

**An Exploration of how the Social Supply and User-Dealer Supply of Illicit  
Drugs Differs to Conventional Notions of Drug Dealing and Consideration  
of the Consequences of this for Sentencing Policy**

**By**

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## Abstract

The concept of 'social supply' has emerged as a term used both in the UK, and internationally, to describe drug distribution that is non-commercially motivated and almost exclusively found between friends and acquaintances. Social suppliers have increasingly been presented as actors who are qualitatively different to drug dealers (proper), in relation to their motivation and their activity. As a result, they have increasingly become identified as a group who should be distinguished as such legally (Police Foundation, 2000; Release, 2009). While social supply behaviours can be identified in wider research literature relating to recreational drug use, there is a relative gap in regard to in-depth accounts of social supply activity, and in regard to a social supply definition. In a similar way, heroin and crack cocaine user-dealers - a group who are also perhaps not best understood as profit motivated suppliers - have received insufficient academic attention, with the majority of research references failing to go beyond typologies that recognise them simply as suppliers who also use. With research indicating that social supply permeates a meaningful section of adolescent and adult drug markets, along with evidence to suggest that drug supply embodies one of limited options for addicted drug users to fund their habit, this thesis explores how far we can understand these behaviours as drug dealing (proper). Using qualitative in-depth interviews and case studies, this interpretivist research design develops existing ideas, as well as highlighting emergent social supply and user-dealing themes.

Findings from this research indicate that social supply behaviours are usefully understood through a theoretical application of 'normalisation' (Parker et al., 1998) and 'drift' (Matza, 1964) and are wider in scope than those currently recognised by the literature base. The research findings also indicate the importance of the notion of 'economies of scale' - an incentive for drug users to obtain a larger quantity of substance for a cheaper price. Notions of reciprocity also feature, with group obligation providing a

rationale for involvement in social supply. The findings are also suggestive of the idea that user-dealing - understood through the theoretical gaze of Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' (1990) - is characterised by limited distribution, minimal profit and explicated as a *less harmful option* than other crimes undertaken to fund drug dependence. This thesis concludes with the proposal that a conceptual shift towards '*minimally commercial supply*' offers a more realistic and inclusive means of conceptualising both social supply and user-dealing activity. Possible ways forward therefore include the implementation of this term as a distinct offence that focuses on intent, thereby presenting a more proportionate approach than current policy responses for these groups allow.

## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

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### Publications

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## Introducing the Drug Dealer

For many, both the illicit drugs market and the main players that occupy them have been conceived as a largely homogenous phenomenon (Coomber, 2006, 2010). Arguably, partly a product of visual media representation and construction (Boyd, 2002), the drugs market is often represented in the form of a pyramid type structure (Hough and Natarajan, 2000; McSweeney et al., 2008). Here, individuals presented as 'king pins' or 'drugs barons' (Pearson and Hobbs, 2001) manage sophisticated drug distribution systems, supported by lower level 'street dealers' and 'runners' (Gilman and Pearson, 1991). Along with a sense of uniformity in the shape and structure of the imagined drugs market, drug dealers, whether they be profit driven wholesalers or drug addicted 'junkie' retail distributors (Pearson and Hobbs, 2004), are presented as predatory, immoral (Speaker, 2002) and generally unconcerned by the potential 'harms' their products may cause (Coomber, 2006). This image of the drug dealer is suggested to be culturally omnipresent, both historically (Berridge, 1999; Kohn, 1992; Musto, 1999), and within contemporary society (Murphy et al., 1990; Jacinto et al., 2008; McElrath and McEvoy, 2001). In contrast, the evidence base relating to illicit drug markets, drug supply activities and drug seller characteristics increasingly presents a picture of diversity whereby differing motivations for supply, suggest different levels of culpability and divergence from this homogenised image of the drug dealer (Coomber and Moyle, 2013).

