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## **Sexy substances and the substance of sex: Findings from an ethnographic study in Ibiza, Spain**

Dr Daniel Briggs, Dr Sébastien Tutenges, Rebecca Armitage and Dimitar Panchev

### **Abstract**

#### *Purpose*

This article offers an ethnographic account of substances and sex, and how they are interrelated, in the context of one holiday destination popular among British youth. We write this paper because current research on British youth abroad and their use of substances is based almost exclusively on survey methods. Similarly, the same research works do not explore in sufficient detail sexual relations outside those between British tourists.

#### *Design/Methodology*

We base this article on 38 focus groups, observations and informal conversations undertaken in San Antonio, Ibiza over the summers of 2009, 2010 and 2011.

#### *Findings*

Here we complement current knowledge on sex and substances abroad by discussing the role of Promotion Representatives (PRs), strippers and prostitutes and the use of both drugs and alcohol, emphasising how substances feature in the promotion of sex. We adopt Bakhtin's concept of the 'carnavalesque' (1984) to understand these behaviours.

#### *Originality/Value*

As far as we can see, current research is almost exclusively based on sex between tourists and sexual encounters with other social players in holiday resorts has been largely neglected.

**Key words:** Sex, substances, British youth, ethnography, social context. **Word count:** 7,541 excluding references. **Paper type:** Research

## Introduction

We wander around the hotel pool area in the evening looking for some potential interviewees. We are startled by the noise coming from the corner of the bar area, where three young men shout at each other and drink in unison. They each have t-shirts saying 'FANCY A FUCK' in capital letters. They consent to a focus group and concede to limiting alcohol and drug use to weekends at home – albeit quite intensive weekends. However, in Ibiza, they are “*at it, non-stop*” because it is a “*24-hour party*” they say. One even shows us the MDMA he has in his pocket. They do this, they say, because they are on holiday but it seems it is not only substance use which has elevated. They have intentions to have as much sex as possible. Indeed, after only three days of their holiday, one, who was drunk at the time, has already had sex with two prostitutes – something which he refuted would not happen back in the UK:

**Scott:** *Basically those two [Stewart and Paul] are here to get 'hole', to shag [to have sexual intercourse] 'holes'.*

**Dan (Author and Interviewer):** [Surprised] *A 'hole' [to Stewart as he returns]. We were just talking about 'holes' and whether you were up for any.*

**Stewart:** [Interrupting own sip of cocktail] *Fucking right, fucking right.*

**Dan:** *Right, so how many 'holes' have you had?*

**Stewart:** *Two. Bad ones. Smelly ones, stinking fucking ones. Came [ejaculated] all over them. Hookers.*

**Paul:** *'Whatever happens in Ibiza, stays in Ibiza.'*

**Stewart:** [High fives Paul] *Fucking right. Fuck the STIs [sexually transmitted infections].*

For some young British men who holiday abroad in resorts such as San Antonio this seems to be their attitude to substance use and sex. When we looked at the literature about British tourists, substance use and sex, we found there almost exclusively to be data on sex between tourists and that sexual encounters with other social players in holiday resorts had been largely neglected. We found a paucity of information which could unpack the relationships between British tourists and others in such social arenas – for example, Promotion Representatives (PR) workers, and sex workers<sup>1</sup> - or street prostitutes, strippers and/or lap dancers. The aim of our article is to examine the role of sex and substances among the various players of these social arenas using San Antonio, Ibiza as a case study. Of the numerous theoretical perspectives at our disposal, we feel Bakhtin's (1984) notion of the 'carnavalesque' to be most fitting to analyse these behaviours. We adopt an ethnographic perspective to do this and our data is based on focus groups, informal conversations and observations.

We acknowledge that other resorts on Ibiza and in other destinations draw different tourists with different attitudes to their holidays but we wanted to specifically examine this area and those who holiday there. Moreover, our aim is not to reinvent the literature on sex between British tourists (Gillies et al, 1992; Thomas et al, 1997; Elliot et al, 1998; Clift and Page, 2000; Bellis et al, 2000; Bellis et al, 2003; Bellis et al, 2004; Thomas, 2005; Hughes and Bellis, 2006; Hughes et al, 2009) but provide a more holistic account of the role of sex between the different players in this social scenery and how substance use fits within this context. We also acknowledge that there are other class and gender dimensions which warrant discussion but have decided to explore those areas in other papers; our main argument instead focussing on how sex and substances are dependently interrelated in this social context. Firstly, we contextualise our findings by discussing sex tourism and

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<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that 'sex workers' is the correct collective term to use to describe these women but throughout the paper we refer to labels such as 'street prostitutes', 'strippers' and 'lap dancers' because 1) our participants frequently use these terms in their accounts and 2) because we have to separate the different roles the different groups play in the social scenery.

drug, alcohol and sex on holiday among British youth. Then we present the theoretical foci, the methods and our findings.

