowledge magazine, which reinforced how much he wanted to experience it again. He also considered the DJ line up to be a key draw for the event and from the advertising and from past
experience he also “knew all arenas were held by well known and respected promoters”. When I asked him how he knew about all the promoters involved in the event he said it was primarily as a result of the media coverage as he had not actually been to their events but had read reviews and seen magazine advertising for them.

Advertising thus did play a key role in creating event awareness and attracting this participant who commented that he saw many adverts in magazines and flyers for the event. Yet past experience and word of mouth were also important in shaping his decisions as for him the Valve sound system was the most attractive feature of the event and he felt that “the Drum and Bass tent increased their credibility through the joint hosting by Valve and Drum and Bass Arena”. He had previous experience of Valve, Gatecrasher and “most of the Drum and Bass DJ’s which I knew were good”.

Discussions with the participants also reveal that advertising played a key role in their decision to attend Homelands 2002 and 2003. Jill (2003) commented:

It sounded big and exciting ... due to the number of arenas, other attractions like stalls and fair ground rides and, and the fact that it’s an annual event. I fancied going somewhere away from home and the fact that it was like a festival, going on during the day as well as the night was also very appealing ... I saw advertising in Mixmag, on the internet and remember hearing about it several times on the radio. These adverts made it out to be one of the main events of the year, something that everyone was going to... something not to be missed.

In terms of the marketing of Godskitchen Global Gathering (2002), some participants initially saw magazine adverts and then once they realised that their friends were going they began examining it in more detail; for yet others the process was reversed. Some such as Johnny T decided to go to the event before knowing which DJs were playing there (which actually contradicted his earlier comments about his clubbing preferences). Many participants presumed that an event of this size and nature would attract
many top name DJs and did not think it necessary to confirm the exact line up before deciding to go. The sheer number and range of people and networks talking about and advertising Godskitchen Global Gathering was also a significant motivator, creating the perception that it was “something interesting and worth taking a look at” (M).

Such comments illustrate how unconscious exposure to advertising in all the dance music media plays a major role in generating awareness of various event brands and the DJs who perform for them. A particular point to emerge was how the credibility of advertising and brands was enhanced through the use of multiple promotional platforms. The more sources through which a message is conveyed, the greater the perceived cultural significance of the communication, making it appear more important to participants and increasing their likelihood of acting upon it. Advertising constitutes a key factor in consumer perceptions of brands and specific events (Morgan and Pritchard 2000). Having a high brand presence, through media advertising in particular, was perceived by the majority of participants to reflect a successful quality brand and therefore a credible brand.

The role of posters and flyers also emerged as highly influential in attracting people to particular events however their exact level of influence is highly variable and dependent on other factors. For example, if an event has an established customer base these adverts serve to promote forthcoming events and generate interest amongst potential customers. However if an event is new, word of mouth promotion is almost a prerequisite to provide the message with additional credibility. Cultural information received through the niche national media such as magazines has been identified as having the greatest significance to participants in dance culture (Thornton 1995) and this was also largely true in this study. Many participant comments indicate the degree to which clubbers trust certain media to inform them of the best events to attend and demonstrate how many participants use the media to inform their purchase decisions. The only medium with greater impact was word of mouth, however in many instances the word of mouth communications were derived from messages
received through other media vehicles, interpreted by individuals and then passed on. As is often the case within groups of clubbing friends, not all consume the clubbing media and there is often a reliance on some key opinion formers within the group to provide information of specific events.

A major finding to emerge under this theme of media influences was the role of DJs in attracting crowds to events and validating the importance and credibility of those events. Both media editorial coverage and advertising content play a major role in raising the profile of DJs; advertising works as a barometer of DJs’ popularity by illustrating the number of events they play and magazines, radio shows and websites provide a greater insight into their motivations, attitudes and musical inspirations. The media discourses surrounding DJs is an issue addressed in chapter six; therefore it is suffice to say here that the media and advertising are central in creating DJs’ images, which in turn attract people to events. DJs have become brand names largely through their media exposure and even if participants have not heard them perform in person, they are still aware of their reputations – as this next section will now discuss.

5.10 The sound of the DJ
Musical styles, as one would expect, exert a key influence on clubbing preferences, but of more importance are the DJs who embody these particular styles. Although there are numerous brands responsible for organising and promoting clubs and events, many DJs also act as brands within their respective scenes and whilst the promoters’ brand is symbolic of the events’ physical qualities, the DJs attract people for the quality and style of music. Thus an event in a well known venue, without well known DJs, is unlikely to be a success, as the DJs play a major role in reducing consumer uncertainty. As Brewster and Broughton (2000: 415) comment, “in Britain in the nineties, the DJ became a superstar ... suddenly his status was magnified a thousand fold and he was treated like a rock god or pop idol ... People even started describing their musical tastes not in terms of genres or records but by reference to particular DJs”.

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Whilst the previous sections of this chapter have addressed the more emotional and spiritual aspects of clubbing this section addresses one of the strategies adopted by clubbers in the pursuit of such experiences. The intangibility of dance events and many other leisure services means there can be a high degree of consumer uncertainty when purchasing such products and therefore, as with other service encounters, consumers search for tangible clues to the quality of events. It is generally the brand of the promoter, the venue and the DJs that provide these. DJs are the celebrities within dance music culture, as other music cultures have their celebrity bands and performers so the DJs fill this role within dance music. In a conversation with a participant at an event I was told that:

DJs are the main influencing factor on deciding whether to visit a particular night or not, I go more for the music than other features. Ideally there would be several known DJs playing at the club or event.

Here we can see the link between musical styles, DJs and club preferences: people are drawn to events based on their preferences for musical styles and DJs (as well as other factors, such as peer groups, accessibility and brand preferences).

This attitude is encapsulated by Mr Curious’ comment that “Drum and Bass is my musical preference and the deciding factor in whether I go to a club or not, I don’t really go to clubs playing other styles. But after experiencing the different styles at this event I’m more open to a wider variety of clubbing experiences”. Here, he illustrates how clubbers often confine their activities to a small section of club culture, rather than embracing it all. When people become familiar with a certain section of club culture that they enjoy and identify with, they often keep to this type of clubbing experience as a means of reducing risk and ensuring satisfaction. As with most consumers, clubbers also seek means of eliminating risk in their purchase decisions and they do this by following specific musical scenes, promoters and DJs to ensure that their dance music experiences are enjoyable. It is often only through big events, encompassing a broad array of musical styles, that clubbers fully experience new genres of dance music in their
intended setting and hence gain a greater appreciation of their appeal to others.

One participant (Mr Z) visited five arenas at the Gatecrasher Summer Sound System festival: Gatecrasher; Drum and Bass Arena; Twice as Nice; Tidy Trax; Bedroom 1. He considered that Gatecrasher had the best ambience and layout: "it had the most money put into creating the ambience in this arena with all the lighting, screens, marquee and sound system"; however since he considered the music in this arena to be merely "OK" he "didn't see much of it". His opinion of the Drum and Bass Arena was that it "had a good layout and the production was reasonable". Clearly, the providers of this arena had satisfied but not exceeded his expectations. His past experience of numerous large events meant that he "knew what the layout would be and knowing about the co production between Drum and Bass Arena and Valve I knew the sound system would be spot on". After the event Z didn't feel qualified to comment on the other arenas, as he had spent so little time in them. This was because the music in the other arenas held little appeal for him, despite the fact they were hosted by very reputable brands with high profile DJs. The music was the most important factor for him and although the layout and ambience was only considered "reasonable" in this arena in comparison to the others, this was where he chose to spend the majority of his night. He went on to comment that "the best bits [of the event] were the DJs, records, sound systems and the crowd (what you'd expect). The Drum and Bass Arena was most memorable because that's what I'm into that's where I spent most of the night".

When she was discussing the highlights of a festival event, in addition to the crowd and the atmosphere A Girl also mentioned the performances of two DJs: "Roni Size and Marky". They both created "a special energy and atmosphere, which was really great, everyone was loving it because you could see how much they were loving it". From my own observations that night I thought that Marky’s performance was a very memorable part of the event: he had so much energy behind the decks and such a passion for what he does, he was amazing to hear and to watch. Seeing people with such a passion for what they do is very inspiring especially when there are
many DJs who simply ‘go through the motions’ and are more driven by the commercialisation than by their own pleasure, something which again illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the DJ and the dance crowd.

My participants at the Godskitchen Global Gathering (2002) also commented on the role of DJs in attracting crowds. When I asked Johnny T about his clubbing preferences he replied that he had “no club preference at all, I tend to like DJ’s and what certain people like and play and I will tend to be more personality driven”. This illustrates how for him, music is central to clubbing experiences and how a DJ’s personality affects his enjoyment of the night. This also shows that although this participant considers himself to have no preferences he actually does prefer particular DJs, because of what they “like and play” and also because of their personality. He also commented, “music’s far more important, the rest of it I can take it or leave it, but if the music’s working that’s what does it”. To this participant the music and DJs are more important than any other aspect of the event such as its size, lighting or effects.

Figure 5.14 Beat conductors
For Johnny T the best aspect of the festival was “watching craftsmen working an audience and working their craft... Watching people who understand flow, who understand how to build and how to just play with things, how to play, how to play with a bunch of people and everybody have fun”. The fact he refers to DJs as ‘craftsmen’ is significant as it illustrates how this participant regards DJs as highly skilled, artistic people, with the connotations that such skill is something developed through years of practice, a unique attribute associated with a minority of people. This comment also alludes to the voyeurism of dance culture. Here Johnny T refers to the DJs and to their interaction with the crowd, with the dance floor and how DJs can build energy and excitement within a crowd and breakdown inhibitions (figure 5.14). It is largely the DJ who maintains the momentum of the crowd and locks them into the music; it is during such performances that people experience the often celebrated but elusive oceanic or ecstatic state, where the distinctions between self and the dancing crowd merge (Pini 1997, Malbon 1999).

5.11 Summary
This chapter has investigated participants’ clubbing preferences and their involvement in dance culture and a number of themes have emerged. Firstly, geography is important and we have seen how travelling away from their usual places of residence brought a sense of excitement and adventure for many participants, something which echoes the early rave culture where people often had to travel long distances to attend events. The role of travel was also discussed in relation to the effort people are willing to invest in events and the mindset they acquire through the journey. Part of this mindset created through distance enabled them to assume different identities with less pressure on them to perform and conform to their everyday social roles. For some participants travelling to major events also constituted a form of pilgrimage and as such were journeys of exploration and self discovery – processes of being and becoming. Just as in tourism, the act of travel itself is a highly significant element in the consumption of dance music experiences.
Chapter 5: Exploring participant motivations and preferences

The second major theme to emerge from my conversations with dance music participants was the importance of the visual spectacle and the role of crowds. Again there are parallels here with religious experiences and the expectations people have of the spectacle they are to experience at the end of their pilgrimage. The role of crowds in generating such experiences and the size of the event itself was also important to participants. Larger events provided greater opportunities for escapism and voyeurism, associated with the anonymity of being part of a large whole, where attention is divided between more people, whilst simultaneously providing more opportunities for people watching. Another point to emerge in this context was that larger crowds validate the cultural importance of events and imbue them with greater significance to the participants.

The embodied clubber has also been briefly foregrounded in this chapter and I have highlighted the polysensual nature of clubbing since it is a social, cultural and physical form of experiential consumption - all of this combines to make dance culture participation a liminal experience (see section 5.3). On this theme of embodiment, dress and visual representation also emerged as key themes in the discussions with clubbers. Clothing has thus been explored in terms of its centrality to identity performance and in terms of its simultaneous ability to foster notions of cultural belonging whilst excluding individuals who lack sufficient cultural knowledge. Dress codes in particular have been highlighted in terms of their role in fostering senses of belonging and creating an air of exclusivity at certain events. The interrelationship between dance music and drugs has also been briefly discussed, as dance events constitute desirable environments for consuming drugs and their consumption also facilitates the performance of alternative roles. Here I noted that the participants did not so much seek to escape from reality as to escape to a different type of reality. The normalization of drug use within dance culture is also apparent in the interviews and observations, again endorsing the alternative norms and values of dance culture.

This chapter has also described the perception of dance culture as a youth culture as a significant motivation for participation and the varying degrees
and levels of participation which enabled participants to acquire higher cultural status. The range of opportunities for participation under the umbrella term dance culture means that individuals are able to be part of something unique, requiring specialist knowledge, whilst also being part of something larger and all-embracing. Here, the social aspects of clubbing also emerged and it is seen to provide opportunities for group bonding, for shared experiences, for meeting new people and for expanding social networks.

Music and dancing are of course, prime motivators for participation in dance culture. The appeal of dancing is that participants experience flux between notions of self and the wider dancing crowd and that dance floors provide opportunities in which to play with music, with themselves and with others. Dancing provides a release from day to day physical states and an opportunity to physically embrace music, interpreting and responding to it through bodily actions. The alternative norms and values associated with dance culture, whilst a theme running through the whole chapter, are such a draw for many participants that an entire section was devoted to this topic. This section further considered the factors surrounding notions of acceptance and belonging which are central to the discourses of dance culture, although in reality the extent to which these issues are embraced varies from individual to individual. The general absence of violence at events was also a common factor in the appeal of dance cultures.

Although many participants were not consciously aware of its importance, their comments reveal the key role of the media and the marketing activities of event promoters in shaping their event participation. Despite the reluctance of individuals to acknowledge the extent to which they were influenced by the media it was established that the radio, magazines and also micro media such as event flyers all played a role in motivating event attendance (the dance music media will be analysed in greater depth in chapter six). The final topic discussed in this chapter was the role of musical policies and DJs in attracting people to dance events. The presence of well known DJs performing at an event provides an affirmation that it will be of a certain standard and reduces participant anxiety about attending
events, which are essentially intangible products. Chapter six will now provide an in-depth textual analysis of how a selected number of dance music magazines address events and the discourses they construct around DJs.
Chapter 6

DJs and events: The media discourses

6.1 Introduction

As we have seen, extant research has focused on a number of key themes in relation to individuals’ clubbing preferences and their motivations for participation in dance music culture. However one key area, the influence of the media, (particularly magazines), has received little academic recognition. This is surprising considering the range of the media studies which have demonstrated the role of this institution in informing and constructing socio-cultural values (for example Cohen 1972, Briggs and Cobley 1998, Barker 2000, Lewis 2002) and its obvious influence on various elements and aspects of dance music culture (Thornton 1995, Malbon 1999, Brewster and Broughton 2000). Thus in this chapter I will analyse the discourses in a number of magazines catering for the dance music market and discuss the key themes and prevailing ideologies. The media plays a central role in the dissemination of information and knowledge in contemporary society, and despite the contentious nature of media objectivity, holds great power in constructing social discourses. This is true of dance culture as DJs and events are socially constructed within the media and these media representations in turn influence the views and actions of participants. Therefore the intention of the final phase of this research project is to analyse several of the main dance music magazines, examining the discourses they construct of dance music culture.

Briggs and Cobley (1998: 11) stress that “much of our media consumption is specialized ... and motivated by specific enthusiasms and prejudices”, with particular groups predisposed to consuming certain media forms. Such predispositions also influence individuals’ interpretations of the media they consume and the discourses they encounter within such publications. Holding similar ideological stances and values on key issues leads a majority of consumers to similar conclusions upon engagement with particular texts. Lewis (2002: 137) describes this phenomenon as the “dominant or preferred reading ... processes whereby audience members draw on their knowledge of culture, cultural values and cultural norms,” to
gain a similar interpretation. Accepting this theoretical reasoning, analysis of the dance music media and its discourses can provide further insights into the socio-cultural mechanics of dance music culture.

Thornton (1997: 203) highlights the central role of the media in disseminating cultural knowledge commenting:

I would argue that it is impossible to understand the distinctions of youth subcultures without some systematic investigation of their media consumption. For within the economy of subcultural capital the media is not simply another symbolic good or marker of distinction ... but a network crucial to the definition and distribution of cultural knowledge.

Although she makes this bold statement, Thornton fails to engage in any significant analysis of the media, simply addressing the receptivity of participants in youth cultures to messages received through different media vehicles, paying particular attention to the well known UK television music programme Top of The Pops. Therefore although Thornton theorises about other media formats and their sphere of influence within dance culture there is no systematic analysis of other formats such as magazines within her work. However she does claim that whilst niche and micro media such as flyers and magazines are central to the dissemination of cultural knowledge, positive mass media coverage of subcultures (such as in the tabloids) is the antithesis of subcultural credibility. Conversely negative mass media coverage is positively embraced by subcultures as evidence of their subversive and unique qualities. The implication of this is that within youth cultures, the niche media are the definitive authorities on all the constituent components and as a consequence are highly influential.