## Social Supply: A Brief Introduction to the Current Research Base

Although there has been wide-ranging study of drug markets, the research to date has tended to focus more on commercially orientated drug distribution and otherwise criminally engaged dealers (see Adler and Adler, 1983; Fagan, 1989; Pearson and Hobbs, 2003, 2004). In this respect, there has been little evidence of studies that *explicitly* focus on social drug distribution in present day society. The literature base has

presented historical accounts of socially based markets and typologies, with commentators (Blum et al., 1972; Atkyns and Hanneman, 1974; Dorn et al., 1992; Dorn and South, 1990) highlighting actors' involvement in supply as a means of, for example, presenting an advocate stance towards the perceived good of certain drugs. Similarly, themes of reciprocity and obligation in drug using friendship groups are found to reside in research that focusses on twentieth century drug distribution (see Dorn and South, 1990; Dorn et al., 1992). However, there has been limited analysis of how far these themes are represented in *modern* social supply behaviours. Some recent wider (national and international) research findings have indirectly provided insight into some of the features of social supply. They indicate that rather than social distribution being restricted to youth markets, social supply is also found to characterise meaningful segments of the adult recreational drug supply market (e.g. Joe-Laidler and Hunt, 2008; Nicholas, 2008; Dunn et al., 2007; Shearer et al., 2005; Winstock et al., 2001). Significantly, while all this information contributes to a greater understanding of how social supply is acted out by adults and youth populations, there is an absence of detailed typologies of social supply roles, along with theoretical discussion of rationales for participation. Literature in this area also displays a lack of detailed analysis or dialogue on some of the contested aspects of social supply behaviours, such as levels of profit, the relationship between social supplier and receiver of the drug and the idea of social supply as a form of 'neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Potter, 2009). There have been attempts at theorising the scope of the term (see Hough et al., 2003; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), 2007; Potter, 2009), with some broad agreement regarding the main features of social supply. However, crucially, there is still no definitive agreement on exactly what social supply entails in relation to its scope and the roles that characterise it.



## **User-Dealers: Just Suppliers who Use?**

While social supply has largely been aligned with notions of non-commercial social drug distribution, user-dealing provides another example of a supply pursuit that would not instantly be conceived as fitting with conventional notions of drug dealing (Coomber and Moyle, 2013). The literature base has displayed a strong interest in the propensity for problem drug users to participate in acquisitive crime to fund a drugs habit. There has been an association between user-dealing and drug dependency by several academics (Akhtar and South, 2000; Dorn et al., 1992; Small et al., 2013; DeBeck et al., 2007; May et al., 2005; Cyster and Rowe, 2006; Cross et al., 2001; Lewis, 1994). In spite of this, there is still a distinct lack of focussed empirical research that situates the relative position and circumstances of the user-dealer in relation to aspects of addiction, illegitimate opportunity and problem drug communities. Wider literature can be drawn upon in order to contextualise the user-dealer's situation in regard to addiction (Nutt, 2012; Volkow et al., 2011; Coomber and Sutton, 2006), the structure of heroin communities (Stewart, 1987), and minimal profit (through consumption) (May et al., 2005; Jacobs, 1999; Coomber, 2006). However, more empirical work is required to align these themes with user-dealer typologies. Research that provides insight into this group's unique context could potentially provide valuable empirical support for the repeated calls (see Release, 2009; Harris, 2011b; Lai, 2012) for more effective and proportionate ways of dealing with this particular group.

## **Why Should we be Interested in Social Supply and User-Dealing?**

So why is this research study important? To address this question, some reference to the wider national context must be considered. In terms of current UK drug use trends, the recreational drugs scene has been argued to represent a context that goes beyond the 'dichotomous construction of a 'mainstream' of alcohol consumption and 'underground'

subcultural clusters involving simply ecstasy use' (Measham and Moore, 2009:456). Therefore, whilst not proclaiming that these behaviours and trends symbolise a fully 'normalised' (Parker et al., 1998) culture of drug use, the increased consumption of illicit drugs as an accompaniment to alcohol in UK has rendered drug use by otherwise non-criminal populations as not so unexpected as was once commonly understood (Aldridge et al., 2011). Far from suggesting that weekend drug use is a normal aspect of most (young) adults lives, it appears that in our 'consumerist society' (see Measham et al., 2001; Stephenson, 2003), there is a noticeable proportion of adults who consume illegal substances within the pub and club leisure space. Significantly, this consumption appears to involve an 'extending repertoire of weekend polydrug use' (Measham and Moore, 2009) whereby drugs used range from historically popular and recognisable drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy pills and cannabis (Parker et al., 1998), along with newly favoured psychoactive substances such as Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), gammahydroxybutrate (GHB) and ketamine (Aldridge et al., 2011). The increasing normalcy of consumption of psychoactive substances for largely otherwise law abiding citizens, together with the fact that drug use is widely conceived to be a social endeavour (Becker, 1953; Gourley, 2004) suggests that drug users are more likely to purchase drugs with friends or on behalf of friends (Duffy et al., 2008). Adding to this, it may also be the case that drug users become involved in these practices without even realising their actions to be legally conceived as supply (see Talking Drugs, 2011).