### *Sex tourism*

Sex tourism is becoming progressively more prominent within contemporary society and increasingly within youth cultures. Research shows that sex tourism encompasses relationships with locals, prostitutes and other tourists. For example, in countries such as Singapore, where prostitution is legal and regulated, there has been an influx of male tourists specifically looking for sexual relations with prostitutes (Cardinale, 1997). Studies across the Caribbean and South America show that sexual relations also evolve between tourists and locals. A study carried out in Barbados demonstrated how sexual relations evolve between women on vacation and local 'beach boys' (Phillips, 2008); the latter group not always looking for payment for services but rather a 'bit of fun' and/or way to temporarily escape their current social position on the island. Similarly, in the case of Peru it seems increasingly common, especially within tourist areas, for young local men to engage in sexual relations with tourists which has been found to lead to greater risks of STIs including HIV (Cabada et al, 2009). These young men were also found to be searching for some 'fun and enjoyment'.

In another example, a recent study on Danish youth in the Bulgarian resort of Sunny Beach, found that also very young tourists pay for sexual services whilst abroad (Hesse and Tutenges, 2011). Among 1,125 tourists with an average age of 20 years, 48.2% of the men had visited a strip club during their holiday, and 12.5% had paid for sex. The purchase of sexual services was found to be much lower among the female travellers: 8.4% went to a strip club, and 0% paid for sex. However, in the course of our literature review, there appears to be no research which specifically examines sexual relations between young British tourists and those working within the sex industry in popular holiday destinations. We would like to offer this insight in the context of a holiday resort in Ibiza

where large numbers of young British tourists visit. When they go to these places, they engage in elevated drug use, alcohol consumption and sexual relations (Bellis et al., 2000).

*British youth at home and abroad: Drugs, alcohol and sex*

Evidence from the UK suggests that in the home context, British youth engage in high levels of substance use on a typical 'night out' (Deehan and Saville, 2003; Rickards et al, 2004; Aldridge et al., 2011) although the level of consumption is dependent on individual biography and motivation, and the type of music scene (Anderson et al. 2009). This high consumption has been associated with chances of sexual activity, leading to higher levels of unprotected sex and risk of STIs (Standerwick et al, 2007). However, it seems that attitudes to substances and sex change when British youth go abroad on holiday. They choose destinations such as Ibiza because of the nightlife and party scene (Hughes et al. 2009) which marries well with their holiday intentions for a 'blow out' (Briggs et al., 2011).

While research indicates that tourists perceive drug use as less hazardous in the context of holidays abroad than in home settings (Uriely and Belhassen, 2006), numerous studies show that levels of risky substance use quickly escalates as the familiar routines and responsibilities of home life are forgotten (Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2004). For example, Hughes et al. (2009) note that a quarter of young British holiday makers have sex abroad when travelling without a partner and of these a third did not consistently use a condom. While away, research also shows that British youth engage in unsafe sexual behaviour while under the influence of alcohol and drugs. In their study on substance use among British tourists, Bellis and colleagues (2000) found that of 846 participants, 53.8% had sex while in Ibiza, of which 26.2% didn't use a condom and 23.2% had more than one sexual partner. Research of this quantitative nature provides valuable insights into the conduct of young British holiday makers, showing how these behaviours can place them in vulnerable situations leading to higher risks. These actions seem to be fuelled by alterations in the perceptions of what 'appears to be risky' (Kelly, 2005) – partly because the tourists are far away from the constraints of

home, in an environment designed for excess (Briggs et al., 2011). In such environments, individuals tend to feel that they can lower their inhibitions and misbehave without necessarily risking their overall reputation (Redmon, 2001; Thomas, 2005). This is why we feel Bakhtin's theme of the 'carnavalesque' is most fitting for our paper.

### **Theoretical foci**

The 'carnavalesque' is a concept developed by Bakhtin to understand how carnival was a very real feature of life for people throughout history. He (1984: 122) sees the carnival as a time when the *"laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is non-carnival, life, are suspended"*. It is during the carnival that people engage and interact with others in different ways because it represents dissolution of everyday hierarchical structure of society in favour of more free and familiar contact among people. As Bakhtin (1984) puts it, the carnival 'builds its own world versus the official world' and this is what seems to happen with British holidaymakers in San Antonio, Ibiza: they seek out another more adventurous, unpredictable and intense world which contrasts their everyday lives at home.

Carnival is also a time for play and experimentation where individuals indulge in activities that would be unheard of in normal life. Individuals 'lower themselves' during carnival; they momentarily liberate themselves from the restraints of decency and common sense and explore aspects of reality that the 'official world' condemns. Likewise, many tourists in San Antonio do things during their holidays that they have been taught are unhealthy and morally wrong. But right and wrong are turned upside down in the carnivalesque space of San Antonio; risks and depravation are defiantly celebrated and enjoyed.