In addressing the socio-cultural constitution and creation of dance culture it is also important to view subcultural ideologies and the discourses that create them "not as innocent accounts of the way things really are but as ideologies which fulfil the specific agendas of their beholders" (Thornton 1995: 10). This further consolidates the case for detailed media analysis, as various media publications provide vehicles and platforms for the
promotion and dissemination of cultural information and knowledge. In the process of disseminating information and knowledge they play a major role in the ideologies and discourses of dance music culture on a number of levels. Thus: they promote and perpetuate particular views held by specific journalists (sometimes overtly sometimes covertly); they create awareness of and thus sustain ideologies held by specific groups within dance culture; they play a major role in disseminating cultural norms and values; and finally they assert the value and cultural significance of the components of dance culture, identifying what, or who, is fashionable, acceptable, worthy of celebration and so forth. Different media publications therefore act as a form of authority for their reader groups, with their different messages received with varying levels of credibility dependant upon the receptivity of individuals to various discourses. What is undeniable is the power that niche media vehicles hold in determining the direction and development of niche cultures.

Whilst there are a range of dance music specific and related magazines, three magazines have been selected as the focus for this stage of the research these are: *DJ*, *Knowledge* and *Mixmag*. These publications have been chosen because of the dance music culture they cover, the sub groups within dance music culture they target and the differences in their appearance (see figure 6:1 on the following page). Of particular interest is the role and position of DJs within dance music culture and how DJs, clubs and other events are addressed and portrayed through the various articles and features in different magazines.

Within dance music culture as a whole and more specifically within sub sections of dance culture, various ideological discourses are promoted, both overtly and covertly, directly and indirectly. These are the doctrines that form the core and structure of these cultures, the features that give them strength and credibility, what makes them unique and different and ultimately what participants buy into as confirmation of their membership. Ideology is a key element of cultural institutions and a particular feature of media analysis. As Firth (1997: 163) comments:
The question common to studies of all media ... concerns ideology. How do different media work ideologically? What are their ideological effects and how are they achieved? At issue here is the concept of signification: how do different media organise the meanings with which and on which they work?

![Figure 6:1 Publications selected for discourse analysis](image)

The role and influence of DJs has emerged in this research as of major significance, particularly in terms of their iconic roles and their ability to attract clubbers to specific events. The above image is also demonstrative of their importance with three of these covers featuring DJs. Club and event promoters use DJs as a major marketing tool to build their brands and sell their products to such an extent that many DJs are now brands in their own right and it is their names on flyers, posters and adverts that draw people to specific events. As the majority of the foremost DJs are also producers of music and founders of record labels, many of them can be seen to be creators of taste and generators of trends. In many respects
DJs are some of the most influential people in club culture as they often produce music, promote it through their performances and make it available to the wider public through releasing songs on their record labels. Such is their role in the generation and dissemination of cultural capital they are effectively the icons of contemporary dance culture.

I would argue that the status attributed to different DJs is largely due to their media exposure; determined by the level, frequency and nature of media coverage. However not all media will feature and recommend the same DJs as each individual publication has its own coverage and scope, particularly in terms of the prominence given to specific genres (which inevitably changes over time with trends), their ideological positions and the perceived merits of individual DJs. Therefore different magazines play different roles in the development and maintenance of the images and public profiles of specific DJs. Ultimately however it is the promoters of clubs and events who really raise the profile of particular DJs by giving them regular bookings, enabling the public to experience their performances. Indeed the number of times that particular DJs appear on flyers and in adverts for events is symbolic of their ability to entertain crowds and pull in customers and forms a major element of their profile. However, as there is little commentary on specific DJs within the majority of marketing material, it is the magazines that really generate and promote the images of particular DJs.

Events form a central element of dance music culture, being one of the main points where participants meet and DJs perform. As we have seen events come in many different forms: from illegal parties, to small, medium and large clubs, arena events and the biggest of events, which are the festivals. The illegal, unregulated side of dance culture is rarely articulated in the media, which tend to focus on the more mainstream and regulated dance music sector. Events, although only part of a greater whole, are the sites where dance culture becomes most significant to the majority of participants. Events are the sites where the numerous cultural components converge to create the most dynamic aspect of dance culture. As previously noted, the media plays a major role in disseminating cultural
knowledge and informing participants on aspects of dance culture. Therefore, due to their importance most of the media coverage focuses upon events, reporting on past events and building anticipation for future ones. It is the nature of this coverage, which is the focus of the second section of this chapter. This chapter therefore examines how media portrayals not only signify the importance of events, but also how their discourses assert and perpetuate the behavioural norms and values associated with them. This is accomplished by examining the media and establishing the key themes emerging both overtly and covertly through the use of language, images and terms of reference in a number of selected articles.

Firstly, however, I will turn to the DJs as the icons, the role models, the superstars and the artists within dance music culture. They are the arbiters of taste and possibly the most powerful people in dance music culture due to their prominent public positions and role in the creation of dancing soundtracks. There is no question or doubt as to the importance attributed to DJs within dance culture and we now need to analyse how the media address certain DJs, how an elite group of DJs achieved iconic status and how they are promoted as purveyors of good taste with authentic, artistic credibility.

6.2 The creators
Primarily DJs are positioned as the artists within dance culture, the creative forces pushing the boundaries of the plethora of sub genres that constitute dance music culture. They are commonly associated with developing new ways of mixing genres and utilizing the latest technology to create soundscapes of ever increasing dynamics, ultimately for the listening and dancing pleasure of participants. The positioning of DJs relates to and complements the progressive ideology of dance culture. The continual evolution of soundscapes is at the core of dance music ideology, pushing the boundaries of musical genres, to expand their horizons and create new sub genres, mixing musical influences from within and outside dance culture, to create new musical styles and forms. The media positioning of DJs correlates with and complements this general ideological discourse of
musical evolution and innovation, it is the DJs who are most commonly portrayed as the innovators and source of artistic inspiration within dance culture, reinventing the performance boundaries of genres to provide new and original experiences for the participants in dance culture. Continually engaged in the pursuit of new formats and styles of composition, it is they who are bestowed the most respect in dance culture.

A major element of the positioning and personality of different DJs is their ‘style’. This is their selection from the musical genres and sub-genres which they are most associated with and famous for performing, the way in which records are ordered within their compositions and the technical skills and methods applied in mixing them together. A common characteristic attributed to DJs is the perceived uniqueness of their style in terms of the musical selection, composition and approach to mixing sounds. Although in reality there may be only minor differences between the musical selections of different DJs performing within the confines of particular genres and subgenres, the media seeks to perpetuate these differentiated images. Such differentiation can be seen as a key element of generating and enhancing artistic credibility, where uniqueness of style and composition are valued traits.

One of the most rapidly ascending new DJs over recent years has been James Zabiela, a young DJ who has progressed from a bedroom DJ to a highly praised international DJ in a matter of years. In an interview feature with him the music journalist Matthew Duffield (2004: 54) notes how “it ain’t what you play it’s the way that you play it that’s the key … it’s all about providing a ‘unique musical experience’ … and it’s here where Zabiela really stands above the pack”. This reference is typical of the manner in which the media commonly address DJs, asserting their unique attributes in comparison to others and providing justification for their positions of superiority within the cultural hierarchy. Through the use of terms like ‘unique’ the media seek to emphasise the qualities of certain DJs as distinctive, exceptional and different to others. By describing them as creating ‘unique musical experiences’ they are adding another dimension to their performances, with the connotations that their distinctiveness makes
them comparable to no other and that seeing them perform constitutes a profound experience.

This discourse of uniqueness and differentiation also relates to another key dance culture ideology, that of authenticity. The fact that different DJs are forging their own particular styles and pushing the boundaries in their own individual ways serves to further authenticate the originality and artistic credibility of their work. Whether this is technical ability, the approach of DJs to mixing various sounds or music they have produced themselves, what is often most highly praised is doing something different, something new, something exciting—all notions which complement discourses of authenticity and originality. It is for such contributions to particular musical genres and dance music in general, that the media award DJs with the highest status, for their artistic integrity in the pursuit of new soundtracks. It must also be noted that the media has a vested interest in portraying DJs as progressive and innovative, as it provides them with enticing content to attract readers and portrays a vibrant progressive culture, whilst simultaneously DJs who are versed in such ideologies use the media to promote themselves. For example in an interview with Mixmag, Erick Morillo (one of the most famous DJs in house music), comments how he wants to “reinvent dance music” (Anon 2004: 57). Here is further evidence of DJs highlighting their endeavours to push their work and the boundaries of dance music. The status of this particular DJ is such that to expand the boundaries is not enough to satisfy his artistic cravings; highlighting his desires to reinvent dance music really positions him as an aspiring and unique individual. Indeed it is also symbolic of his status that he is attributed with the credibility to do such a thing, whilst lesser artists would probably be ridiculed for making such statements.

The theme of authenticity is visible in the various terms and references used by the media when describing DJ performances, as journalist Ben Edwards (2003: 39) refers to a particular DJ as unleashing “a torrent of ... tribal electronics”. ‘Tribal electronics’ is an interesting term in this context, as things ‘tribal’ are often associated with being deeply rooted in culture, authentic and potentially untainted by our capitalist world. It is significant
that such terms emerged at the same time as warehouse parties which were also a backlash to the increasingly commercialised entertainment industry. Tribal also has connotations of groups of people, "united by common ancestry, language and culture" (Websters' 1997: 786), whilst loyalty is another theme deeply embedded within the terms tribe and tribal, suggestive of this DJ's loyalty to dance culture and dedication to pursuing his own sound; therefore referring to a sound with terms like tribal has wider significance, adding resonance to the themes of authenticity and artistry, by signifying loyalty to common ancestry and culture. The positioning of the term tribal alongside 'electronics' also evokes connotations of his performance being not only culturally but also technologically embracing and forward thinking. Progression through the utilisation of technology, whilst retaining and respecting elements of tradition, positions this artist as innovative yet authentic. It is the demonstration of his dedication and loyalty to this culture and its progression that proves his real commitment, which thus affirms the authenticity of his work as an artist.

Many such media interviews refer to a DJ's 'sound' and pay considerable attention to the factors influencing the progression and development of this sound, evoking a sense of ownership. In response to this DJs often comment on the influence of their previous work and their desire to push the boundaries in different and innovative ways. Indeed, ideas of building on styles, progression and evolution are constant themes in the media discourses with respect to DJs, their music and the general ethos of dance culture. As with many cultures, progress and development are at the core of maintaining participant interest; it is the dynamic condition of culture, its continual state of flux, which captivates and maintains the interest of many. Such a condition therefore promotes continual media commentary monitoring, analysing and critically evaluating the development of artists' material and their technical abilities. This issue is exemplified in the following comment from Verma (2003: 76) who says of a particular DJ, "in the last 18 months he has pushed on to the next level as both DJ and producer". This illustrates how the media track the progress of DJs creating different images and categorising them differently dependant upon their
technical abilities and music production status. DJs get greater recognition when they also produce their own music as they are considered 'more' artistic and as a result are awarded greater cultural credibility. This is further evidence of the way in which the media position different DJs and their levels of ability, which also correlate to their level of involvement within particular musical genres. The terms 'pushed' and 'level' symbolise the effort exerted by this individual to progress as an artist and affirms the superiority of specific DJs over others. Indeed the very term 'level' demonstrates the presence of a hierarchical structure within dance culture, where DJs' achievements and the media's perception of these largely determine their status.

It is worth noting that the level of media interest in DJs and the willingness of DJs to appear in media publications often coincides with forthcoming or recently released singles and albums. Such conditions therefore offer a partial explanation for the bias towards focusing on new releases, reinforcing the interest of the media in the new artistic material being produced by DJs. However such coverage also highlights the importance of these releases to the wider public and promotes discourses of diversity and cultural progression. Selectivity is a major issue in media representation and therefore the decision to focus on new music being created, or innovative mixing techniques, stresses their importance to the positioning of DJs: as Bell and Garrett (1998: 8) comment "we need to look carefully at what texts actually say and what they do not."

The progression of genres and the development and classification of new ones feature prominently in the dance music media discourses which again highlight the important role of DJs and the fascination with the evolution of music. Specific DJs who have played important roles in the development of genres are therefore accorded higher status for their artistic ingenuity and their commitment to their own sound. It is these particularly prominent personalities within specific genres who are generally given the highest status within the media, as they are considered the most forward thinking and progressive individuals, their quest for authenticity within their work affirming their status as true committed artists (commitment in this sense
not only refers to the time and reputation invested but also to the financial commitment needed to set up new record labels as outlets for their own and others’ material).

I believe a major reason for the continued longevity of this music culture (a culture that many academics and cultural commentators considered would be merely ephemeral), is this media focus on and promotion of DJs as artists. Although art, and therefore the consideration of individuals as artists, is both highly subjective and contextual, the nature of media commentary affirms that within this culture these individuals are held up as artists. Influenced by and contextualized within a myriad of contemporary and historical genres, DJs are continually portrayed as pushing and breaking down the boundaries of contemporary musical forms, embracing new technology and new techniques in the pursuit of eclectic new structures to musical composition and performance. Such activities by DJs and the media have to date ensured this culture has remained open and progressive, drawing in new participants whilst also retaining current ones.

6.3 Lords of the dance

Another element of the discourses surrounding DJs in the media relates to their role in the provision of dance music experiences, specifically their abilities to entertain, influence and ‘transport’ audiences. In the event reviews and the specific features on DJs, there are numerous references to their influence on their audiences. Such references commonly portray DJs as having highly emotional effects on their audiences, sometimes to the extent that they are portrayed as god-like figures, conducting crowds through religious experiences. Although many other factors combine to create successful events, it is the DJs who are most credited for the atmosphere and energy within events, therefore it is they who are ultimately considered as the entertainers within dance culture.

Media depictions of powerful and emotional DJ performances (and crowd reactions) play a major role in developing the profiles of DJs as entertainers, and carefully chosen terms are used to emphasise these traits. Such terms have a powerful effect on establishing the credentials of
these DJs within dance culture and creating their public image and the way the media portrays the DJs also influences how people respond to them. As many people often read about DJs before they hear them live, the media plays a major role in developing their expectations of what DJ performances provide aurally and emotionally and potentially how they should respond to such performances. Such commentary also reinforces the positive experiences people have, serving as an element of post purchase evaluation, perpetuating positive perceptions amongst participants in dance music culture.

Take the following quote as an example of the use of powerful terms to convey the performances of DJs: "Steve Lawler... unleashes a torrent of dark, sleazy tribal electronics and twisted jackin’ house beats" (Edwards 2003: 39). Based on a literal interpretation, to ‘unleash’ can be defined as "to release suddenly a strong, uncontrollable and usually destructive force" and a ‘torrent’ can be defined as “a sudden large or too large amount, especially one which seems to be uncontrollable” (Cambridge 2003). These are very dramatic terms to describe the performance of this DJ. This language communicates an extremely powerful performance (surprisingly so), charged with emotion and atmosphere, a barrage of sound that took the crowd by surprise or overwhelmed them. It is the essence of power, which is the focus of this phrase. Through using such terms the music journalist is increasing the significance of the performance and the performer as powerful cultural forces; people capable of unleashing torrents are usually in positions of great power, and must be very skilled to achieve such powerful responses through their work. Significantly, these terms are generally very masculine in their nature; reinforcing the masculine rather than feminine nature of the experience created by this powerful male figure (the vast majority of DJs are men). Interestingly feminised music is often associated with more mainstream styles of music and seen to be less edgy and underground, another dimension to the dominant dance music media discourses.

The terms ‘dark, sleazy tribal electronics’ and ‘twisted jackin’ house’ also help create the impression of music with a real personality and physical
element/presence; they emphasise the dynamic nature of the performance and the dancers' response to it. As they twist and jack to the music, there are strong images of emotive movement expressed here. There are also sexual undertones in this sentence (sleazy), which underlines the significance and power of this performance, creating a highly charged moment for those in attendance. These suggestions also echo the liminal properties of these dance spaces, which I discussed in chapter five (and will consider further in chapter seven), where dancers succumb to the music and are driven by the beat.

Figure 6.2 DJ as prophet

The description of specific DJ performances as unique moments (Anon 2003e, 2004b), relates both to their positioning as artists and entertainers and to the liminal properties of dance events (figure 6.2). The word 'moment' literally means an often brief but definite instant in time, a significant circumstance and point of excellence (Webster's 1997). Here its use has a two-fold significance, asserting the importance of an event, with
connotations of living for the moment. Moments are fleeting instances, precious times, and often highly memorable points, with potentially far reaching consequences: they can be life changing events. Living for the moment is also a major theme within dance music and wider youth culture ideologies, concentrating on the experiential, the here and now, the appreciation of being. The emphasis on moments and the temporal nature of dance events in the media also reflects the liminal properties of dance events and also elevates the role of DJs. It is the DJs who constitute a major element of the experiential dynamics within dance music events and are therefore pivotal in the creation of unique moments.