With the 'average' person increasingly likely to have used drugs, or know someone who is in some way involved in drug supply (Coomber, 2010; Barton, 2008), this could be suggested as creating a greater need for 'safe' access to drugs (Measham et al., 2001). Commentators are now acknowledging the internet as a new arena of access for drug purchases (Barratt, 2013; Barratt and Lenton, 2013; Hout and Bingham, 2013). However, despite this, research continues to suggest that club drug use and young persons'

access is very often 'sorted' through friends (Parker et al., 1998; McElrath and O'Neill, 2001; Measham et al., 2001; Aldridge et al., 2011). This trend has been suggested as predicated on the need or preference to decrease risk of arrest and cut out interaction with those who are assumed as dangerous criminals (Potter, 2009; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Coomber, 2010). As well as gaining prominence in the academic research literature, the increasing prevalence of socially based modes of supply are to some extent officially endorsed, with the Crime Survey for England and Wales suggesting 54% of respondents sourced their drugs from 'someone known to them, e.g. a friend' (CSEW, 2013). Arguably, the implications of treating social suppliers as drug dealers (proper) are potentially vast in terms of human rights arguments and legal resource issues. In this respect, there is a significant requirement for a clear definition and consequent recognition of social supply as a conduct and offence *separate* to commercial drug supply (Coomber and Moyle, 2013).

### **User-Dealers as a Distinct and Visible Group**

In 2010, there were an estimated one third of a million 'problem drug' users in England. Problem drug users are defined as those using opiates (mainly heroin) and/or crack cocaine, both of which are Class A drugs (National Audit Office, 2010). Recently use of problem drugs has been estimated as 'low' and the Crime Survey for England and Wales, for example, have reported the proportion of adults using heroin to be at 0.1% (CSEW, 2013: 11). An important point to make is that although problem drug users are a proportionately small group, their impact on crime rates is claimed to be high, with their cost to society estimated at around £15.3 billion a year (estimation, 2003-04, Home Office, 2013). While many have argued that estimates relating to the proportions and cost of problem drug users to society are exaggerated (see Stevens 2007, 2011; Potter and Osiniagova, 2012; Dorn et al., 1994), there is a clear and significant statistical relationship (McBride et al., 1999; Potter and Osiniagova, 2012; Stevens, 2011)

indicating that it is likely that this group does commit a disproportionate amount of crime. In addition, user-dealers should be understood as a unique group; the causes of drug dependency are multifaceted and it is important to note that they do not occur in isolation to the social circumstances faced by the individual (National Audit Office, 2010). Dependency often occurs in conjunction with other factors and complex needs (Maté, 2013) including trauma, marginalisation, homelessness, polydrug careers and co-morbidity (Falck et al., 2008; Neale et al., 2012). Ultimately drug dependency can very often lead to a cycle of drug abuse that is extremely difficult to break free from, even if the individual is truly convinced that they want to become drug free (Volkow et al., 2011). As a result, problem drug users (particularly crack cocaine users) are said to be highly criminally active (Briggs, 2012; Lupton et al., 2002). This characteristic is strongly associated with the need - often in the face of legitimate opportunity – to fund their drug habit through criminal acts such as drug supply or acquisitive crime. In regard to their position in the criminal justice process, between one third and up to a half of new receptions to prison are suggested to be problematic drug users (UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC), 2008; Briggs, 2012), and in the UK these offenders serve (on average) 37 month sentences for crack and heroin offences (EMCDDA, 2009).