## Methods

This data is based on three short studies which used ethnographic methods (Hammersley, 1992) with British youth abroad in Ibiza, Spain in July 2009, July 2010 and June 2011. A preliminary scoping exercise was undertaken by one of the authors in July 2009 and visits were made to various tourist destinations on the island. Throughout June 2010, relevant material was gathered on the subject area before six pilot focus groups with British youth were undertaken to develop research tools. These were included in the analysis. These youth had experience of holidays of this nature in places like Zakynthos, Greece, Aiya Napa and San Antonio, Ibiza. Four researchers then travelled to San Antonio, Ibiza and spent one week in July 2010 undertaking focus groups and observations (Briggs et al., 2011). The primary aim was to consider binge drinking on holiday with a side interest in drugs, sex and risk. In June 2011, a team of six researchers returned to the same resort to consolidate findings and explore deviance and risk in more detail. Once again, focus groups and observations were undertaken over one week.

Observations were conducted in bars, clubs, beaches, and general touristic areas. These areas were public and activity was observed which would have happened without intervention or influence from researchers. We were not necessarily interested in 'living the life' as it were (Inciardi, 1995) but rather making astute observations of British youth and their behaviours. We used a combination of overt and covert roles (Adler, 1985; Agar, 1986; Bourgois, 1995) and tried, where possible, to record low inference descriptors (field notes) (Van Maanen, 1988). Researchers' thoughts and impressions accompanied these notes, as well as summaries of conversations. This information was noted within a few hours of concluding observation sessions and these data were entered directly into a password-secured laptop.



In 2010, seventeen focus groups were undertaken in Ibiza (n=97, aged between 17 and 31) over one week and in 2011 fifteen<sup>2</sup> were conducted (n=72, aged between 17 and 35) over one week respectively. The focus groups were open-ended which enabled researchers to determine how British youth interpreted and talked about their behaviours (Carlson et al., 1994; Clapp et al., 2007; Griffin et al., 2009). They were digitally recorded, with signed/verbal consent. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used to recruit groups into the study. Most youth groups who were approached, agreed to participate in the research. However, some refused because they had hangovers, seemed to feel as if they had something to hide or were busy enjoying themselves / did not want to engage in a 'serious' conversation with researchers. These groups tended to be older male groups (late 20s onwards). When we arrived in San Antonio, we found we could not avoid collecting data while people were intoxicated in some form. Indeed, had we restricted data collection to non-substance using groups, we would have had a very small sample size and a skewed picture of substance use on holiday.

It has been acknowledged that informed consent and intoxication are important to consider when conducting such in-situ research. Some note the problems of undertaking such methods when people drinking heavily or on drugs may be overly compliant in agreeing to be interviewed (Measham et al. 2001). However, we took steps not to abuse such compliance, and where possible, tried to reaffirm consent a few days after the interview. If individuals or groups were too intoxicated, they were not approached or asked to participate in this research project. However, it was difficult to judge from the outset who may be potential groups; that is, it was at times difficult to know how drunk some groups were when they did not display typical signs of drunkenness. In this way, and as others have done in the context of researching youth drinking cultures (Blackman, 2007; Briggs et al., 2011) we drank alcohol with participants to establish credibility, rapport and trust. Therefore we

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<sup>2</sup> We base this number on data collected by Daniel Briggs and Sébastien Tutenges.

make use of a critical realist appreciation of knowledge construction of social meanings (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994).

Informal conversations were also undertaken with local businesses, bar owners, strippers, taxi drivers, prostitutes, PR workers, police and tourist representatives about their perceptions and experiences of British youth abroad. Informal conversations were mentally noted and written up into observation notes. All participants were given pseudonyms. Once transcribed, interview and observation data was categorised thematically, with the key areas of investigation providing the overall framework for coding (Ritchie and Spencer, 2004). Analyses were inductive, which meant that themes emerged from the data rather than being hypothesised. The research was granted ethics approval by the University of East London's Ethics Committee.

## **Findings**

### *The social context of San Antonio*

This social context for this study is imperative in understanding the role of substances and sex in holiday resorts. Numerous studies indicate that British youth come to Ibiza with the intentions to 'party' (Calafat et al., 1998; Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2004) and create memories which offer identity construction (Briggs et al., 2011; Tutenges 2010) – individually, socially and virtually. However, our data also indicates that the social context of San Antonio actively endorses and promotes alcohol consumption, drug use and sex (Bellis et al., 2003; Sellars, 1998). Indeed, in the principal drinking area called the 'West End' of San Antonio ('drinking strip' hereafter), where most of the data collection was undertaken, tourists can take advantage of numerous bars, clubs, take-away outlets, strip clubs and all the familiar sites of entertainment and the night-time economy (NTE) in the UK (Hollands and Chatterton, 2003; Measham, 2004; Sonmez et al., 2006; Hadfield and Measham, 2009) - see Figure 1.