The description of dance music experiences and the role of DJs within them are central to the dance music media discourses. For instance, the paragraph below is a description of the atmosphere in a club before and during DJ Andy Cs’ set, (he is a particularly famous DJ, voted best drum and bass DJ in various polls for several consecutive years). This description is loaded with connotations of the powerful emotional effect of this DJ on crowds and effectively positions him as a masterful entertainer with almost supernatural powers:

With the pressure cranked up past the point of no return, the mass of bouncing bodies is sent into rapture by the arrival of people’s favourite, Andy C. There is, quite simply, no other d&b DJ that is responsible for such wide-eyed wonderment amongst punters, or who can work an entire venue into a frenzy of flailing limbs, as Andy C. With GQ, Andy lives up to his near mythic status by totally devastating Republic’s heaving dance floor (Verma 2003: 76).

This description uses numerous terms to recreate and emphasise the palpable energy and air of excitement at this event. This quote demonstrates how the language of the media evokes and reinforces issues of liminality, tribalism, authenticity and performance. ‘Pressure’ has numerous connotations within given contexts and here creates the impression of an emotional, social and physical force, stimulating people to dance. It also conveys the intensity of the experience and atmosphere created by DJ performances and the level of crowd anticipation before Andy
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C performed. The first half of the opening sentence gives the impression that there was no turning back, no stopping, the atmosphere and the music was so intense and charged, that there was no escaping it and that it captivated everyone in the club. ‘Crank’ evokes notions of the DJ transmitting motion to the crowd, winding them up and teasing them and also has associations with people without fully functioning mental faculties, or those different from the norm. Therefore, the above description emphasises the energetic atmosphere created here by the behaviour of the audience, dancing wildly and highly emotively under the influence of this DJ. The anticipation of this DJ’s performance is able to induce altered mental states and behavioural patterns; such is his powerful encompassing influence. This also bears similarity to tribal practices, where groups experience altered realities through high intensity music and dancing, entering into liminal states under the supervision and guidance of the shaman.

The fact that the crowd is “sent into rapture” by his arrival certifies his direct effect on clubs and the response of clubbers to him; ‘rapture’ is a powerfully emotive term, representing the emotional response of clubbers to Andy C. Such terms enforce the positioning of this DJ, as capable of creating powerful experiences and evoking deep emotions. In writing, “There is, quite simply, no other d&b DJ that is responsible for such wide-eyed wonderment” Verma (2003: 76) further highlights how in awe clubbers are at the abilities of Andy C and the emotions he evokes within them. This is also directly contrasted with other DJs, since ‘no other DJ’ can evoke such a reaction from clubbers, he is positioned in a different league to other famous DJs and seeing him perform seems to be an experience comparable to no other.

Interestingly, by describing him as “people’s favourite, Andy C” (Verma 2003: 76) rather than ‘Andy C, people’s favourite’, or simply ‘Andy C’, the journalist emphasises the role of the participants in determining the status of this DJ in this culture; he is someone who performs for the people rather than someone who people simply pay to go and see. Placing the people before the DJ also signifies the attachment and respect this DJ has for his
fans, as many DJs are not entirely appreciative of those who indirectly pay their wages and keep them in work. ‘People’s favourite’ also relates to the position of this DJ within drum and bass culture; he has been consistently voted best drum and bass DJ in the world in every poll on the subject and here the media is stressing his achievements.

It therefore clearly emerges that the DJs constitute a major element of the overall event experience as the media continually project them as creators and influencers of powerful and emotional experiences for the participants in dance culture. The discourses surrounding DJs in this context also echo the general ideological discourse within dance culture towards experiential consumption. Indeed it is the pursuit of the experiential that motivates the participation of many within dance culture, seeking out new and different experiences in the pursuit of precious moments. The centrality of moments and the experiential within dance culture therefore perpetuates the role and cultural significance of the DJs, who are positioned as the identifiable entertainers within dance culture; major components in the creation of moments.

6.4 DJs as Brands
There is no doubt that such is the prominence of DJs within dance culture and the recognition they receive from participants and the media, that many established DJs are brands in their own right. In most instances it is the DJs who perform at events who receive the most attention within promotional material, illustrating their role in attracting clubbers’ attention and interest and stimulating their desire to attend specific events. Indeed I know from my own experiences and observations that DJs are a major motivational factor in event attendance. As we saw in chapter five, this is not to say they are the only factor motivating attendance, but famous DJs comprise a considerable element of the appeal for many clubbers attending clubs and other dance music events.

In today’s choice-filled consumer society, brands play a major role in consumer decision making and purchase decisions. Brands have a number of beneficial functions, practically, socially, psychologically and emotionally
(Morgan and Pritchard 2000). In practical terms brands aid decision-making, by reducing uncertainty surrounding the purchase of particular product items and through both the media and life experience individuals develop perceptions and knowledge of the attributes, qualities and image of individual brands. The result of such knowledge and perceptions is that certain brands will fulfil individual consumer needs, wants and desires better than others. Therefore the brand with the most desirable characteristics in terms of the practical, social, psychological and emotional benefits will be most sought after by the consumer. Brands are packages of benefits, recognisable to consumers as such and therefore they reduce consumer uncertainty and anxiety surrounding purchase decisions. This function is particularly valuable within dance music culture, since all dance music events, as other service products, possess the characteristics of intangibility, inseparability and variability. These factors lead to increased consumer uncertainty when purchasing dance music experiences and it is the DJs who form a major element of the evidence that particular events will provide positive experiences. The dance music media is one of the most influential forces in developing and shaping the brand image of different DJs; it is the nature in which the media address certain DJs which projects their image and establishes and certifies their credentials. Thus this current section (6.4) will now analyse the manner in which the media refers to DJs and the points of reference and signification attached to specific DJs to further explore how DJs are portrayed as artists and entertainers and as brands in their own right.

Within dance music culture there are numerous leagues of DJs, similar to celebrities. Whilst some DJs are known and recognised globally others may only be national, regional or local figures. Furthermore whilst a minority of DJs are recognised by participants in all sub sections of dance culture, other DJs may only be known to participants within the specific sub sections they are associated with and yet others will only be known on a far more personal basis. The more famous DJs are referred to by the music media as 'gods', 'magicians', 'masters', 'heroes', 'A-list', 'exclusive' and 'kings'. Yet many lesser known DJs are endowed with additional credibility through their association with other cultural institutions (such as clubs, other DJs
and record labels) and their cultural achievements to date including record releases, relationships with different record labels and artists and performances at famous clubs. In many instances there is also the combination of both types of commentary, assumptive and evidence based which provide hierarchical descriptors. Figure 6.3 portrays part of the cover of a special issue of DJ magazine, edited by Danny Rampling, a particularly famous DJ (and previously discussed in chapter 3). This image clearly illustrates the role of the media in raising the profile of individual DJs and also endowing them with religious qualities.

Many of the terms used to describe the DJs at the top of the clubbing hierarchy have very powerful and authoritative descriptors. Such terms evoke perceptions of DJs capable of performing to very high standards, often with profound effects on those who experience their performances. A journalist for Mixmag (Anon 2003e: 37) refers to Dave Clarke commenting, "Techno god Clarke blew away Horatio's bar on Brighton Pier at last year's Skint party with a rare electro set". The first striking element of this comment is the reference to this DJ as ‘techno god’. Such a combination of
signs positions this DJ as superior within his specialist area, someone with such skill at manipulating crowds, that he is truly special and inspirational. This comment also portrays this artist as a very creative, original and inspirational figure with great power to produce unique experiences for those who witness him performing; The reference to “last years Skint party” also associates this DJ with a very high profile record label owned and run by one of the most famous people in dance music as Skint is the record label owned by Norman Cook, who DJs and produces music under the name ‘Fat Boy Slim’.

In another article Edwards (2003: 39) comments on the performances of a number of DJs including Armin Van Buuren who he describes as: “Dutch trance master, Armin Van Buuren takes things to another level”. Again here we can see the DJ transformed into a cultural icon through media representation. Describing him as the ‘Dutch trance master’ situates him in a position of authority, as highly skilled, an expert and artist at the height of his profession, as someone who has followers who strive to copy him. Taking ‘things to another level’ emphasises the masterful nature of this DJ, how he can stimulate the achievement of higher states of being and consciousness amongst the receivers of his art. Both the phrase reaching new levels and the term master also have religious connotations, according the DJ the status of a god who is able to elevate people to higher levels, through his craft. Here again is further evidence of the liminal nature of dance events finding echoes in the media. Other scholars have likened dance music culture to a religious movement where the DJs are portrayed as the gods and spiritual leaders of dance culture (Malbon 1999, Brewster and Broughton 2000) and this current study of the media lends further weight to such analogies.

When describing less famous DJs the media commonly cite other cultural reference points to enhance their credentials and the following is an excellent example of such positioning. This sentence is interesting for a number of reasons - primarily for the name-dropping, cultural references and powerful terms. “Yoshitoshi new boy Desyn Masiello gets the crowd really hyped with some pumped up, funkout explosive house - dropping
his, Leon Roberts and Omid 16B's epic ‘Feel The Rush’ (Edwards 2003: 39). ‘Yoshitoshi’ is a very prominent record label in dance culture, whose hundredth release advert occupies the back cover of this particular issue of this magazine. Desyn Masiello is therefore endowed with extra significance and credibility/sub-cultural capital through his association with this record label. The DJ’s image is being built through association with other items of cultural significance, much the same way as advertisers bestow meaning upon products through association with other signs (Williamson 1978). Here the journalist is also acknowledging that without this additional information the name alone is unlikely to be meaningful to the majority of his readers, but by mentioning that he is ‘Yoshitoshi’s new boy’ he is associating him with another sign that is significant to many people. This has the combined effect of raising his importance with the reader and transferring some of the brand values to him. Moreover, to provide extra credibility, we are also told that he played ‘Feel The Rush’ a record he co-produced with several other artists. This is how many DJs seek to differentiate themselves, through their own productions, which illustrate their musical capabilities and hence gives them greater credibility as artists. Again the author is attempting to impress upon the reader the cultural significance and hence credibility of this DJ through his production work and also the fact that other artists wish to collaborate with him.

In the same event feature a further description again illustrates how some of the biggest names are positioned and portrayed vis-à-vis other DJs. Edwards (2003: 39) comments “Clearly the biggest draw, Brummie jock Steve Lawler”, thereby explicitly highlighting this DJ as a major factor in attracting crowds. Whereas Desyn Masiello was described as ‘Yoshitoshi new boy’ Steve Lawler is simply described as ‘clearly the biggest draw’; no terms such as master, king, wizard, etc are required here and the absence of such signifiers of power demonstrates that such symbols are not necessary in establishing the credentials of this DJ; such is his status that his name is enough.
6.5 **Size and significance**

Although the media portrayal of dance events was covered in some detail in previous sections of this thesis, such is the centrality of events to dance culture that here I will analyse the media portrayal of dance events in greater depth. Dance music events and clubs form the core or the 'hub' of dance music and club culture (Thornton 1995). These are the places and events which are central and sacred to the participants, spaces where all the elements of dance music culture converge to create the much-celebrated synergy of cultural forces combining to create unique and fulfilling experiences for dance devotees. These are the sites and locations where the ideologies and fantasies of participants are lived out, where dance culture becomes more than discourse and music, where everything takes on meaning.

Such is the cultural importance and centrality of events to dance music culture that the media constructs a number of evocative and interrelated discourses around them. Analysis of media depictions of events both past and future, foreground a number of key themes, which are common to dance music magazines. In practice, as much of the ideology of dance culture is interrelated and interdependent, there is a degree of overlap between many of the discourses that support them, while some discourses converge and are intertwined within several themes. However for the purposes of this research themes were separated to facilitate analysis. Within this section 'size and significance' (6.5) consideration is given to the textual and visual portrayal of events in terms of 'social spaces' and 'focal points'. The subsequent sections consider 'moments and the experiential' (6.6) and 'behavioural norms and values' (6.7). Running throughout each of these is the cross-cutting theme of 'religious experiences and processes of worship'.

Events are undoubtedly focal points within dance music culture, they are where the DJs perform to their fans and participants dance to their favourite DJs. They are the location for the synergistic climax of dance music's cultural components, where participants, DJs, music and technology come together in harmonious equilibrium. They are the sites of playful
vitality (Malbon 1999), where carefully selected crowds come together to
dance and socialise (Jackson 2004). These are the places where
participation takes on its full meaning for the devotees of dance, where
moments are created and shared amongst friends and strangers, where
escapism and hedonism reign supreme and the norms and values of wider
'straight' (conventional) society are shunned in favour of unrestrained
expression and social experiences. These are the places where DJs lead
and participants take part in quasi religious experiences – such is their
significance that I have earlier described them as the churches and temples
of dance culture.

Being the focal points of dance culture, events form spaces where
participants congregate and socialise: they are social spaces deeply
intertwined with discourses of hedonism and escapism. Certainly the
language and terms of reference used within the dance music media play a
major role in creating impressions of the size and significance of different
events. As previously discussed there exists a symbiotic relationship
between the size and perceived cultural significance of events, with a
general preference towards larger events. Scale not only has direct
implications for the spectacle, but also for the events' cultural value and
within the media portrayal of events numerous references are used to
emphasise the size and cultural significance of events.

For example the following short sentence from *Knowledge* is packed with
signifying signs to highlight to the reader the size and significance of this
event. Verma (2003: 76) introduces an event as “co-hosted by definitive
d&b website, Drum&Bass Arena in the sprawling Republic night club”.
First there is the reference to the co-host. Describing the co-host as the
“definitive d&b website” denotes a very significant organisation. Definitive -
with its connotations of the ultimate, the best, the most comprehensive and
complete service - suggests great significance. Such terms signify the
involvement of a very important and competent organisation in this event.
Here the media is validating this event through highlighting the positive
attributes of the organisations behind it. Being as dance music events are
intangible products there is a greater need to provide evidence of their
quality, through emphasising tangible aspects of the events and organisations involved in their production.

Secondly, the use of the term ‘sprawling’ to describe the venue also has an impact on the perceived size of this event. Describing the night-club as ‘sprawling’ connotes a very large club, spread out with a number of different areas; it also creates the impression of a venue with a chaotic and almost unruly nature (the perfect environment for a dance event). As previously highlighted in chapter five there was a general preference amongst my participants for larger venues, encompassing a number of different zones or distinct areas. This creates a more interesting, stimulating environment and enables participants to socialise as well as dance. Here it is evident the media is attempting to subtly express this aspect of the event in order for participants to gain a greater appreciation of the magnitude and quality of this event.

Another commonly used term to convey the size and more so the significance of events is their capacity, particularly when they were “full to capacity” (Aston 2004: 102). Such references provide additional confirmation of the importance and quality of specific events, if they are able to maximise attendance and have to turn people away they are obviously significant. This type of commentary therefore serves to confirm their cultural credibility and significance through establishing their ability to attract customers. Crowds have a major effect on and role in the consumption of dance music experiences and references to capacity crowds, therefore, have further positive associations. There is nothing worse for clubbers than going to poorly attended events, and as one of my participants commented (see chapter five) they prefer a small club full of people to a large one with few people, as capacity crowds have direct associations with good times and facilitate the feelings of escapism that many seek to gain from dance events.

In addition to the venue and the numbers attracted to events, the acts and DJs performing at any event also act as major signifiers of importance. A *Mixmag* journalist (Anon 2003e: 38) comments “Homelands has secured a
huge line-up of live acts. Audio Bullys are confirmed but the real pull is The Streets – he’s conquered the suburbs now he wants to convert you”. In saying that the organisers have “secured a huge line-up,” this journalist is not only confirming the fact that there will be lots of famous acts performing, but also that these will be high status performers. This serves as a major attraction to potential customers and hints at the cultural significance of this event: it has a large line up of very big stars. In addition the ‘Audio Bullys’ and ‘The Streets’, (both particularly famous artists), are referenced here to exemplify the famous acts that are performing and highlight the event’s significance. Perhaps more interestingly however, is the phrase “and now he wants to convert you”, heavy with religious connotations, this therefore likens this artist to a spiritual or religious leader; such is his profound skill and knowledge it is as if witnessing his performance will be a profound, life changing experience. Indeed the quasi religious dimension to dance music revealed in the earlier stages of this research are often echoed within the dance music media. In fact it is very clear that events are portrayed as the focal points of dance culture. They are the sites where the rituals of participants are lived out and where ideas and ideologies become reality. The terms and points of reference used when referring to them are therefore intended to convey maximum significance, both in terms of their value to dance culture as a whole and their emotional, spiritual significance for individuals.

6.6 Moments and the experiential
As previously noted within the analysis of DJs notions of ‘moments’ and the experiential are key elements of dance culture ideology; such discourses not only promote experiential consumption but also hint at dance culture’s dynamic and progressive nature – that no two events are ever the same. These themes are also deeply rooted within the wider discourses of hedonism and escapism and as such are inseparable. Both the written and visual texts of the media contain numerous references to the value of moments i.e. living for the moment, and the unique experiential values of dance events. Indeed such discourses are privileged within youth cultures, which often value the present above the past and the future and place
greater value on experiential consumption than the acquisition and accumulation of material goods.