This particular space is quite strategically designed and concentrated in one area of San Antonio to maximise consumer spending (Miles, 2010). It is made up only of one main pedestrian road and a few intimate alleyways either side. Such is this concentration that one need not drift too far to find the next site of attraction. At night, young female PRs in next to nothing march up and down the drinking strip advertising various DJs, nightclubs or special events around the night-life calendar. There are also young male PRs, but they generally wear more clothes. Like so many other tourist environments around the world, the drinking strip in San Antonio caters for the male, heterosexual gaze (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000). This intoxicating male landscape bombards visitors with tempting offers and opportunities for excess. As the night progresses, this social space swells with young British tourists; in particular, male groups lose their friends, get in fights and/or wander off and are at the mercy of other socio-commercial pressures which occupy the same landscape (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007). These field notes give the reader an idea of how intense this space is because potential punters are constantly roped into deals on alcohol, drugs and sex:

The time drifts past 1am. I walk down past the strip and pass a hen party. I fancy a burger, only because it is there – only because it is what is the norm and what is available. I am stopped again:

**PR woman (PRW):** *Are you coming in again?*

**Dan:** *Again? We haven't been in yet? How did you remember us?*

**PRW:** *Yeah, come in for some drinks.*

As I look down, once again, at the streets, they are strewn with drink bottles, sick, waste, half-eaten burgers, chips and all manner of rubbish. Suddenly, we are dragged over once again:

**Lively PR man (LPRM):** *Come in here to have a drink. Get two free shots as well, guys.*

[Physically shepherding me in] *What would you like to drink?*

**Dan:** *We're coming back, calm down.*

**LPRM:** *Come down now, come on, come in.*

**Dan:** *No.*

**LPRM:** *Try it now.*

**Dan:** *Er, NO.*

**LPRM:** [As if nothing has happened] *Ok, guys enjoy your night.*

30 seconds later – Chirpy PR man (CPRM) approaches us:

**CPRM:** *Two drinks and a shot for €8.*

This gives some ample context for the commentary which follows on the different players of this carnivalesque space and their perceptions and experiences of sex in the context of a heavy drug and alcohol use.

#### *The British tourists*

Ibiza is known as the 'party capital' of the world where people can experiment with sex, alcohol and drugs without being condemned or punished. For some, the experimentation involves legal activities such as heavy drinking and casual sex while others brush with the law, for instance by engaging in fights and drug exchanges. The night-time excesses are certainly not reserved for men only. For example, we observed several instances of females fighting and drinking themselves into unconsciousness. However, during interviews the women often downplayed their own risk-taking whereas the men tended to exaggerate theirs. This may be due to the fact that most of the interviews in this study were conducted by male interviewers. Or perhaps it has to do with the double standards that exist among men and women regarding sex and substance use: young men

are encouraged to indulge in a maximum of casual sex and substance use whereas women may become stigmatised for the exact same behaviour (Crawford and Popp, 2003).

Many of the young British men with whom we spoke seem to overrate their abilities to 'pull women' suggesting that if a 'bird [young woman] was not up for it' then it is because she is too drunk or has a partner. These attitudes are perhaps motivated by their attitudes to their holiday and group dynamics which generate a kind of competitive edge among their peers to show other group members how attractive, appealing and successful they are when it comes to women. Some male groups attempt to have drinking competitions, take as many drugs as possible and 'shag' [have sex with] as many 'birds' as possible:

Our conversation is interrupted as Streetfighter whispers in my ear about how he can pull women although he doesn't seem to have much success. He tells one PR woman he will "fuck her senseless". "Charming" she says. He tries again only to fail:

[Girls in bikinis walk past]

**Jay:** *Nice arse.*

[The girls walks on unimpressed]

**Streetfighter:** [To Dan] *Mate, you have to push the birds out here.*

We are tempted at almost every opportunity the PR people offer and the order of the night seems to change as soon as they receive a new offer:

**PR woman:** *Hi guys we just want to let you know what is going on Thursday...*

**Streetfighter:** *Nice face. Pretty.*

**PR woman:** *Hey!*

**Jay:** *Why don't you come back to our hotel to PARTY?*

**PR woman:** *Well come down on Thursday...*

**Jay:** *So are you coming?*

**PR woman:** [Gives us vouchers] *Its an hour and a half free bar. Then we take you on to a catamaran.*

**Streetfighter:** *What about my hotel?*

**PR woman:** [Ignoring this] *You can jump off, swim, get the sunset in café Mambo.*

**Dan:** *What's the catch?*

**PR woman:** *€46.*

**Jay:** *Then to our hotel to party or you could come pre-party?*

**Streetfighter:** *We will fucking smash you up, fuck you, all sorts.*

**PR woman:** *Eugh, that's disgusting. That's vile.*

[All the lads laugh while Streetfighter remains serious about the offer]

Streetfighter and his friends ended many of their exchanges like this. They were eager to have sex, but got numerous rejections perhaps because of their direct and blunt advances. Indeed, after unsuccessful attempts like this with other female tourists, one in the group ended the night by paying two prostitutes to give him oral sex. In general, sex with street prostitutes tend to emerge late into the night/early in the morning when young British men are most intoxicated. In the group context, most men who go to the street prostitutes laugh it off as 'something which should be done'. However, some also feel worried about the potential aftermath of their actions. In one focus group, one young man struggled to deal with the jibes and criticism he got from his friends after paying for sex with a prostitute on the beach. Indeed, throughout most of the focus group, he seemed quite anxious about the fact that he may have 'something' [an STI].

The locals that we spoke to in Ibiza generally have ambiguous opinions about the young tourists coming from the North. While the tourists bring a lot of money and life to the island, they also cause lots of public nuisance and damage. A policeman we met in San Antonio told that, in the daytime, his job is pleasant, but as the night falls things turn ugly:

**Sébastien (Author and Interviewer):** *Which tourists cause most trouble?*

**Policeman:** *The British are the worst. I don't know how they are at home, but here they are crazy. They jump into the harbour, smash windows. Just crazy!*

In Britain and many other countries, the public opinion about young tourists is also ambiguous; critical and at times outright condemnatory (Hunt et al. 2007; Andriotis 2010; Tutenges 2010). Likewise, the research on young nightlife tourists tends to be problem-focused with little attention to the pleasures of partying abroad. Indeed, much of our own writings on tourism are problem-focused (e.g. Tutenges 2009; Briggs et al. 2011). It is therefore worth considering that many of the young tourists in Ibiza are normal, well-functioning individuals who lead conventional lives at home. However, San Antonio is a carnivalesque space of exception and experimentation (Bakhtin 1984) where *“the normal becomes abnormal, and the deviant is temporarily legitimated”* (Redmon 2003: 381). In this context, people say and do things that they would never say or do in normal life back home.

### *The PRs*

The role of PRs are very significant in the context of sex and substances; they are well connected in this social space and often also know drug dealers or sell drugs themselves in order to supplement their meagre wages.<sup>3</sup> They generally have a similar background to the tourists in San Antonio and while they are concerned about ‘working’, they place just as much importance on

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<sup>3</sup> The PRs we spoke to earned around €30-40 a night and made commission from drink sales. As a basic wage, however, this was not often enough to cover their living costs.

having fun. Some have established contacts in Ibiza having worked there for some years, while others get off the plane and start hunting for some sort of promotion work in bars, clubs or restaurants.

Some PRs with whom we spoke take substantial amounts of drugs and drink heavily most nights over long periods of employment (see Hughes et al., 2004). Therefore it is our contention that the PRs, club reps, strippers, prostitutes, bouncers and other workers in Ibiza's NTE are the ones who take the greatest risks - not the tourists - and this is a theme which has been largely overlooked in the research literature. As one walks up and down the drinking strip at night, numerous strip club PR workers boast about 'how much pussy' they have in their clubs and how 'fit the birds are'. As the night progresses, and as the numbers on the drinking strip swell, the numbers of these workers on the streets increase to draw in potential drunk and drugged up punters in the hope they will be careless with their spending. The PR men target very intoxicated male groups/individuals and, at times, are quite physical with the way in which they offer their deals; shepherding them in for 'all the pussy' they could want. Even the PR workers who don't work directly for strip clubs - actively promote the ideology of sex on a night out, however, it is predominantly with other young British tourists. For male groups we followed on this drinking strip, this seems to work; that is, selling the potential promise of sex boosts the expectation that sex - in some form - should happen and is a normal feature of the social moment and holiday environment. They also boast of their sexual conquests with tourists:

Thirty seconds later another PR couple approach us with tickets for an Ibiza nightclub:

**PR woman 1:** *How many of you are there?* [She starts wrapping free entry wristbands for Eden nightclub around our wrists]

**PR woman 2:** *Come over, Mark Wright from the Only Way is Essex will be there.*

**Popeye:** [Sarcastically] *Oh great. You are just trying to sell me something.*



**Streetfighter:** *All they are is a pretty face. They all want to sell something.*

**Popeye:** *Looks like we're going to Eden tonight.*

[An Irish PR man comes along who knows the PR women]

**Irish PR man:** [To the lads] *Plenty of pussy in Eden tonight.*

**Jay:** [Excited by this remark] *Fuck it, I'm gonna pay for everyone.*

**PR woman 1:** *I'll sort your tickets out then because we also have Professor Green. Its gonna be really good guys.*

[Irish PR man imitates having sex with a girl from behind and laughs about how he claims he pulled two young women in a night]