Without a doubt a core element of the media discourse surrounding events and dance culture more generally are the themes of escapism and hedonism, although these are not unique to dance culture and are common to night-time leisure cultures. Escapism is a prerequisite for enjoyable leisure experiences amongst many, diverting the mind from the harsher, unpleasant realities of life to more pleasurable pursuits (Harris 2005, Rojek 2005). Moreover many people in contemporary western society could also be considered hedonists, since the pursuit of pleasure and self-indulgence is a key element driving capitalist societies.

Therefore, whilst escapism and hedonism are discourses common in much of the leisure media, the contexts in which these themes appear is of great interest, as is the way in which these themes are also interrelated with and validated by other ideological discourses such as the value of moments and the experiential, altered behavioural values and norms and drugs. Such discourses also underpin notions of liminality in relation to dance events, how they exist as spaces beyond conventional social structures of interaction and constitute sites for identity development and experimentation. I will return to how these themes are created, progressed, enhanced and embodied within the discourses of the dance music media later in this chapter.

Let us take for example, a comment by Cream’s Jim King in *Mixmag* May 2003. In discussing his highlights from a previous Creamfields festival he states, “my highlight was Underworld playing as a rainbow was forming in the sky, it was just a wicked atmosphere” (Anon 2003e: 36). Deeply engrained within this comment is the value of first hand experiences, as for people who experienced this event the memory is probably an unforgettable moment, whilst for those who missed it, it invokes the sense of a powerful moment. Such references bring to mind the power of experiencing specific ‘special’ moments and hence the necessity to live life to the full. Such references also remind us that there is no substitute for
being there, that seeing is believing and once a moment has passed it may never be repeated. This further impresses upon the reader that events truly hold the potential for unique, powerful experiences, with an atmosphere like nothing else they have to be experienced to be appreciated. Such references to the experiential also enforce the ephemeral nature of dance events and reinforces their liminal nature; since they only exist for finite periods their elusive properties are soon gone.

In this same feature there are numerous images supporting the themes of living for the moment and the pursuit of the experiential. Accompanying the Homelands text is a large image of people sitting on the grass (Anon 2003e: 38). This photo has been taken from ground level where three people sit on the grass in the foreground with clear blue sky behind them. The use of this camera angle emphasises the green grass of the countryside where this event took place as well perhaps making the photo’s composition of three people sitting down look more visually interesting. The clear blue sky evokes notions of being relaxed and care free and carries associations of happy summer days. The combination of green grass and clear blue sky also induces a strong sense of escaping from the hectic urban lives that most people live. Thus we have a sense here of getting away to the countryside to a more relaxed and self determined pace of life and of living for and appreciating the moment. The subjects of the photo are all wearing sunglasses and smiling, emphasising the happy and summery nature of this event, whilst the sunglasses also convey associations with 'cool' (Pountain and Robins 2000). The man on the left is looking straight at the camera whilst his two companions in the centre and on the right (one male and one female) face each other smiling indicating the social nature of this event and the potential for flirting and meeting partners. The clothing of these individuals also helps assert the summertime atmosphere of this event and remind people of the pleasures of sitting on the grass on a sunny day with friends enjoying a relaxed moment. The text across the centre of the image (WE LOVE HOMELANDS) is also in vivid yellow, which evokes images of summer sunshine and extroverted behaviour.
Atmosphere is another frequently commented upon feature of dance events, the mood and tone of events being a major contributor to positive and negative experiences. Atmosphere is very difficult to articulate, but very significant in respect of the experience gained at events. Therefore it is common to read comments such as “the atmosphere was electric” (McGrath 2004: 104) which try to convey the energy, power and value of events. Terms such as electric create impressions of positively charged, exciting, powerful and dynamic events. Such descriptions signify enjoyable and therefore highly memorable experiences; commenting upon the atmosphere at an event Charles (2004: 82) states that it had “the kind of beamingly optimistic vibe that events such as Homelands 2004 always strive for and only rarely achieve”. This highlights the role and significance of atmosphere whilst also stressing the uniqueness of such moments. Whilst all events strive to create very positive atmospheres, only a minority achieve such goals, hence the additional significance of experiencing such moments.

Of course crowds play a major role in the creation of atmosphere and in the generation of experiences and significant moments. As service products are produced and consumed simultaneously, those present form part of the overall product and the product experience. The crowd is as central as the DJ to creating the atmosphere and therefore the experience at events. Crowds are commonly portrayed as ‘up for it’, ‘clued up’ and ‘mad for it’, which connotes their awareness of cultural discourses, willingness to party, and the enthusiasm with which they do so. Aston (2004: 102) when reviewing an event comments, “in true Room At The Top fashion the crowd interacted with the DJs, cheering every tune, and clapping and shouting encouragement”. The role of others at dance music experiences also demonstrates why the presence of friends is also a major motivational factor in attending dance events.

Another feature of the crowds at events is the unity and common purpose that individuals at dance events share; indeed as previously considered there is often felt to be some form of common bond between those at dance events. Verma (2003: 76) describes one particular event crowd as a
"mass of bouncing bodies", a phrase which recreates the sense of being at such an event in terms of the volume, purpose, density and activities of people there. It is interesting that such terms create a sense of drama and unity and the word mass has associations of “an assemblage of things that collectively make one” (Webster’s 1997: 443). This phrasing evokes notions of the unity of the crowd, that they are one together, as a result of their shared purpose, passion and musical preference. Unity was a major element of early rave culture ideology and an integral part of utopian ideals, which again signifies the liminal properties of dance spaces, as significantly different to other social spaces. Again, whilst ‘mass’ also relates to the volume of people within this club it has further associations with religion, another institution/cultural force which dance music culture has been likened to in the past. Here we can see deeply embedded notions of dance clubs and events as places of worship and attendance as a symbol of patronage to dance culture, where the truly devoted participants demonstrate their dedication.

Moving on from the description of the “mass of bouncing bodies” the journalist then focuses on how the audience was “sent into rapture” by the arrival of a DJ, denoting a very powerful and emotional effect on the audience. Rapture can be defined as “the state of being transported by a lofty emotion; ecstasy; the transporting of a person from one place to another, especially to heaven; an expression of ecstatic feeling” (dictionary.com 2003). This again emphasises the effects of this DJ on the crowd and highlights the nature of the emotions that clubbers undergo during clubbing experiences. Being transported “from one place to another” and undergoing “ecstatic” experiences has strong overtones of escapism and liminality, ideas I will return to in chapter 7.

6.7 Behavioural norms and values
At the heart of many of the points discussed above is the notion that dance culture embraces different values and norms from those of wider society. This is intertwined with many of the above points, since it is these different behavioural norms and values, which lead to the significant experiences and unique moments for many at dance events and the lack of inhibitions
and behavioural expectations plays a central role in the generation of positive atmospheres. Through shedding social baggage and taking on altered roles participants are able to escape, to indulge, to play and to experience new social situations in the liminal spaces that are dance events. This final section of the chapter will now investigate how the dance music media promotes and positively embraces a different set of behavioural norms and values to wider society.

The alternative norms and values within dance culture are represented in its media in both images and language and relate to social interaction, body language, dress, expression and identity roles. Whilst some of these themes emerge very obviously through the media, there are also numerous subtexts within the language and imagery which can be explored. A prime example appears in *Mixmag* (May 2003: contents page) in reference to a feature on festivals entitled ‘FESTIVAL FRENZY’ and the accompanying text “Fuck war, lets get mashed in a field! *Mixmag'*s ultimate guide to where to go and who to see”. The title feature “Festival Frenzy” connotes celebration and cultural events (Merriam Webster 2003), special days and religious ceremonial events (Cambridge 2003). Defining these events as festivals is significant in itself, as this portrays them as important cultural events, with their own unique ceremonial features. There are further associations here of festivity, a term which has associations of positive events, associated with people enjoying themselves and socialising during special often religious occasions. Therefore simply terming these events festivals heightens their significance and centrality to dance music culture and shapes the expectations of participants as well as carrying connotations that these events are quasi-religious occasions for participants in dance music culture.

The combination of the terms festival and frenzy adds additional weight to the promotion of alternative behavioural norms. Frenzy has various undertones, associated with both activities and state of mind. Frenzy signifies uncontrolled behaviour and emotion, wild excitement, temporary madness, delirium, intense, wild and disorderly activity. This title therefore raises the significance of these festival events and the type of behaviour
that may be expected at them. It also signifies their relatively unrestricted nature in contrast to clubbing environments that are more tightly regulated by clubbers' social codes and policing by doormen and security staff. Hence festivals are less restricted and may be seen as more liminal than club events. The term frenzy also gives the impression of very vibrant, hectic, lively and emotional events, places where uncontrollable excitement and emotions may be experienced, without need to suppress the actions arising from such experiences. It also conveys the intensity of the events as sites of hedonistic and impulsive gratification. Indeed this corresponds with many of the comments made to me during and after my field trips to such events - that the sense of freedom to do as you wish and act as you wish is far greater at festivals than at conventional club events, although such self imposed constraints vary considerably from individual to individual and depend on the clubs and events they normally attend.

The statement “FUCK war” and “lets get mashed in a field” has a number of different connotations and can be interpreted in several ways. The anti-war stance echoes the 1960s peace protest and hippy culture, a movement concerned to contest the dominant norms and values within society. This also echoes the early rave culture ideology of peace, love, unity and respect, all of which are contradictory to war. The initial impression is that the magazines editors consider festivals provide a good means of escaping from the reality of the UK-USA conflict in Iraq. Mixmag is positioning itself against this war and getting intoxicated (mashed) in a field is seen as a solution to the frustration felt by many (not only clubbers) of feeling powerless and marginalised in the political process, a means of escape from the harsh nature of the world. However not only is the magazine condemning the war but also promoting drug use in the same sentence, something regarded by the government and mainstream society as undesirable and is thus once again perpetuating different values and norms from those widely accepted in the UK.

The article to which this contents page text refers is entitled, “FUCK WAR! LET’S GO FESTIE MENTAL” (Anon 2003e: 35). This again emphasises the strong anti-war position of dance culture and its utopian ideals of peace,
love, unity and respect. ‘FESTI MENTAL’ is also interesting in its associations, connotations and the similarity between terms. ‘FESTI’ is the abbreviated term for festival and linking it directly with the term ‘MENTAL’ indicates a number of things, all revolving around festivals and the mind. Arguably the term ‘FESTI MENTAL’ is very similar to the word, sentimental and whilst various interpretations are possible it is hard to ignore the connotations of using such a term. It helps invoke within the reader the emotional significance of these events and the fact that actions and opinions towards and at such events are governed more by emotionality than by rationality. This again indicates the hedonistic ideology and alternative values of dance culture. Mental has various definitions such as, “relating to the mind, or involving the process of thinking” and is also “UK SLANG [for] crazy” (Cambridge 2003), and, ”of, relating to, or affected by a disorder of the mind” (Your Dictionary 2003). Therefore the combination of terms invokes notions of going crazy at festivals, acting abnormally and forgetting about society’s expectations of conformity to behavioural norms of public conduct. Indeed this is much of the appeal of participation in dance music and club culture in that it provides liminal, other worldly environments where different sets of values and behavioural expectations exist to those of the every day world (Malbon 1999, Jackson 2004). Also evident here are connotations of altering the normal functions of the brain i.e. through drugs, which confirms the different attitudes towards drugs within dance culture; here the dance music media is emphasising how festivals provide an opportunity for playful disorder and carnivalesque misrule (Bahktin 1984), for getting intoxicated and letting go of our socially engrained behavioural codes.

The plethora of these direct and indirect references to drug culture, clearly visible within the media provides clear representation of the alternative values within dance culture. Comments such as “it’s all good unclean fun” (Madden 2004: 86), “you could just tell this was going to be messy” (Ti 2004: 100) and “the “emergency services” theme merely encouraged people to further excess” (Brown 2004: 94) all indirectly infer the normality of drug taking at events. Such references also signify the inseparability of
drugs from the other altered behavioural norms associated with dance events.

A further way to challenge everyday norms is through dress and as previously discussed, whilst many youth cultures have readily identifiable dress codes (e.g. punks and Goths) this is not the case for participants in dance culture and it is only at dance events where the distinctive dress styles of dance participants are apparent (see figures 5.6 and 5.7). Here, the adoption of these unique styles contributes to both the different norms and values at dance events and the adoption of different behavioural roles amongst individuals. Indeed the dance music media commonly feature individuals in distinct dress at events. Thus, an image for Creamfields features two young men, with CREAMFIELDS in bold pink superimposed over the centre. The person in the foreground is distinguishable for a number of reasons including his hair, face and his attire. His hair style is unusual with numerous tufts sticking up wrapped in blue tinfoil, echoing the cyber look, although it may be a pastiche or an ironic representation. Whatever motivated this individual to style his hair in this way, the one thing very evident about his appearance is he is not there to look or act normally, but to have fun. Further evidence of this comes from his face (he has a look of liveliness and excitement) and from the fact that he appears to have fluffy wings attached to his back. This individual holds in his hand a programme featuring the Cream logo, which serves to remind readers of the excitement of being at a festival, with all the various acts performing and trying to decide where to go and who to see next. This further promotes the discourse of events as places of fun and uncontained emotional expression in comparison with the behavioural norms of everyday life.

The clothing and hairstyles of many of the people featured in magazine event photos are also very out going and bright, symbolic of their determinedness to have a good time and embrace the ethos of dance events, which is to party, meet new people and have a great time. Dress makes a strong statement that people are there to have a good time, express themselves and not conform to expectations. Playful expression is
also very evident through the use of vivid colours and all these styles demonstrate the youthful vibrancy of the crowds attracted to dance events and are symbolic of the type of extrovert behaviour my participants described in earlier chapters.

The following extended quote demonstrates the effect of dress and the adoption of identity roles on clubbing participants; it sums up a number of the altered norms and values held by participants and projected within the dance music media. Gary Marto promoter for 2Kinky cited in Brown (2004: 95) comments:

because we theme each of the nights the crowd always dresses up, which helps push the party into the realms of surrealism – big burly rugby players in little dresses, dwarves, people on stilts; it’s wall-to-wall wrong – the dancefloor looks more like a circus ring than a dancefloor. But they’re a real unpretentious lot...these people just want to have fun!!!

As I have discussed above, many participants at festival events wear fancy dress of some kind and my observation revealed that wearing costumes helps people take on different roles and become less self conscious. When we dress we do so consciously or unconsciously to meet a specific role or image and create a specific persona, therefore our clothing affects our perception of self and others. In different clothes we can feel different and may also be treated differently by those we encounter, therefore wearing clothes radically different to those worn in day-to-day life enables people to break the constraints of normal routine and act less conventionally. Such abilities lead to less restrained behaviour and greater openness, which is ultimately a major part of the appeal of participation in dance music culture for many individuals.

Photos of dance events in dance music magazines commonly feature people smiling and cheering with their hands in the air as an expression of the extent to which they are embracing the music and the event (see figure 6.4 and 6.5 below). The waving of hands in the air is an expression of approval and an acknowledgement that these people are very much enjoying
themselves and they want others and the DJ to be aware of this. In terms of body language such posture indicates their openness to the situation and that they are very much at ease with the entirety of their surroundings. This notion of openness and engagement is confirmed by the hand gestures of the subjects, having their hands open and palms facing out or pointing upwards with one finger. Many of these people (men and women) also have their arms around each other demonstrating the pleasure received from experiencing this event with their friends and their willingness to show affection. Such images also indicate rapture and joy, with connotations of a religious response or that participants are engaged in a religious experience that could be likened to movements such as evangelical Christians.

Figure 6.4 Embracing the moment

Figure 6.5 Energised crowds
6.8 Summary

This chapter has analysed the way in which the dance music media presents and portrays DJs and events, revealing a number of key discourses in relation to both. The media representation of DJs contains a number of separate and intertwined discourses, all of which appear to revolve around maintaining and progressing the images of DJs, whilst simultaneously portraying dance culture as vibrant and dynamic. The chapter has revealed how there is significant emphasis placed on highlighting the artistic merits of individual DJs in terms of discussing their techniques, abilities and approaches to making and mixing music. I consider that such representations also serve to authenticate dance culture itself, through the levels of originality and authenticity associated with these icons. Another common theme within the media reporting was the role and effects of DJs on crowds at particular events, where they are attributed with great status as powerful, emotion evoking entertainers. It also emerged that the contexts within which DJs names are commonly situated also denote power, superiority and excellence, symbolic of their centrality in dance events and dance culture. The chapter also illustrated how the dance music media plays a highly influential role in making many DJs very well recognised and identifiable as brands in their own right.

The second main focus of the chapter was an analysis of how the media perpetuate the discourses of escapism and hedonism which dominate dance music culture. Events constitute the focal points of dance culture as these are where the individual components combine to create the experiential consumption opportunities that motivate participants. Echoing a theme of chapter five, the visual spectacle and the role of crowds is a common feature of dance music magazine articles, with various terms used to convey the cultural centrality of many events, in addition to the unique experiences associated with their ephemeral nature. Entwined within the coverage of events and heavily emphasised by the media is the importance of living for the moment (common to many youth cultures), which again emphasises the ephemeral nature of dance events and their liminal nature. Such are the points and terms of reference used that dance events are conveyed as other worlds, where the rules and pressures of societal norms
and values give way as participants immerse themselves in these liminal zones. In portraying dance events as alternative, non-judgemental worlds, havens of hedonism and youthful expression they emphasise the centrality of these events to the vibrancy of dance culture and pay homage to their eclectic nature and the participants that make them. Simultaneously the media emphasise, especially in terms of the major events, how attendance is essential for those who consider themselves dedicated to the values of dance culture.
Chapter 7

Considering identity, performance and space

7.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the key findings of this thesis and attempts to develop a greater understanding of dance culture and its participants. In particular, issues of space, performance, liminality and identity appear as key themes throughout the chapter; indeed these are the interrelated and overlapping themes within dance culture most pertinent to the construction and development of cultural spaces and participant identities. The issues of identity are very much intertwined with notions of performance and presentation within commodified places and with the nature of participation. Complex and multi-dimensional relationships exist between these factors and whilst in order to provide a structure and coherency to this chapter they are considered separately, they are very much intertwined and therefore a degree of overlap between areas and in some cases repetition is inevitable.

The first section (7.2) considers dance culture and identity, considering the processes and influences surrounding the construction and development of participant identities. Central to this section is a consideration of the factors that shape participant perceptions of self and others including amongst other issues dress (7.3), degrees and nature of participation and subcultural involvement (7.4), use of language and terminology (7.5) and media consumption. The last section of the chapter (7.6) then considers the role of space and place in dance culture, addressing issues concerning the construction, commodification and resulting use of spaces and places where the participants in dance culture converge within a liminal zone.

7.2 Considering identity

The pervasive ideology of individualism and personal choice are central to contemporary Western society, whereby its constituents strive for individual identities whilst seeking acceptance within the various social spheres with which they engage (Hall 1997). These social spheres and their etiquette therefore require the construction of multiple identities in order to fulfil
individual needs for social acceptance and credibility, whilst maintaining a sense of autonomy over presentation of self (Kaiser 1990). Issues of identity and identification have been previously discussed in several chapters of this thesis and we have seen how “fantasies of identity are a key pleasure” of participation in club cultures (Thornton 1995: 91). Indeed Jackson (2004: 158) considers:

The construction of identity becomes an ongoing creative project aimed towards the creation of a sense of personal and social authenticity. The identities created are fluid, rather than fixed, in that they are grounded in practices, rather than signs. As such, they are founded upon experiences and the creation of emotional and sensual narratives memorialised through the body.

Such comments are particularly pertinent to issues of identities and dance culture. Thornton considers that fantasies of identity are an intrinsic aspect of social interactions within clubbing environments and many dance participants are indeed reluctant to discuss issues such as work and social background within club environments. However I would suggest, as Jackson (2004) does, that this is a rather simplistic view of clubbers’ presentation of identity and that such matters are simply further down the list of social priorities that determine the script of clubbing interactions. It is not that participants deny the work aspects of their life or reject them as part of their identity, it is more that these aspects of their identities are generally not relevant to participation in dance culture. Dance clubs, like many other areas of life, enable experimentation with and development of identities, however the boundaries of these identity explorations are stretched further in dance environments than in many other contemporary social leisure settings.

Whilst Thornton focuses on the artefacts of ‘subcultural capital’ as pertinent to identity, Jackson (2004: 158) considers identity to be “grounded in practices rather than signs”. I would contend that the notions of identity, including perceptions of others, are influenced by and constructed through the experiences of practice accompanied by the presence of and association with subcultural ‘signs’, texts and objects (Barker and Galasinski 2001). It
is the juxtaposition of practice and signs, their intertextual nature and the corresponding interactions, perceptions and interpretations of such cultural elements that combine to create potent distinctive images of self and others. Indeed a whole range of signs and practices are used within club environments to express particular identities and to assess the identities of others. Dance clubs and the cultures that surround them permit and entail the development of identities, which facilitate identification in these and other cultural realms, fulfilling individual needs for personal exploration and self-development in a wider social context. These attributes constitute a central element of the appeal of dance culture for many individuals, whereby they gain an enhanced sense of self and others and an alternative perspective on the social world, through the intertextual nature of the forces at play.

The processes of identity formation within dance culture involve considerably more than the acquisition, development and maintenance of high levels of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995). Although subcultural capital is a particularly useful concept, being highly relevant to the constructions of hierarchies within club cultures, the intertextual nature of the components of subcultural capital and the subjectivity surrounding their interpretation is highly consequential. It is at this juncture that issues of life experience, particularly the degrees and nature of subcultural involvement/participation, social networks and media consumption and exposure are highly influential in the interpretation of subcultural texts, providing for a myriad of outcomes from the processes of intertextuality and hence attributing a great diversity of values and associations to the cultural texts of dance culture. The nature of the interactions with and interpretation of cultural texts and the combination of their outcomes is therefore central to the composition and definition of individual identities.

It may therefore be that notions of performance (Goffman 1969, Schechner 2003) are more appropriate for providing the conceptual framework for considering issues of identity formation and development. The notion that life is a series of performances encompassing a variety of settings and scripts creates an alternative theoretical perspective from which to analyse
processes involved in the presentation of self, perceptions of others and interactions with environmental constituents. Within this framework the clubs, events and other places of cultural interaction (record shops, bars, parties, internet forums, etc.) become the stages or settings where performances take place (Doorne and Ateljevic 2005). For each setting there exist a range of physical and aesthetic features and qualities, atmospheres and ambiances (determined by the properties of the stage and the actors present at a given time). Club/event environments comprise the main stage for performances within dance culture as they constitute the embodiment of dance culture and the diversity of clubbing genres as such present an extensive range of stages for alternative identity performances.

Particularly pertinent to identity and its performance is the nature of the setting in which it is contextualised. Each setting or stage (club/event, record shop, internet forum) has its own discourses influenced and appropriated by the actors (clubbers) present, the directors (promoters, owners, site masters) responsible for the selection and construction of the stage (including the recruitment of actors) and the various media and stakeholders which are central to the construction of wider discourses within dance culture. These forces are central to individual self-identities (and perceptions of others), constructed through the performance of roles within these various social settings (Goffman 1969).

Performing on the stage are the actors, all of whose roles are semi prescribed and semi self-determined or self selected. Their roles are semi prescribed as a result of the prevailing discourses and the subsequent codes of conduct, interaction and presentation within given settings. These are highly influential on the nature of roles which actors are able to adopt, creating physical barriers (in the sense of door selection policies) and psychological barriers (perceptions of behavioural ideologies) to role determination. These factors are also accompanied by more personal influences such as peer groups and the roles of others within these groups. From personal experience I would say that one’s clubbing companions significantly affect the roles performed by individuals at different events.
Chapter: 7 Considering identity, performance and space

Equally, although apparently not a significant influence on my participants in this study, the dance music media discourses also have a powerful effect on role determination.

It must be noted that there remains a high degree of subjectivity in the interpretation of discourse and the degree to which individuals are willing to conform to the roles expected or perceived as expected of them. There are always individuals who wish to stand out, to make the statement that they are unique. Added to this are the varying discourses which individuals are exposed to and the cultural products they wish to consume, which influence their interpretation of their cultural experiences, which in turn influences their self-identity and role performance. In addition, when one performs there is always the personal choice as to how a role should be played, the actors' interpretation of the role, which facilitates a degree of self-determination in role selection and performance.

A recurring theme in my conversations with participants at dance events was their openness both musically and experientially, which I believe is largely an issue of self-image in itself. This relates to the perceived availability of choice, the perception that participants are acting purely upon their own free will as autonomous individuals, even if they are really influenced to a high degree by the media and other players in the dance scene. As Klein (2003: 44) comments:

The field of pop is itself structured by a relational structure of the connections between different players: DJs, musicians, producers of music and video, publishers, music critics and promoters. They engage in what Bourdieu calls 'the game of art as art' (Bourdieu 1998:354), a game of power over what legitimates pop as pop and what is of worth within the symbolic economies of the pop cultural field. Those who play the most important roles in this game are the 'legitimate speakers' (Bourdieu 1990). They are legitimated by their social positioning in the pop cultural field and confirm this legitimation with the negotiation of 'aesthetic dispositions'.

Therefore although many individuals perceive themselves as autonomous individuals, their perception of complete autonomy is an ideological myth,
due to the levels of influence of the legitimate speakers within their relative social spheres. It is the interplay between the notions of individual autonomy and the ability to choose from the range of aesthetic options available that provides many participants with a sense of self-identity and group identification within dance culture. However this all takes place not in a vacuum, but within an environment shaped and influenced by peer groups, other actors present, artists, DJs promoters and the media, both within dance culture and wider society. The processes of identity development and presentation are conducted through negotiating an authentic and legitimate character within the contextual and logistical constraints of individual bodies and the socio-cultural forces acting upon them.

7.3 Dress and visual performance

Dress and bodily adornment are the most immediate and visual elements of individual identity performance. At their most superficial level they constitute a representation of the extent to which people belong and fit within specific social settings, their awareness of dress etiquette and their ability to apply cultural knowledge in the process of identity performance and presentation. As demonstrated through the earlier consideration of dress codes, conventions of presentation can form a key determinant in club admissions policies. Whilst imposed presentational conventions are considered as trivial and undesired by many, all clubs have some form of presentational conventions to which those attending conform to greater or lesser degrees. Such conventions of presentation (and therefore performance) facilitate levels of cohesion within club environments as others are interpreted as possessing similar levels of shared cultural knowledge that has been interpreted with similar outcomes. As Goffman (1969: 1) comments:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him ... Although some of this information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individual helps define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what others may expect of him.
Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him.

Methods of visual presentation are a key means of expressing and constructing identity, as they are predominantly the most immediate and obvious distinguishing factors used by individuals to judge and assess others in terms of who they are and how they perceive themselves. The clothes worn by individuals are their shell and armour to the outside world, but more significantly they reveal much about the role they are adopting and the identity they are portraying at any given time (Kaiser 1990). Role adoption is neither entirely autonomous nor objective, it is subjective and contextually based, “the part one individual plays is tailored to the parts played by others present” (Goffman 1969: ix).

The interpretation of and response to presentations of self through role performance and adoption, it must be noted, are also highly subjective as indicated by symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969). “From a symbolic interactionist perspective, successful communication is not guaranteed but depends on how clearly a message is sent and how accurately those receiving it identify, interpret and negotiate the intended symbolic meanings” (Winge 2003: 124). It is the location of individual signs within wider collages of signs and their contextual situation that create, convey and sustain meanings and portrayals of individual identity; as signs are embodied with varying meaning, significance, cultural relevance and worth depending on their placement within wider codes of understanding and perception (Hall 1997).

It is of relevance to note how particular scenes within dance music culture have a greater propensity for certain fashion styles. This relates to taste cultures (aesthetic preferences), media influence and different participant perceptions of self and others and the extent to which they wish to assert individuality or embrace group identity within the social spheres and experiential fields they encounter. Contrary to many ‘spectacular’ subcultures of the past, much of the clothing worn by dance culture participants ‘on the streets’ is not unique, often constituting a strategic
bicolage of contemporary and past clothing styles. Although much of the clothing worn by participants has come to reflect (and is often reflected in) mainstream fashion, the adoption of the clothing styles of other niche youth cultures is also prevalent within scenes which have a stronger underground ideology and anti-mainstream discourse. For example there are numerous parallels between the visual identities of many participants in drum and bass culture and the dress of other youth cultures such as skateboarders, surfers and BMXers. Within these respective cultural scenes baggy jeans and hooded tops are shared styles, but they are also prevalent in other musically based youth cultures such as grunge, nu metal and hip-hop. This illustrates the intertextual nature of these garments across a number of youth cultures, which interestingly all possess an air of the more edgy and darker aspects of contemporary society (discourses which are less mainstream or less accepted within mainstream society).

It emerges from my research that it is the individuals who often perceive themselves as further from the mainstream of high street fashion retailers and the top 40 radio friendly pop music which provides their soundtrack who adopt more distinctive dress patterns. As I have previously noted the majority of clubbers seek to distance themselves from the monolithic entity that is the mainstream and the lowest common denominator products of the pop culture industries. Through the wearing of articles such as the hooded top and baggy jeans they visibly demonstrate they are not part of something common and undifferentiated (the mainstream) but are more unique (ideologically). Such articles are often produced by less widely available and distributed brands, associated with skateboarding and surfing and often only available through specialist outlets. Therefore like the music they listen to, clubbers’ clothes are often also less accessible and more specialist, which makes them (ideologically) more exclusive. In this case the discourse of the culture is personified in the clothing worn by the participants.

The wearing of hoods has various connotations within cultural discourses; it signifies a desire to cover something up and to protect the wearer of the hood. Such interpretations give rise to further suggestions that the wearer
has something to hide or protect, that they wish to create a barrier to their identity and that they seek to limit their interactions with the outside world. There is also a certain mysticism (whether it be good or evil) surrounding hooded characters and wizards, monks and the Grim Reaper are all associated with wearing hooded clothing. Hooded costumes are also associated with ceremonies, constituting part of ceremonial gowns and ritualised clothing. Such associations are not necessarily intentionally invoked through the presentation of self in such a manner but at a more subconscious level the symbolic value of certain articles of clothing play an undeniable role in motivating certain individuals towards such methods of identity presentation. Indeed, although I often wear hooded tops, it was not until I began this thesis that I considered the potential symbolic significance of this item of clothing or what it potentially represents. However I, like many others, am conscious of the brands I wear and choose to associate myself with less mainstream brands, such as surfing and skateboarding labels, rather than general sports wear brands. I certainly make a conscious decision that I wish to be identified with certain brands and not with others, as these reflect my identity as being less conventional.

The dress and fashion elements unique to dance music culture tend to only be displayed by certain dance cultures, highly visible within specific club environments although generally invisible on the street; hence the club or event is the site of performance. Unlike previous youth cultures the clothing adopted by clubbers is generally less conspicuous. This provides the participants with an element of anonymity as a clubber when on the streets of everyday life. Anonymity is a prevalent, although often covert discourse within dance culture, applicable to life both on the dance floor and on the streets, thus enabling participants to engage in a variety of identities and hence gain (and more importantly often, feel) acceptance within a variety of settings without impacting on one another. Indeed this issue is central to the postmodern condition that individuals perform multiple identities within their lives and demonstrates the postmodern nature of this youth culture (Rojek 2005).
This also relates to audience interpretation, as Kaiser (1990: 200) comments:

> When we dress, we also *address* some audience whose responses are essential to the establishment of our ideas about ourselves (Stone, 1965). In Stone’s terms we receive reviews from our audiences, which come in the form of social feedback as well as challenges to develop new *programs* (appearances).

The contexts in which people participate in dance culture (and hence the audiences to which they perform) provide a source and feedback mechanism for ongoing identity development; both inspiring and redirecting approaches to role performance. Therefore although many of the individuals I spoke to in my research found many of the most elaborate approaches to role performance quite entertaining, it is the feedback and response from the intended audience that is of significance to these individuals. It is the varying contexts of participation and the inspiration gained from such experiential consumption that leads individuals to certain approaches to self-presentation. The approaches greeted with the highest degrees of acceptance and approval amongst the audience and those leading to the individuals most positive experiences of clubbing are those most likely to be continued, whilst role performances that have lead to participants feeling out of place, uncomfortable or unaccepted are those most likely to be amended in the future.

The wearing of different clothing articles to create looks and styles demonstrates how dance events are sites of visual performance, which both enable and facilitate role performance. Through selecting specific items of clothing participants both indicate to others how they perceive themselves and express their affiliation to particular musical genres, through embracing their stylistic aesthetics. As Kaiser (1990: 193) comments “being cast in a role [or casting oneself into a role] is facilitated by ‘looking the part’ and dressing in a costume that others have come to expect of a person in that role”. The clothes provide the visual props for participants to engage in what they and others deem to constitute authentic performances and desirable identities.
Thus when individuals dress up for clubbing and dance events it entails a personal and social negotiation process, contemplating the compatibility of their role for the performance stage. The individual must decide on whether their costume enables them to portray themselves as legitimate and therefore authentic members of their selected social grouping within a given performance setting. The legitimacy and hence the authenticity of role performance is therefore, as mentioned earlier, also dependent upon the stage of performance. Much as the costume for a pantomime fairy would differ from the costume of an operatic fairy, so too must clubbers present themselves differently to be seen as legitimate upon different stages, as symbolic interactionism dictates. It is the context in which clothing is worn that is as relevant as the clothing itself to role credibility within a given performance setting.