Indeed, later that night the four young men meet the Irish PR man on the drinking strip where they each pay €40 each for an organised bar crawl; where they pay for their own drinks and are led by half-naked PR women from place to place until they get to the Es Paradis and Eden where they have free entry. However, earlier in the day we were given free entry tickets to Es Paradis so essentially we paid €40 for club entry to Eden. In general, the PRs are very critical when they speak about the street prostitutes. Most with whom we spoke tend to think they have AIDs, and work for organised groups who mug and beat up their clients. In these field notes based on informal conversations with various PR men, this seems to be evident:

I start to talk with one PR man on the drinking strip. I joke that I don't have much money but was considering visiting a prostitute later in the night. He tells me its "*not worth it*" because they are "*African and Africa has the highest number of people with AIDS.*" He bemoans the fact that *they come here* but that people sleep with them anyway. He jokes how they "*pay €20 for AIDs.*" Before I know it, I have another PR friend and he puts his arm around me, starting to brag about his sexual conquests. He tells me a story of how he took a girl home

and *“smashed her all over the apartment”* after bluntly approaching her with the offer for sex. Afterwards, he stands back looking for my admiration and I reluctantly high-five him. He reiterates that all he does is *“club and fuck.”*

I walk out into the street where there seems to be some loud disagreement going on. It is now getting on for 4am. I walk up and down the main strip – the street is barely visible under the rubbish. There is another disturbance outside another bar and I start to feel like for many people the night is getting a little too much. I stand now at the top of the strip, looking down the hill to the port; watching the drunken bodies move from side to side, and from bar to bar. The lights are still flashing strongly and I start up a conversation with a nearby PR person. I am still curious about the alcohol deals.

The muscle-bound man offers me *“pint of Bacardi and coke, super strong, and one shot of sambuca, tequila, and absinth all for €7.”* I try to sound amazed at the deal and this prompts him to offer me more alcohol if I am with a group, promising to get me *“annihilated”* – such a strong word to describe it I think to myself. He says I can shag women in his bar if I want and if I am lucky the DJ will film it. As we are on the topic of sex, I ask about good brothels. Once again, he puts his arm around me and holds me close as if he is about to tell me the secret to the meaning of life. He says there are only two *“proper brothels”* around here and that if I can hold out I am likely to *“get my fingers wet”* at the end of the night when all the strippers are drunk and want to earn as much money as possible. I play along but say I am considering visiting a prostitute and he immediately ebbs on caution. He tells me I will *“end up with AIDs, herpes and shit”*. He recounts a tale about a friend who had his *“nob [penis] bitten, blood everywhere and got fucking AIDs.”* When I ask him how he can be sure, he doesn't seem to know but tells me *“problem is, they are all from Africa mate”*. [Field notes Dan Briggs]

### *The strippers*<sup>4</sup>

The strippers with whom we spoke came from a range of countries – Britain, Russia, Poland, Croatia, U.S. Unlike the PRs, they tend to work for economical reasons than for fun. Many of the strippers in this study seem to be taking substantial amounts of drugs and alcohol. Like the prostitutes, we found some to occupy quite a fragile and vulnerable position in this social scenery – although these women are perhaps unaware how vulnerable they are. This is not the complete story. We spoke to a few who seemed to be in control of their lives and substance use. Towards the end of the night, however, we observed several strippers stumble around the streets drunk and high on drugs. While working in some clubs, they are permitted to have a few drinks on the job, but in the main they drink what punters buy for them. This may also be drugs. In most cases, they are paid no money in strip clubs and have to earn commission for a wage – this seems predominantly through getting punters to buy drinks and lap dances. Outside strip clubs, they advertise their services in intermittent spells before swapping. In most cases, €10 buys entry to a strip club and gets two treble shot measures of spirit and mixer (most commonly red bull and vodka) and two shots. However, as the night goes on, the PR strip club workers are most concerned with maximising profit and may do deals to coax in the punters. It is difficult to determine what all the women working in these establishments do and don't do but the data suggests that some of our British youth had 'extras' in these places:

I walk past some pubs looking for somewhere to have a drink. One has pint of vodka for €6 and free shots. Once again, I am tempted in by a PR girl. Somewhere between the next approach, I am offered a lap dance yet I have only been walking up the street for a matter of minutes. There is another bar where one can have x2 vodka and red bull and x2 cocktails for €8 but there is no PR promotion. I decide to sit down in the same bar where I went on Monday night. The same waiter stumbles over as he tries to clear a table for me. The waiter

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<sup>4</sup> 'Strippers' not only strip but perform private lap dances. Some participants refer to them as 'lap dancers'.

offers two drinks (trebles in each), a shot and a jug of cocktail for €10. The Bacardi and coke I ask for arrives as a vodka and red bull. I question the green colour. The strip club starts to get busy and I go over to chat to a lady in blue (LIB):

[Dan approaches stripper]

**LIB:** [Suggestively] *Hello there.*

**Dan:** [Reading out] *'The genuine men's club.'* Well, what goes on in here then?

**LIB:** *Yeah, strip club. Girls on the pole, lap dancers, and you can buy a private dance upstairs.*

**Dan:** *So obviously I have to pay to get in, don't I.*

**LIB:** *No, its free to get in but you have to buy your own drinks. €10 gets you two doubles and a shot.*

**Dan:** *And what about if I want some lap dance?*

**LIB:** *Lap dance is €30.*

**Dan:** *For how long?*

**LIB:** *One song, or about 5 minutes.*

**Dan:** *Doesn't seem like much.*

**LIB:** *For €50 you can have them naked and €60 you can have their tits in your mouth.*

**Dan:** *Right.*

**LIB:** [Looks around cautiously] *Some girls do 'extras' but I'm not meant to tell you that so don't go round saying the girl in blue said.*

**Dan:** *Nah, don't worry.*

**LIB:** *Just ask her 'do you do extras?'*

**Dan:** *Thank you.*

When I return, another g-stringed stripper returns, once again, adjusting her hair and her bikini.

When we visited lap dancing clubs, the emphasis seems to be geared toward the client drinking and paying for lap dances and/or extras rather than 'enjoying the women strip'. In fact, the women we saw rarely revealed everything which what was promised by the PR men outside the clubs. So one must, once again, pay €30 for this privilege – or more for any other privileges. However, it seems that many young men in this study, who are aptly intoxicated - caught up with individual conceptions of what is expected of them on holiday and the banter of the group – often part with large sums of money to see naked women dance for them privately. One young man said he paid for three lap dances with different women, drinks and had 'extras' with one. He spent over £250 in the strip club.

### *The street prostitutes*

While there is an aggressive promotion of the strippers in the strip clubs, there seems to be general caution and mistrust of the street prostitutes who occupy the space surrounding the drinking strip – primarily at the top and bottom. Their caution does not simply stem from the potential business they may lose nor do they necessarily feel in competition with them. Instead, their caution seems to surround their potential for transmission of diseases; because they are apparently 'drugged up' and a few PRs indicate they are potential robbers who 'work in groups'. There is little information in our data to suggest that these assumptions are true. For example, we cannot comment on whether they have any infectious diseases, however, they do seem to be the most sober of those in this social scenery, drinking red bull/water throughout the night. Maybe this is because they have to stay alert – aware of the potential for police intervention or potential

victimisation from the punters. Our data show that some of these women had worked within the hotel and catering sector but because of the current economic climate in Spain, lost their positions and had to seek new ways of making money. Unfortunately, as the Introduction highlighted, some British young men do not see this side of their lives and have quite derogatory views of them. When we had informal conversations, many women were extremely cautious of our questioning. In most exchanges, they were evaluating other peoples' movements and checking that the police were not nearby.

In 2010, the prostitutes were found walking up and down the main drinking strip, and in the alleyways and side roads. In 2011, however, there seemed to be little sign of them throughout the night and instead, they seemed to congregate in larger groups at the bottom of the drinking strip. A brave few move around on their own but rarely stay in one place for significant periods. Having spoken with these women, we found that the general approach is to firstly only offer oral sex:

As Sébastien and I leave the club, within a few yards, we see some prostitutes; two are sitting on steps talking to each other while one approaches Sébastien. I am curious as to why they are not occupying the drinking strip as they were last year. As we stop, we are offered blow jobs for €20. One seems quite business-like about it. I say I am married but she insists: *"it will be good blow job, very good blow job"*. As she speaks, she looks around as if it is nothing to her at all. She, like the others, is black Sub Saharan. They talk in short language but no vaginal sex is offered. [Field notes Dan Briggs]

Offers change depending on whether they have seen the punter before, the level of their intoxication and the time in the night. For example, when we 'acted drunk', sex was offered for €100. In another example, as we walk off the drinking strip, it is assumed we are drunk and going home, and that our night is approaching its conclusion. Two young African prostitutes proposition us and then get quite physical – perhaps as a way of seducing us or determining our commitment:

**Dan:** [Smiling walking past as if just to pass] *Hi.*

**Prostitute 1:** *Hi.*

**Dan:** *How are you?*

**Prostitute 1:** *Let's go for blow job.*

**Dan:** *A blow job?! Well, that's very kind but...er...*

**Prostitute 1:** [Directly] *What?*

**Dan:** *What?*

**Prostitute 1:** *Come on.*

**Dan:** *Well, I'm new to this. I don't know.*

**Prostitute 1:** [Seriously and leading me away] *Ok, lets go.*

**Dan:** *Er, that's kind but...*

**Prostitute 1:** *Ok, lets go for sex.*

**Dan:** *Well, that's very kind but...*

[They both reach for our dicks and one grabs mine]

Generally offers come at €20 for oral sex and €50-60 for sex. The women we interviewed are reluctant to have sex but have no choice, they say, because they need to earn money. Some say they simulate sex with the punters because they are too drunk/drugged up to notice what they are doing. While they can earn more from those who take cocaine or who are too drunk who “*don't cum [ejaculate]*” they say, it is often a more frustrating experience. Others, they say, have quite odd requests which can result in victimisation if they do not comply. One woman we spoke to said when

she refused to 'do anal sex', one punter got aggressive and ended up kicking and slapping her in the face.