As much as "appearances convince others about who we are" they also "render credibility to behaviour" (Kaiser 1990: 196). An extension of this hypothesis is that clothing facilitates the adoption of alternative behavioural norms and values, which although different to an individuals' everyday conduct, are none the less credible when appropriately contextualised. Hence when at a football match and wearing team colours, shouting and chanting is more credible than if the same participant was dressed in a shirt and tie, it has a greater resonance of authenticity. Likewise wearing brightly coloured (day glow) clothes at a trance or hard house event gives greater credibility and hence acceptance to someone acting extrovertly, as that is what many people would expect from someone in such attire. They are likely to be openly embraced and positively received within such an environment, serving as confirmation that the role performance is appropriate and authentic. Conversely if someone was to dress and act in such a manner at a drum and bass club they would probably encounter negative, hostile or indifferent reactions as such a role is inappropriate to the etiquette in the context of drum and bass clubs.

In this section I have illustrated how dance environments constitute the sites for the performance of different roles for participants, places where identity is carefully constructed through dress and behaviour to portray and
facilitate the adoption and performance of roles. Roles provide a cathartic release from the day-to-day lives of participants, enabling them to dress and act differently whilst facilitating social acceptance, credibility and authenticity within given contexts (stages). Dance environments facilitate the visual and physical expression of roles which are incompatible with other social contexts due to their alternative performance boundaries. However it is only through understanding the performance and role etiquette surrounding dance cultures and individual club events that participants are able to fully utilise and benefit from the potential freedoms of role performances facilitated by different environments, through selecting the stages appropriate to their character or selecting the character appropriate to the stages on which they wish to audition and become established actors.

7.4 Contexts of participation
Context is central to interpretation, to meaning, to identity and therefore to understanding dance culture. Out of context and in alternative contexts cultural practices and objects can acquire entirely new meanings and evoke differing interpretations and responses which effect and reflect upon notions of self-image, perception of others and critically identity (Baldwin et al 2004). Without a context in which to situate actions they become meaningless. This next section now considers the role of contexts of participation and the contextualisation of participation in dance culture.

Participation in dance music culture can mean engaging with a whole range of activities and thus a variety of contexts. It is often the case that initial involvement comes from simply listening to the various strains of music, particularly for those too young to gain entry to clubs. For others attending a club or taking a pill (ecstasy) for the first time is the catalyst for further enduring involvement. Peer group influence is also a common factor initiating participation in dance music culture. However, besides the two consumption activities most commonly associated with dance music culture (attending dance events and taking drugs), many participants engage in many other activities, which are essentially fundamental to the
considering identity, performance and space

maintenance and progression of dance culture and to their notion of identity.

Just as in rock and other forms of guitar-based music where many followers aspire to play the guitar, in dance culture many aspire to play the decks and become DJs. Two aspects drive this trend; firstly the higher status attributed to DJs in dance culture and secondly clubbers wishing to become more deeply involved in the culture. Many clubbers progress to bedroom DJing, whilst some progress to club DJing, producing dance music and also organising and promoting club nights. All these activities have played a pivotal role in developing rave/dance music culture since its initial conception (hence their cultural significance). Such levels of individual involvement are also a major reason for enduring involvement with this culture way beyond traditional definitions of youth. Indeed Pete Tong, cited as the most powerful and influential person in UK dance culture in Mixmag (Anon 2005b), is forty-five and many other big name DJs are also in their forties. It is largely their knowledge of dance music and their role in editing and sharing music that provides them with continued credibility and status.

The processes and effects of disseminating cultural knowledge cannot be underestimated in musically based cultures. As Ebare (2004) states, “music sharing practices traditionally constitute a locus for negotiations of meaning and identity among music fans”. The sharing of views, opinions and knowledge of music constitute a key element of identity development and expression in musical cultures, in addition to the avenues through which the processes of sharing music occur. Sharing knowledge of music may be manifested in several ways, operating on various hierarchical levels, with those associated with production being attributed with higher status than those concerned with consumption (see Figure 7.1 below). Discussing the music at a particular event or the style of a DJ; styles of music and genres; recent and classic releases within genres; and releases of particular artists is one means of sharing knowledge of music. Performing; producing and distributing mix tape; DJing at house parties; DJing in clubs; DJing on the radio and posting DJ sets on the internet demonstrate greater ability to share music. Producing; making tracks for
personal pleasure; making tracks to form sets; posting tracks on the internet and releasing tracks on labels demonstrate artistic ability and access to cultural networks. Facilitating; organising parties; putting together club nights and booking high profile DJs also consolidate musical knowledge and social networks. These various manifestations of music sharing constitute a key cultural exchange process, enabling an expression of personal identity through the acts themselves, whilst providing a feedback mechanism for identity construction through ascertaining the value and cultural worth of individual knowledge of musical texts within wider contexts.

Figure 7.1: Continuum of production and consumption practices.

Within and tied to the various manifestations of music sharing are a variety of cultural signifiers and power relations related to degrees of production and consumption, the passivity or activity involved in consuming, relating to, creating and sharing music. Acts of production are central to capitalist systems and to cultural progression, as they create the objects desire, inspiration and discussion within society and they provoke people to think about, respond to and interact with the discourses of life in new and different ways. It is for this reason that acts such as DJing and producing
music occupy higher status within dance culture, as they entail a more active and involved role in creating and sharing music and therefore in shaping the cultural landscape. Tied to this then is the context in which people DJ or produce music, for this is an active demonstration of their overall cultural importance, the position and the platform on which they perform is indicative of their status within wider dance culture. It is the credibility of the contexts of individuals’ performances within the wider cultural field that determines the credibility of the actors and the strength of their identity.

Pete Tong for example hosts the most popular dance radio show in the UK, and possibly the world with an audience of "150 million people" worldwide listening to The Essential Selection (Anon 2005b). He has been hosting this show since 1991 at peak listening time on Friday evening. Furthermore he DJs at the most prestigious clubs around the world and is an A&R (artist and repertoire) man for London Records, with responsibility for finding and developing new artists. In his A&R role he has shaped the careers of many artists and signed many acts and individuals who have progressed to become major stars. Such is the status of Pete Tong that he has also acted as a musical consultant for several major films including The Beach, Human Traffic and 24 Hour Party People. Pete Tong also writes a regular column in Mixmag identifying his 'essential' albums, singles, mixes and events of the month, which also demonstrates how the media support this DJ. The various contexts in which this individual is involved in dance culture and the status and credibility associated with these contexts, has positioned him as the most powerful person in UK dance culture.

As outlined above there are a myriad of processes through which participants in dance cultures share musical knowledge. A key reason for participants seeking to engage in a greater diversity of communication processes and to seek more high profile communication opportunities is to demonstrate their knowledge of and affiliation to musical genres. Whilst some people are simply 'into' particular musical genres others attempt to personify their allegiance through dress, attitude, lifestyle and activities (activities such as DJing, producing, reading the media, attending certain
clubs, organising events, booking DJs and seeing DJs). To a degree the majority of participants personify their allegiance to genres when out clubbing, however the extent to which they engage in other activities to personify their allegiance is far more varied. While many are content with going clubbing and talking about music, others become far more deeply involved, buying records, mixing, producing music and organising events.

All of the above activities help position individuals' identity in relation to dance culture whether this is at a personal, local, regional, national or international level. They provide individuals with numerous means of expressing their interest in, allegiance to and understanding of music and their and other people's reaction to it. They provide more tangible evidence of levels and competency of participation in what is essentially an intangible sphere of production and consumption. Ultimately these processes also empower individuals through enabling them to communicate their identities to others in one of the most culturally relevant means: music.

### 7.5 What is in a name?

This section will now address the issue of naming and labelling within dance culture. Although there is a general fascination with the labelling of 'others' and musical styles within dance culture it emerges that there is a reluctance in post-modern society to be stereotyped or classified:

Back in 1964 you were a Mod or a Rocker. Today, you're *into* Techno, Ragga or Acid Jazz. It's the difference between swimming and sticking your foot in the pool to check out the temperature - an exploratory dalliance versus immersion and commitment (Polhemus 1997: 131).

Although I would agree with Polhemus, that many dance music participants do not want to be labelled and pigeonholed, I would contend that this does not represent a lack of commitment to or cultural immersion in contemporary youth cultures. A common theme in studies of youth culture is the unwillingness of participants in various youth cultures to label themselves as a raver, a clubber, a crusty and so on (Muggleton 2000).
There is a resistance to categorisations of self, whereby participants often differentiate themselves through the categorisation of others, the symbolic representation of what they are not. Although this is also often true of participants in dance culture, in that people rarely define themselves as clubbers, the classification of musical tastes and spheres of engagement within club culture are a different matter. Labelling in terms of scenes, genres and others is of great significance to notions of self-identity and definition of taste.

The reluctance to label and pigeonhole oneself is part of the postmodern condition in which everyone is an individual, an autonomous ongoing creative project, picking and selecting elements of contemporary and past cultural artefacts, texts and discourses within which they find appeal. It is the diversity of cultural influences contributing to the formation of identity which provides individuals with the status of being an independent and respected individual. The wider the range of life experiences, the greater the number of cultural spheres engaged with, the more whole and complete a person is perceived to be. It is for this reason that many clubbers do not label themselves as ‘a clubber’, because they are far more than simply a clubber, it is a part of their life, but for the majority it is not their entire life or their profession and therefore although they may consider clubbing to be highly influential in their life, it is merely one aspect of their identity.

As mentioned above it is the labelling in terms of scenes, genres and others that is most common within dance culture. Being a musically orientated culture there is a fascination and significant amount of attention attributed to the classification of musical styles. Beyond the basic classification of genres such as house, drum and bass, trance, techno and hardcore there exist a plethora of subgenres and sub-subgenres. Examples of subgenres within drum and bass for example are jump up, tech step, liquid and thrash, which all relate to differing styles of drum and bass predominated by certain rhythmic and musical aesthetics. However, as with the broader classifications of house and techno, a degree of crossover exists between many subgenres, grey areas, which depending on perceptions may be classified as one subgenre or another. Furthermore participants also
articulate their tastes in terms of the DJs they listen to, the events they attend, their favourite artists and record labels.

These classifications serve a number of purposes for participants; to describe and articulate their specific tastes, differentiating between the musical aesthetics which do and do not appeal to them; to demonstrate their grasp and comprehension of genres and hence their cultural knowledge; to exclude others who do not have the same level of cultural knowledge and most importantly to authenticate musical styles. These forms of labelling are therefore critical to the identities of clubbers as what they are ‘into’ is part of what and who they are. As Thornton (1995) identified, club cultures are largely taste cultures, although her work does not attribute attention to the generation and application of generic labels, they most certainly provide a vehicle for conveying and assessing musical tastes. The labelling and definition of musical preferences are central to defining clubbers’ self-identities and their perception and identification of others. As Ebare (2004) comments;

Genre categorizations ... authenticate a work (a band, or a song) within a distinct cultural space. Without a genre label, a work exists in a limbo–like state in what Gunn proposes to call an "antigeneric moment" ... There, the work is strange, marginally understood, and ... marginally saleable at best .... Genre can be very territorial because of the pronounced degree to which youth self–concepts are tied up in identifying with genres or subcultures ... the "antigeneric moment," seen in this way, is something of a collective identity crisis that calls for resolution, so that music fans can again make sense of their world, and themselves.

The labelling of genres and subgenres therefore plays a key role in the authentication of music and as it progresses, changes and evolves so too must the terms to describe it. Generic classifications serve to carve out a cultural space for musical styles both physically and within the mindset of individuals and they provide individuals with a means of communicating their preferences and differentiating their tastes, constituting a key area of identity negotiation. In addition labels take on new meanings over time as genres and subgenres evolve and mutate; some labels become obsolete,
whilst others become less appropriate to the musical aesthetics to which they relate. This ongoing process necessitates the development of ever more specific niche labels to more explicitly define the identities of participants through their musical tastes, whilst simultaneously raising the status of those who understand and apply the latest generic terms and protect such knowledge from wide scale distribution.

Also at play here is the issue of cultural exclusivity whereby the classification of new subgenres reduces their perceived accessibility. The limited understanding of these classifications for 'outsiders' can make penetration and membership of highly specific generic scenes more elusive and therefore more exclusive and with exclusivity comes higher cultural status. Therefore individuals, in particular journalists, producers and DJs, can go to great lengths to define and differentiate their musical tastes through the concoction of new generic classifications or through stating that their style is beyond current generic classifications. When DJs with particular styles which do not fit current generic classifications emerge, someone (often within the media or involved in the promotion of a particular DJ), concocts a term to identify and distinguish that style. People trying to create a more sophisticated and elevated cultural position will also go to great lengths to describe, define and differentiate their musical tastes and preferences through references to artists, DJs, record labels and genres. Labelling of subgenres forms a part of interaction management between clubbers facilitating specific approaches to identity presentation. As previously mentioned above with regards to music sharing, the labelling of genres is key to the processes of identity presentation and assessment of others.

The continual emergence of genres and subgenres is also a demonstration of the evolution of music, a labelling of the dynamics of change, which enforces notions of cultural progression. Within western post-modern society change is hailed as progress, however authenticity is seen as the key to cultural integrity. Thus whilst cultures must always relate to their past and their heritage as a source of authenticity, there remains the ever-present pressure to progress and to build upon past achievements. In the
culture industries authenticity is key to credibility and with constant pressure to develop new cultural commodities there is a continual process of negotiation (Hesmondhalgh 2002). Such process must legitimate cultural texts and artefacts, largely by proving their relevance and authenticity.

Generic and particularly sub generic classifications serve to authenticate the achievements and progression of dance cultures. As previously mentioned authenticity is key to cultural success, linked as it is with notions of origins and originality. Entwined in these issues is the contextualisation of cultural products, which is also central to their reception, endorsement, popularity and credibility. The continual emergence of new generic classifications serves to highlight the evolving and progressive nature of dance cultures, whilst situating these changes within a generic framework that individuals can relate to. Without being contextualised through generic classifications new approaches and styles of musical production simply exist as alternative, novel approaches, rather than occupying a distinct cultural space (Ebare 2004).

The development of sub genres authenticates musical styles through providing them with an identifiable label and through applying alternative prefixes to an established genre they are embellished with a notion of origin, whilst also differentiating them from the genre that spawned them. For example a myriad of subgenres has evolved from house music such as tribal house, deep house, handbag house, tech house, bassline house, funky house and vocal house. The alternative prefixes demonstrate the individuality of these styles, acting as a narrative of the development of house music, whilst simultaneously carving out a cultural space for them in which they gain a greater degree of autonomy from their parent genre facilitating further development and creativity.

Generic labels provide another point of reference for clubbers to communicate their identity and demonstrate their understanding of the territorial negotiations of music definition. They provide a vehicle for conveying tastes and communication between clubbers, whilst also serving
as a means of cultural distinction and differentiation. The key within all of this is the legitimisation of musical styles through contextualising them as authentic in both their originality and their origins. Such legitimisation serves to mark out cultural spaces for styles to grow and develop which prevents dance culture from stagnating through lack of innovation and progression. Dance genres and subgenres serve as points of reference and identification to the people that support them, whilst their situation in the context of past and present musical styles, provides them with a greater sense of history and authenticity.

7.6 Construction, commodification and conventions of place
Space and place have emerged in this thesis as key to cultural creativity and development of participant identities in dance music. Places can be claimed, converted, and remodelled; physically, culturally and socially (Aitchison et al 2000) and in dance music clubs and events are the places where this culture lives and evolves, the sites where its norms and values are explored, developed, practiced and refined. Within these spaces cultural identities are formed and refined, where identification and juxtaposition are facilitated and reflected. Also of significance are the processes and outcomes of the acquisition, development and transformation of such places, which reveal much about this niche culture. Commenting on the relevance of this issue in the analysis of subcultures Gelder (1997: 315) comments, "the emphasis on transformation allows us to compare subcultural relations to place with subcultural relations to style ... insofar as both provide significant forums through which subcultural identity is evoked".

Since dance culture first emerged, a range of forces have opposed its continuation and development, primarily the police, government and mainstream media. As a result of these forces dance culture had to win over spaces within towns and cities in order to stage events, developing networks of clubs and venues willing to stage dance events despite various threats and hostilities (Bennett 2000). There is always a sense of loss when a venue popularly associated with hosting dance events is sold off for conversion to an alternative use. Likewise there is a renewed sense of
purpose and an increased impetus for participation when a new venue opens or an existing venue is refurbished. This cultural process of acquiring spaces and then reconstructing them as dance environments has led many participants to develop a strong territorial affiliation with many sites which regularly host events and there is a sense that such places exist outside of the conventional night time entertainment industry.

As a result of the alternative norms and values associated with dance events there is a significant degree of venue association within dance culture, as just as other commodified spaces these are places where “power, identity, meaning and behaviour are constructed, negotiated and renegotiated according to socio-cultural dynamics” (Aitchison and Reeves 1998: 51). Certain venues are associated with particular activities and social groupings, which in turn have their own associated codes of interactions. The conventions of venues, as considered previously, are key to the identity constructions and the role performances facilitated by them, which in turn contribute to the social construction of individual spaces. The construction of clubbing spaces as locations of performance is largely due to the various audiences within these spaces and the interaction between these audiences and the performers. Indeed every clubber is simultaneously a member of the audience and a performer. This relationship provides clubs with an exciting dynamic and it is the nature in which such relationships are interpreted that provides a significant amount of the attraction for individual clubbers attending specific events. This dynamic between the audiences and the performers means that no two events are the same as the audiences and performers are always different in terms of their composition and spacings within the clubbing environment. However the nature of the performances that take place within any given venue and the responses of the audience to such activities have a profound effect on the clubbers’ perceptions of the venues and therefore venue associations have a very powerful effect on determining the appeal and hence the success of club nights.

Dance spaces are essentially liminal spaces for they are spaces of transformation and transition where individuals immerse themselves in
alternative identities through the performance of alternative roles. Dance spaces are socially constructed as neither within or completely outside of day-to-day norms and conventions. As Tempest and Starkey (2004: 507) comment, "liminality refers to the condition of being 'betwixt and between', of existing at the limits of existing structures". Liminality also refers to a period of transition, between one life stage and another – part of the rites of passage within tribal societies when boys become men, where a previous identity dissolves and a new identity is formed (Van Gennep 1960). The intangibility of dance experiences also contributes to their liminal status, as they constitute sites of experiential consumption where escapism is also a significant driver, as Preston-Whyte (2004: 350) comments:

Liminal spaces are intangible, elusive and obscure. They lie in a limbo like space often beyond normal social and cultural constraints. In these spaces can be found brief moments of freedom and escape from the daily grind of social responsibilities.

Liminality and the transportation into liminal zones is also associated with the crossing of thresholds, material, physical and psychological; this process of threshold negotiation and crossing can also lead to a sense of "heightened sensitivity or deeper awareness of the special qualities of the space" (Preston-Whyte 2004: 351).

Dance events are places that exist within yet outside existing social structures, where alternative norms and values hold sway and everyday identities become largely invisible (and irrelevant) in the eyes of others. Everyday indicators of status and stature become largely obsolete in the hyper reality of the club environment. Dance events are embedded with cultural connotations and expectations, associated with abandoning the realities of the outside world, both socially and physically, entering into a world of beingness and nothingness. When clubbers pass the threshold of the club or event they are accepted into the clubbing tribe, facilitating a heightened sensitivity to and awareness of the special qualities of the dance club.
For participants dance clubs create a strong sense of being outside of conventional socio-cultural norms and values. Not only do externally imposed day-to-day patterns of interaction and behavior give way to alternative approaches to role performance and management, but these roles are also significantly different to those adopted by many participants in other nightclub contexts. Socializing for the sake of socializing, for the pleasure of interaction is an often cited appeal of dance clubs. Whereas in many other social settings one would not strike up a conversation with a passing stranger in a corridor, in toilets or whilst at the bar, this is the norm for many at dance events. Although the depth of such interactions are typically shallow and related to the event itself, it is the act of communicating and expressing that is often the motivation for such actions. Whilst most interactions with strangers are geared towards specific outcomes such as establishing directions or networking, there are generally no such pressures upon clubbing interactions, they are merely to express experiences of the event and other clubbing experiences. It is only when interaction is more enduring that conversations may turn to more personal matters.

The threat and acceptance of violence in dance clubs is a significant factor in the more liberated patterns of sociality and expression within such environments. Amongst the majority of clubbers there exists the view that there is no space for violence in dance clubs and those who instigate it are distinctly lacking in their understanding of the ethos of such places. A major influence on behaviour and conduct in other nighttime entertainment settings such as pubs and mainstream clubs is the threat (real and perceived) of violence, perhaps resulting from a mere look or one’s appearance. This is a significant factor that differentiates dance clubs from the mainstream that, in general, there is no such need to prove physical strength through violence and the intimidation of others. The relative absence of the threat of violence within dance clubs is pivotal to the heightened sociality of clubs. Whereas in other environments acting abnormally places individuals in a vulnerable position and may provoke a violent reaction, there is a general absence of such threats within dance clubs.
In terms of personal identity, the relevance of occupation (something of great significance to social identity) in clubbing contexts is minimal. Therefore regardless of whether you are a labourer or a lecturer, a plumber or a podiatrist it has very little bearing on social interactions within dance clubs. This enables you to transcend the barriers to social interaction so prevalent in the wider social world, which by and large restrict interactions between disparate individuals. Within the club such individuals dance side by side as equals, their every day social status irrelevant to the clubbing context. Indeed both my respondents and I have encountered many individuals from a wide range of occupational backgrounds such as teachers, trades people, accountants and administrators at dance music events.

There is a presumption at dance events that those who have located and negotiated the threshold of the door are accepted in and more importantly are accepting of the performance that constitutes the dance event; that they are accepting of and open to the heightened expression and alternative sociality of the club; they are open to the experiences that it will bring and positively embrace them; they accept the roles that others play and also accept their own role in creating the party; they are not mere consumers but active participants (actors) in the performance process – dancing and interacting to create the atmosphere of the event. Individuals’ immersion in such spaces also vary from clubber to clubber and event to event. Whilst larger events may be associated with more hedonistic activities facilitated by a greater degree of anonymity within the clubbing crowd, smaller scale events are less likely to evoke such expectations. As I have previously outlined, the role of others is key within dance experiences and within the mass of dancing bodies clubbers become relatively anonymous and less self-conscious. However, when numbers and crowd density is much lower, prospects of anonymity are diminished creating more restrained behavior, which itself demonstrates that there is self discipline and self-monitoring even within these liminal spaces, for although they exist outside of established social structures, they are nonetheless influenced by them.
The temporary staging of dance events also enhances their liminal nature. As they exist for a fixed duration after which point they are no more, this provides them with a greater sense of being in the moment because after the event has passed it can never be experienced again. The intangible and temporary nature of dance events means they are not permanent institutions, but sites of fleeting experiential opportunities where individuals congregate for the performance and then return to their everyday existences. They are not part of everyday life, but distinct temporal zones, they come into being for finite periods as spaces are constructed and commodified, then dissolve to be recreated at later dates for new performances.

Another way in which clubs can be described as liminal spaces relates to how individuals interact within them. There is little likelihood that such interactions within clubbing environments will impact upon life in the outside world and the chances are that family and work colleagues will not hear about such events and therefore their influence on others’ judgements and perceptions beyond clubbing circles are limited. The nature of clubbing interactions shares many similarities with the types of social interactions and fleeting relationships experienced by travellers and backpackers, which O’Rielly (2005: 21) considers provide:

- a chance to develop and test out narratives of self, identity and personal history that will be used in different contexts on the return home ...’ single serving friendships’ are important for testing out new identities, because there are no long-term ramifications unless both parties actively pursue the relationship beyond the end of the trip.

Likewise the nature of clubbing interactions and relationships also provide a similar arena for experimenting with alternative narratives and means of presenting the self, a forum for testing social stimuli and response processes, which can then be applied (where appropriate) beyond the contexts of the clubbing environment. It is the existence of the liminal spaces which are the dance clubs which facilitate these processes.
There are several parallels between the worlds experienced by clubbers and travellers in terms of the development of identity and the liminal properties which spaces encountered by both possess. Many travellers set out on a journey likened to a process of self-development and exploration, a quest for alternative worlds, where social conventions and notions of authenticity are redefined in innumerable ways (O’Rielly 2005, Davidson 2005). Just as knowledge of the social conventions of other cultures engenders greater awareness of, for example, the British or English cultural attitudes, which many people do not question without experiencing alternative cultures, so to do the social interactions and conventions of clubs also open participants’ awareness of alternative patterns and modes of social interaction. Indeed many clubbers comment that their clubbing experiences have increased their confidence and the openness of their social interactions with friends and family, making it acceptable to be more emotionally expressive.

7.7 Summary
This chapter has brought together the key findings of this thesis using the performance metaphor and the concept of liminality in the exploration of participant identities, contexts of participation and the socio-cultural construction of dance music spaces. Within the first section (7.2) I revealed how dance spaces enable participants to explore and develop multiple identities through the performances they partake in within these environments and how different spaces acquire alternative performance parameters according to the other ‘actors’, ‘audiences’ and ‘directors’ involved in their construction. Building on these discussions of identity and performance I then considered the role of dress in visual performances and the identities that participants play out within different spaces and how contexts of participation provide feedback on various approaches to role performance (7.3). It was revealed how dress not only contributes to feelings of cohesion, but also “renders credibility to [individuals] behaviour” within clubbing spaces (Kaiser 1990: 196).

The next section of this chapter (7.4) considered the influence of contexts of participation on participant identities and cultural standing within dance culture. There I considered how the diversity of opportunities for cultural
involvement such as DJing, promoting events and producing music can lead to enduring involvement with dance culture far beyond the ‘traditional’ parameters of youth. Such activities also provide participants with a greater sense of influence over its cultural progression through their active role in creating and disseminating cultural texts and knowledge. Linked to processes of knowledge dissemination, section 7.5 considered the politics and implications of naming within dance culture in terms of the categorisation of others and of musical styles. Here it was argued that there is a reluctance amongst participants to be labelled in terms of their identity and instead they seek all manner of symbolic markers which they use to construct their identities. In particular the classification and reference to genres was found to be a common way of conveying cultural knowledge, whilst simultaneously authenticating musical styles.

The final section of this chapter (7.6) then explored the issues surrounding the construction, commodification and conventions of dance music spaces, revealing how they are socially constructed as liminal spaces. They exist within yet outside of conventional social structures, where norms and values alternative to those of the everyday world can be and are embraced, enabling experimentation with and performance of alternative roles, which would not be accepted within many other cultural contexts. Just as a bikini would not be acceptable dress for the street, but would be on a beach, many approaches to role performance which are not acceptable in other places are embraced within dance clubs. They provide sites for expression and development, escapism and interaction, hedonism and heightened awareness and it is up to the individual participants how they wish to experience individual events and the role/s they select and perform in the liminal spaces that dance events simultaneously create and occupy.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter draws together the key elements of the thesis; considers the contribution it makes to the body of knowledge in leisure studies; outlines how it has met the aims and objectives established in chapter one; reflects upon the research process and considers its implications for leisure studies research and cognate areas. Through reflecting on the journey I have taken in completing this research I will also consider avenues for future research in the light of the research outcomes and processes.

In the spirit of qualitative enquiry this chapter is not intended to provide definitive conclusions. Instead; informed by the tenets of emergent design this study, “rather than being designed around a set of preconceptions and assumptions”, has been “an iterative progression of knowledge gathering and interpretation, that has evolved throughout” (Westwood 2004: 347). With the intention of contributing to the understanding of dance culture by shifting the focus of enquiry to new topics and theoretical concepts, this chapter constitutes more of a progress report than a conclusion, a bridge leading to further avenues for research within leisure and events studies. What is clear is that this has been a journey of discovery in terms of the construction of dance culture and the potential methods available in researching cultural activities. It has involved the implementation of research methods from a variety of disciplines and as the study has evolved so too has its methodology. Whilst I initially focused on methods such as participant observation, interviews, focus groups and Internet research, the study eventually evolved into an autoethnographic project in which discourse analysis also played an important role. Thus what began as a rather straightforward qualitative enquiry has evolved into a multi-disciplinary investigation into the world of clubbing and its participants.
8.2 The study's key contributions

This study has contributed to the understanding of dance culture and clubbing by building on the work of other scholars within this area particularly Thornton (1995) (whose seminal text has been frequently cited throughout this thesis), Malbon (1999) and Jackson (2004). This study has furthered the knowledge base by shifting the focus onto new topic areas (clubbers' preferences, motivations and the dance music media) and concepts (particularly in its application of the performance metaphor and the concept of liminality), whilst also utilising methodologies which have received little attention in studies of dance music and clubbing (notably ethnography, auto ethnography, internet research and discourse analysis).

The investigation, whilst accepting the view of Thornton (1995) and others such as Bennett (2000) that describing dance culture as a subculture is only of limited value, has sought to apply new theoretical concepts such as the performance metaphor and the concept of liminality to the study of dance culture in order to enrich our understanding of the area. It has also explored the religious elements of dance culture, with trips to major events being seen by many participants as the modern day equivalent of pilgrimages. Attendance at major events shares several parallels with pilgrimages in terms of travelling long distances (in comparison to many other leisure activities), investment of financial and emotional resources and the expectations that accompany such investments. Participants in this study confirmed that there were immense expectations associated with major events, developed through the emotional attachment that they had with dance culture and through the media’s portrayal of events which heightened their cultural significance.

These religious aspects of dance culture were also echoed in the ways that participants were akin to worshippers congregating and celebrating at the end of their journeys, participating in collective worship and witnessing the spectacle of the events and the collective practices that took place there. I
would also argue that the visual spectacle and the role of crowds reveal it was more than simply a witnessing of events, but that the social nature of consumption that also added further meaning for participants. Thus, sharing such experiences with friends and forming new friendship bonds within the events emerge as a major appeal of large scale events. Moreover analysis of the clubbers’ motivations revealed that much of their participation related in one way or another to issues of identity development, performance and self fulfilment. At the same time the travel aspects often associated with dance events and the liminality of dance environments create opportunities for participants to develop alternative roles which differ from those of their everyday life. Just like the experiences of travellers and tourists, being away from normal places of habitation enabled the clubbers to perform roles often distinctly different to those of their everyday lives.

Whilst some forms of experiential consumption are solitary pleasures, dance events gain much of their power and meaning from the congregation of people, with numbers not only constituting a physical measure of cultural significance, but also contributing to processes of amplification and the sense of liminality attributed to them. As in large scale worship the presence of many others dancing and cheering contributes to the feelings of community associated with dance music experiences and particularly to the sense of flux between being inside and outside oneself and the liminality encountered by many whilst dancing. There are obvious religious parallels here too, as Harris (2005: 57) comments, “religiosity involves becoming aware of a special part of life, the sacred realm, where the most important and deeply shared values apply, and where the mundane everyday worries and limits are left behind”. For many participants a common theme was that dance events provide a means of escape from the everyday world into an alternative reality, where the liminal qualities of the spaces facilitate a heightened sense of being in the moment. The act of collectively gazing on, whilst simultaneously contributing to the spectacle (which constantly evolved and morphed as the event unfolded) also gave participants a greater sense
of purpose and simultaneously fostered their sense of belonging. For these reasons large events and clubs were generally preferred over smaller ones; however there was also a sense of there being a critical crowd mass as there need to be sufficient numbers of people dancing within a space to enable the process of amplification to take place and to create the charged atmosphere synonymous with dance events.

A further key finding of the study relates to dress and visual representation which were also considered to play a major role in dance music experiences. Whilst some of this can be attributed to dance music as a ‘taste culture’ (Thornton 1995) in that many people seek to be surrounded by individuals with shared tastes in terms of music and fashion, this study has revealed additional layers of meaning. Clothes are highly symbolic and representative not only of how individuals wish to be perceived but are also demonstrative of their self perception and the roles they perform in any given setting. Therefore clothing was found to relate both to taste and to discourses of behaviour and the conventions of sociability associated with certain methods of self presentation in specific clubbing contexts. Furthermore dress codes also serve as a cultural filter, preventing those who lack cultural knowledge from accessing particular experiences and with such processes at work these events inherently acquire a greater sense of exclusivity for those privileged participants able to access them.

The interviews and observations also revealed how even where there are no overt dress codes in operation event participants tend to conform to certain ‘looks’, to confirm their cultural knowledge and demonstrate the compatibility of their identity with their chosen performance stage. This sense of shared cultural knowledge amongst participants who have successfully negotiated a legitimate clubbing identity also seems to contribute to the sense of belonging and the cohesive atmosphere within dance clubs. Therefore dress codes (both overt and covert) emerge as central in the creation of clubbing spaces as not only do they influence the boundaries of role performances
permitted upon particular stages, they provide an admission filter and constitute part of their discursive construction.

As I touched on above in this chapter, this thesis has also sought to contribute to social scientific explorations of dancing, an area that has previously been largely neglected. Consideration of this area has revealed how dancing (a major element of the appeal of participation in dance culture) provides an opportunity for experiencing a number of different states and emotions during clubbing experiences. Dancing was found to provide an opportunity for play and a release from day-to-day physical states, whilst also facilitating the transition to altered states of consciousness. Being and nothingness emerge as crucial to the state of flux experienced by participants whilst dancing, where they switch between the conscious and the subconscious mind in their management of their bodily interactions with music. What was common across all the participants’ accounts of dancing was the sense of liberation experienced through this activity, how it enabled them to experience their bodies in a different state and the cathartic qualities associated with immersion in the liminal world of dancing.