## **Discussion**

This article aims to provide an ethnographic insight (Van Maanen, 1988; Hammersley, 1992) into relationships that occur between British tourists and participants in the sex industry in Ibiza. In this way, it builds on work which has attempted to examine sex relations within the larger context of the tourist industry (Phillips, 2008; Cabada et al., 2009) and augment epidemiological studies which examine the extent of substance use and sex between British tourists in Ibiza and other resorts in Spain (Elliot et al 1998; Bellis et al., 2000; Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2009). We acknowledge the paper's limitation of class and gender debates but are starting to engage with these discussions elsewhere. We also realise that we have looked at this issue in San Antonio alone so are cautious to suggest it represents what 'Ibiza' has to offer in general; that is, different tourists holiday in Ibiza for different reasons and don't engage in these behaviours. The article, however, has attempted to provide a holistic account of this social arena and the role that substances and sex play for some of those visiting this holiday resort.

The findings support other research studies which found that British youth engage in higher levels of substance use and sexual relations (Bellis et al., 2000; Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2009) than in the home context (Riley et al., 2001; Barret et al. 2005; Standerwick et al., 2007 Grov et al., 2009). While research has indicated the extent to which casual labourers – or PRs as we refer - engage in substance use (Hughes et al., 2009), this study highlights how significant they are to sex and substances in the resort of San Antonio. In fact, the article shows that they play a key role as mediators of sex and substances as they are well-connected, with established contacts within the drug market. The data also indicates that most of them have developed persuasive strategies to attract customers – often playing on their level of intoxication and hedonistic intentions (Hobbs et al., 2000). Indeed, gender is also important and this is evident in the process of interaction



between opposite-sex PRs and customers. The promotions they advertise for the clubs are often running all night long and the core of such marketing are often based either on cheap alcohol deals or semi-naked female entourages; perfect for the male groups who have already bought into the ideology of sex on holiday. Therefore, the San Antonio drinking strip is a highly commercialised environment that promotes and capitalizes on young tourists' aspirations for a holiday 'blow out' (Hayward and Hobbs 2007; Hesse et al. 2008; Briggs et al. 2011).

Alcohol and drug use are not only limited to British tourists as many of strippers in the clubs also seem to use substantial quantities. Similarly to street prostitutes, they occupy fragile positions in Ibiza's social and economic strata. By contrast to the type of promotion that is relevant to strip clubs, the image constructed for street prostitution is characterized by suspicion and mistrust – street prostitutes are commonly regarded as 'drugged up', potential robbers who 'work in groups' and have STIs. Their marginal position in society is ignored or glossed over by many tourists and they may be regularly victimized by potential customers and by the police. By comparison to other places, there is, it seems, little regulation of their welfare (Cardinale, 1997). Evidence from our data suggests that some of the women who engage in prostitution have previously worked in hospitality and other manual labour positions but due to changes in the economic climate in Spain they have lost their previous positions and their current situation is one of the few ways of making money and providing for themselves.

We place these findings within a socio-cultural context which endorses substance use and encourages sex and also commercial sex (Bellis et al., 2003; Hesse and Tutenges 2011; Sellars, 1998) and theoretical contexts of the 'carnavalesque' (Bakhtin, 1984). On one hand, the drinking strip of San Antonio is designed for consumer spending (Miles, 2010) and holds all the familiar features of the UK NTEs (Hollands and Chatterton, 2003; Measham, 2004; Sonmez et al., 2006; Hadfield and Measham, 2009). On the other, the narratives indicate a resistance of a home structured in favour of the 'party atmosphere' where 'anything goes'. We feel this represents Bakhtin's (1984) idea of

‘festive madness’, which he sees as crucial to the turning of the world upside down and ‘time out of time’. Some descriptions of British holidaymakers actions are graphic but they enjoy it which resonates with Bakhtin’s idea of grotesque realism and carnival laughter.

We therefore feel that ‘sexy substances’ – which British youth expect to use on holiday (Bellis et al., 2003) – go hand in hand with the substance of sex in this space. Look at the way in which the strip clubs endorse alcohol consumption; the graphic nature of sex promotion which PRs parade during the day and night; and the sexual offers which the prostitutes make to drunken/drugged up young British men. This all seems to resonate with large groups of British youth – even if they have partners and families at home and even if they had made self promises to ‘be good’ – who come to Ibiza for a ‘laugh with the lads’ and become enchanted by the unlimited fun they can have (Briggs et al., 2011).

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