A particular focus of my research concerned the youth cultural status of participating in dance culture, which is also linked to notions of performance and identity. It emerged that people are able to gain a greater sense of status and importance, a sense of self fulfilment and achievement from the nature and contexts of their participation. Whilst dance culture is highly accessible as a whole and there is a vast amount of publicly available information on dance cultures, the nature of dance music media discourses and the prerequisite knowledge required for the meaningful interpretation and understanding of this information can exclude those without the specialist cultural knowledge. Indeed the importance of cultural knowledge in participating in dance cultures is exemplified by the title of one of the magazines studied as part of this research: ‘Knowledge’.
In chapters three, five and six I considered how having a greater knowledge base in a specialist area elevates its cultural prestige through a number of means, primarily because the knowledge is less accessible, but also because knowledge provides a base and foundation, a heritage that confirms authenticity and with this cultural integrity. Indeed discourses which require prerequisite cultural knowledge can further authenticate such cultures by providing them with additional layers of meaning and requiring greater investment of resources to fully understand them. This is another way in which participants in such cultural groupings feel a greater sense of belonging, for the level of investment they have put into understanding the components and discourses of dance culture. The requirement for cultural knowledge acts like a filter or series of filters, blocking those who, for whatever reason, are not versed in the ideologies, cultural practices and texts at work; illustrating how knowledge is power and those who lack knowledge will be limited in the extent to which they are able to participate.

The myriad of means through which cultural information is shared and acquired within dance culture are also important both as a resource for different approaches to identity performance and as a source of community for many participants. Not only does the level of cultural information possessed by participants often correlate with their cultural status, the manner in which they share and distribute such information is also highly pertinent to their positioning and identity within dance cultures. Through sharing and receiving information through contexts such as attending events, chatting on the internet, DJing at events, DJing on the radio, writing articles for magazines and so forth participants also come to feel part of their communities and negotiate their position within them. Such communities operate at a number of levels, within groups of friends, within clubbing crowds and the wider networks associated with them, whilst the global nature of dance culture also fosters notions of belonging to a form of worldwide community.
What I have not yet mentioned in this final chapter is music, and although dance culture revolves around far more than music, it is music which is at its core, its ultimate or most apparent reason for existence. However in this sense music is something far more significant than an audible expression of identity and an alternative creative medium. Music has always been at the core of youth leisure cultures, as a form of glue which brings many otherwise diverse people together and provides a source, a focal point for identifications. Musical styles which are significantly different to those of young peoples’ parents and preceding generations often cause conflicts and provoke negative reactions within homes and wider society. This of course is also part of their appeal for young people, being something which they understand, but which excludes other people, particularly their parents, provides a role reversal opportunity which empowers youths and gives them a greater sense of individuality. Having different musical outlooks, approaches and perspectives, and feeling empowered by these, also enables young people to break away from many of the socially embedded norms of adult society. Such processes allow them to think and approach things from different perspectives than their parents, which is central to the notion of a constantly evolving society. If new generations never challenged the norms, values and ideas of those preceding them, would anyone ever challenge anything? What would the world in which we live be like today? Indeed as Turner (1982: 28) comments in relation to liminal situations, they constitute:

settings in which new models, symbols, paradigms, etc., arise - as the seedbeds of cultural creativity ... these new symbols and constructions then feedback into the “central” economic and politico-legal domains and arenas, supplying them with goals, aspirations, incentives, structural models and raisons d’etre.

It is such immersion in liminal spaces and engagement with liminal practices that equip people with the additional flexibility to view life from alternative perspectives. Such spaces, imbued with unconventional norms and values, enable people to adopt alternative approaches to role performance and
experience the reactions of others to such actions. Through performing roles that differ to those performed within conventional social settings individuals are able not only to build but to experiment with their identity. The liminal qualities of dance environments also enable people to test alternative discourses in relation to philosophies of life and modes of social interaction. Within tribal societies the transcendence of individuals into liminal social spaces and positions is fundamental to their processes of growing up, for without going through such experiences they cannot become fully fledged adults. Immersion in liminal states and the consumption of liminal experiences therefore provides another theoretical perspective for the analysis of youth cultures as a central part of the journey to adulthood for many individuals.

Interestingly, many individuals who participate in dance culture do not consider themselves to be a raver or a clubber and thus not solely identifiable through one particular style of music. Therefore within the context of taste and labelling many participants occupy a liminal or threshold status; neither being wholly one thing or another, they don't fit neatly into a particular social categorisation but straddle the void between several. Such characteristics could be said to be symptomatic of post-modern life where categorisation is resisted, transience and fluidity celebrated and everyone seeks to position themselves as in an ongoing project of creative development, inspired and informed by a myriad of forces, but dictated to by none.

Another characteristic of our post-modern era is the decline of metanarratives including, “ideas such as religion, science, art, modernism and Marxism which make absolute, universal and all embracing claims to knowledge and truth” (Strinati 2004: 209). Postmodernism suggests that the relevance and validity of metanarratives has diminished as institutions such as the church have become less relevant in the everyday life of individuals, particularly in relation to the discourses they espouse. In the
place of such overarching metanarratives postmodernism is characterised by "the increasing sound of a plurality of voices from the margins, with their insistence on difference, on cultural diversity, and the claims of heterogeneity over homogeneity" (Storey 2001: 150). Such conditions are therefore conducive to the evolution of new discourses of being, experiencing, worshiping and travelling. With the decline of metanarratives comes the evolution of new social narratives that enable individuals to bring meaning and fulfilment to their lives in new and different ways. Such processes contribute to new modes of identity development and presentation as new meaning structures are developed.

This research has also sought to contribute to our understanding of dance culture, contemporary youth cultures and leisure studies by utilising methodologies which have been neglected by studies of dance culture. My use of an emergent design in the research process required me to constantly review my methods in order to respond to developments within the study. At the outset there was no intention to use discourse analysis, the performance metaphor or autoethnography, however as the project unfolded it became apparent that such approaches would enable me to reveal hidden depths within this culture and its participants (including using myself as a resource). Initially I had tried to distance myself from the research, being an objective observer and participant, however as the project evolved it became apparent that there was another way which could lead to more insight. In any kind of social science research the researcher is inevitably a part of the process and a resource, however it is the extent to which the researcher becomes entangled in the project and utilises their knowledge, attitudes, emotions, responses, motivations and so forth to inform the research that impacts upon the results (Harris, Wilson and Ateljevic 2007). Due to the nature and extent of my personal experience of dance music and the fact that I would never have and could never have completed this research project without this experience, it became apparent that it would be a missed opportunity if I did not use myself as a resource within this project and a
fiction that I could ever really exclude my personal experiences from the research.

In addition to this issue of researcher positionality, the use of discourse analysis also emerged as an opportunity to investigate dance culture from a different angle – particularly in relation to understanding the role of the media in representing and informing this culture. In creating bridges and building dialogue with other areas of social inquiry such as tourism studies, discourse was applied to the texts of dance culture to reveal the codes of representation in operation and their effects on the social construction of dance culture. Here, the term 'texts' is used in the widest sense possible, to encompass anything conveying meaning within the sphere of study. Therefore the dance music media was an obvious text, particularly significant for its authoritative socio-cultural positioning. In addition to the media, events, participant discussions and the wider dance culture were also interpreted as texts, to reveal their multi-dimensional, symbolic elements and signifying value.

Such processes reveal that there is far more to the attitudes and motivations of dance culture participants than is initially apparent, for language, objects and actions are all invested with multi-dimensional layers of meaning. It is only by cutting through these and dissecting layer by layer that the depth of meanings associated with actions and experiences can really be revealed. Such analysis of the layers of meaning within texts also enables the researcher to explore the complex nature of relations between the various factors that shape individuals’ perceptions and in turn their experiences of the discourses they encounter. Although previous studies have acknowledged the media as a significant influence on dance culture, the dance music media itself has received no significant analysis to date and thus this thesis constitutes a valuable addition to this area of research.
8.3 Personal reflections and research limitations

As this research makes no claims towards objective truths, ultimate conclusions or definitive statements I have simply sought to utilise all the resources available in the light of the various physical and financial constraints, to provide a deeper understanding of a major cultural practice from which so many people derive so much pleasure. In my exploration of this cultural sphere it has been necessary to observe others, to question, to interrogate and to interact with people both face to face and online, at dance events and in their homes. I have experienced events and all their components from a number of perspectives, whilst always attempting to reflect upon and evaluate these experiences and encounters in terms of what they mean to me and to others. Things which I once took for granted have been deconstructed and reconstructed to the extent that they are barely recognisable and this cultural phenomenon which I previously thought I understood now seems much more complex.

Having reached this stage in my research journey, I feel I have significantly developed my personal critical skills and reflected on my positionality as a researcher. I certainly now analyse people’s words and actions from a far more critical perspective than previously, searching for the multiple layers of meaning in what people say and do, which contribute to and reflect the social construction of the realities and worlds with which they engage. Exploring the multi-dimensional qualities of media discourse has been a particularly challenging although also a very satisfying and enlightening process. Through investigating the media's discussion of various facets of dance culture, I have come to realise the extent to which the media contribute to the norms and values of this cultural phenomenon, whilst simultaneously rewarding those who have invested time and effort in the acquisition of cultural knowledge.

Within society as a whole people rely on the media to inform them on a variety of issues and as Park (1997: 24) comments "in any attempt to
understand public opinion ... it is important to investigate first of all the agencies and devices which have come into practical use in the effort to control, enlighten and exploit it ... The first and foremost of these is the press”. The media is a powerful force in the generation and maintenance of cultural discourses and highly influential in constructing and managing the constituents of social reality (Bell and Garrett 1998). Within any given cultural sphere the media thus plays a central role in the generation and distribution of knowledge and in this respect dance culture is no different. For those who wish to keep abreast and informed of current developments in dance culture at a national and international level the magazines are particularly important for the depth and scope of their coverage. Magazines are able to investigate and report on a diversity of events and issues, keeping participants up to date with social, cultural, musical and technological issues, trends and innovations. Just as most individuals read newspapers and watch the broadcast news to keep abreast of economic and political issues, so too must participants in dance culture engage with the specialist media on a regular basis to maintain the currency of their cultural knowledge.

The dance music media therefore occupy a precarious position in the creation, promotion, sustenance, reflection and modification of cultural discourse. They must be open and receptive to change, to alternative ways of being, knowing and behaving, but must also retain their authenticity and credibility with their core, largely young, market. Such a position requires adherence to the core cultural values of their target markets and compliance with the core elements of the discourses they adhere to whilst also constantly challenging the status quo in order to preserve an ‘edgy’ and ‘rebel’ image. Therefore, a continual process of negotiation is occurring at various levels within the discursive practices of many media vehicles in the process of reflecting and reacting to the nature of social realities and their constituent components.
In terms of limitations, this study, as any other, has its limitations and although I have tried to present as full a picture as possible, there are always alternative ways of undertaking any research project. Due to the time and financial resources available, this research has focused on dance culture within the UK. As outlined within chapter two dance culture has emerged through a range of global influences, whilst the global nature of dance culture has also undoubtedly contributed to its success and longevity. However fuller consideration of the impacts of dance culture's global nature are beyond the scope of this research. In terms of covering the dance culture within the UK, the scope of the field research could have also been more extensive as all the participants involved were from either Wales or England and no events in Scotland or the North of England were attended. Overall, I could have attended more events and interviewed more people, however this is a qualitative study and the intention is to provide depth of analysis and insight. The media discourse analysis could have also been more extensive in terms of the number of publications analysed and the topics investigated. However again I chose to focus on a few key areas in order to gain the depth of information which I desired. If more areas had been covered then it would not have been possible to subject them to the same degree or depth of analysis and the resulting discussion would have been less rich. There is considerably more that could emerge from analysis of the dance music media than that presented in this thesis and this leads me to the final section of this conclusion, the opportunities for future research.

8.4 Future research
This final section will deal with the implications of this thesis for future research, identifying how the areas tackled within this project could be extended and other potential research topics which are pertinent to leisure studies. What has emerged from this thesis is the tremendous potential for future research, both into dance culture and the wider events industry. Here then, I provide an outline of potential avenues for and approaches to future research, including: the international nature of dance culture; the potential
for more sustained analysis of the dance music media; the role of the internet in contemporary youth cultures; analysis of dance culture from an industry perspective; examination of the relationship between dance culture and other youth cultures; the growth of festivals and events in UK society; utilising the concept of liminality and the performance metaphor in the investigation of other leisure spaces and practices and applying the research methods utilised in this thesis to other areas of leisure studies.

Something which I have raised several times within this thesis, although not explored in significant detail, is the international nature of dance culture, which I consider to be central to dance cultures' longevity and development. Through its cross cultural influences dance culture has developed, grown and been sustained beyond the imagination of its early participants and this is an area which warrants further investigation. As this study has predominantly focused on dance culture within the United Kingdom, an international perspective on dance culture holds much potential, especially considering the global nature of dance culture and the variety of international forces which influence it.

This thesis' discourse analysis of the dance music media also brought to light a wealth of interesting and insightful information and this is an area which also offers great potential for future research. Here I would advocate more sustained analysis of the dance music media itself, moreover, whilst I chose to focus on media representation of DJs and events, I also found the commercialisation of dance culture very interesting and would have liked to have explored this area further. I also considered but did not attempt a content analysis of the magazines, which in conjunction with discourse analysis could provide further insights into the dance music media particularly if conducted as a time series analysis and in conjunction with other media formats such as films and books.
Another media which I did use to gain further insights into dance music participants' attitudes and motivations was the internet and this medium holds great potential for further research. Whilst I did incorporate contributions from internet message boards in my discussions, the extent to which I used this information was quite limited. However, considering the increasingly important role that the internet plays in everyday life and particularly in relation to leisure and music cultures internet message boards could be a very interesting area for future research. The types of interactions that take place within such virtual environments, their role in facilitating communication between interest groups, the extent to which they facilitate alternative approaches to role performance and identity development and a whole host of other issues are potential research issues in relation to internet message boards, chat rooms and online blogs and networking sites such as Myspace (both of which have grown in significance in recent years and contributed to the success of bands such as the Arctic Monkeys).

As this study has examined dance culture from a participant perspective, a further potential research avenue would be to analyse dance culture from the perspective of the industry including DJs, music producers, record label owners, promoters, website operators, promoters and journalists. Interviewing and observing some of these people could provide further insights into the mechanics of contemporary dance culture and develop a greater understanding of this complex culture. Certainly the events industry as a whole, (including major music festivals) has grown steadily for many years in the UK and whilst this study has examined participant attitudes in relation to major dance music festivals, there is significant potential to research many of the other large scale music festivals in the UK. Events management is a developing academic field (see Yeoman et al. 2004) and such studies could develop a deeper understanding of the factors that attract people to these events in such high numbers.
Whilst this study has largely examined dance culture in isolation and in relation to previous youth cultures, future studies could address the cultural continuities between dance culture and subsequent youth cultures in terms of ideologies, motivations, media consumption and so forth. Such a study would reveal the many commonalities between dance culture and other youth cultures in terms of their means of acquiring youth cultural status and their role in shaping and developing participants’ identities. In this context the concept of liminality and the performance metaphor hold great potential for new ways of seeing and understanding the conventions of leisure spaces and social practices. These concepts provided a framework for analysing practices and spaces in this study and in line with other areas such as tourism studies, leisure researchers need to further incorporate these concepts into their research frameworks. In the same vein there is also great potential for the investigation of media publications focused on particular spheres of leisure activity (such as music). Whilst such research may be common place in the field of media studies, there are considerable contributions such research could make to leisure studies. This is particularly significant considering the proliferation of leisure-related magazines and magazines purchased for leisure consumption.

Finally, applying the research methods and approaches used in this investigation (primarily ethnography, autoethnography and discourse analysis) to other areas of leisure and events research could also lead to new perspectives on various types of events, leisure activities and those who engage with them. Through immersing myself in my research setting for a sustained period I was able to gain a wealth of information that would otherwise have been inaccessible. In doing so, utilising the researcher as a resource to reflect upon their interactions and the implications of these upon themselves and others is central to maximising the benefits of this approach.

What this research has revealed (in addition to the complexities of dance culture itself) is that there is a huge range of potential research topics in
leisure studies, but that there is a pressing need to adopt interdisciplinary approaches to such enquiry. Leisure overlaps with so many other areas and encompasses so many activities, that it is vital that more of these approaches are incorporated in leisure studies. There is a need to incorporate more diverse and flexible research methods and to take a more holistic view of leisure activities which extends beyond the traditional areas of sport, arts and culture and which go beyond the often limited approaches of quantitative research. This study has opened my eyes to the potential created through adopting a flexible approach to research. Freeing myself from the shackles of a positivist mentality and embracing a multitude of approaches has enabled me to delve deeper into my area of research and allowed me to modify my approaches to reveal further layers of meaning and significance in dance culture. Being open to change is central to emergent design and these principles have led me down paths I had never conceived possible and allowed me insights into the hidden depths and complexities within dance culture.
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