There is also estimated to be a 57% recorded reconviction rate for substance dependent prisoners who were imprisoned for drug offences (Ministry of Justice, 2013) and the average period from substance initiation to recovery is reported to span 27 years (Dennis et al., 2005). Significantly, user-dealers are also believed to represent the largest proportion of heroin and crack distributors (May et al., 2005; Debeck et al., 2007; Small et al., 2013). In this respect, they clearly exemplify a distinct group who require more effective treatment in the criminal justice context, not just as a proportionality issue, but also at resource level. Accordingly, drug treatment, probation, or suspension of punishment in the place of imprisonment have been suggested as representing

potentially more cost effective and proportionate outcomes for user-dealers (Harris, 2011b; Release, 2009). While these disposals have been operationalised overseas (EMCDDA, 2013), they have found little favour in UK sentencing paradigms.

## **Social Supply and User-Dealing in a Wider Political Context**

Given that according to the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) social supply and user-dealing essentially represent a physical act of supply, regardless of the relationship between seller and receiver, the question posed in this thesis is whether legally, they should be considered any different to drug dealing (proper). Before the implementation of the 2012 *Drug Offences Definitive Guidelines*, there did not exist a legal differentiation between low-level non-profit motivated supply and commercially based (serious) forms of dealing, even though arguably, these small-scale offences are clearly not the conduct that the law seeks to target (Coomber, 2010; Police Foundation, 2010). Showing an awareness of this issue, in 2000 the Police Foundation called for a reassessment of social supply type offences, contending that the then current drug supply offence, as established under section four of the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971), did not make any distinction between different gravities of supply activity. Subsequently, the Police Foundation (2000) recommended that there should be some distinction between supply to friends and substantial criminally organised drug supply (s.26). They also recommended implementing a 'separate offence' of 'dealing', the main ingredient of which would be a 'pattern of activity of illicitly transacting business in drugs' (s.27). In contrast to this 'dealing' offence, the Police Foundation report (2000) also suggested that there should be a legal defence of 'social supply' where a person could prove his membership of a small social group that supplied a controlled drug (s.30). Despite case evidence suggesting that historically courts in England and Wales were already *informally* differentiating between commercially motivated and socially based supply offences, the recommendations of the Police Foundation Report (2000) were rejected, and sentencers

were left to continue to manage different levels of supply through their own discretion. In a similar way, courts had also unofficially distinguished between supply offences by 'addicted problem drug users' and commercial, profit orientated supply, suggesting that 'their culpability was likely to be less than that of many other suppliers' (Afonso [2004] EWCA Crim 2342). With continued evidence of *informal* recognition of non-profit motivated modes of supply in courts, it was hoped that there would be some official recognition of social supply and user-dealing activity featured within new *Drug Offences Definitive Guideline (2012)*. The implementation of this new sentencing framework has been suggested to be progressive (Moyle et al., 2013), for the first time broadly recognising the different levels of harm and culpability in drug supply acts and attempting to cater for low-level, social and non-profit transactions. However, in reality, the capacity of guidelines and their relative efficacy in capturing social supply and user-dealing offences as they occur in the real world, is suggested to be limited (Harris, 2011a; Moyle et al., 2013). This is argued to be related to the Sentencing Council (2012) providing a framework that exhibits insufficient understanding of the realities and scope of these activities (Harris, 2011b; Moyle et al., 2013; Coomber and Moyle, 2013).

## **The Purpose of this Study**

In the absence of in-depth, qualitative studies on 'non-commercial' drug supply, this research primarily aims to explore what has become known as social supply and user-dealing. The main purpose of the study, in line with the research questions (see Chapter Four), is to consider the extent to which these forms of supply can be compared to drug dealing (proper) – commercially motivated supply for gain. Following the key themes identified in the research base, along with identified gaps in the literature, this thesis aims to provide a working and qualitative definition of social supply and user-dealer supply. In addition, this study will aim to construct typologies that portray the nature and motivations of the different roles evident both in social supply and user-dealer activities. This

research is also interested in how social supply and user-dealing develop; therefore, a key theme for investigation will be the process of transition from user to supplier. For social suppliers, due to recurrent themes in the extant literature, there will be an added emphasis on how far social exchange and reciprocity feature within adult supply relationships, along with a critical focus on the relationship between drug receiver and social supplier. With limited empirical research focussed on the social situation and scope of behaviour associated with the user-dealer population (apart from addressing some key themes in regard to addiction, profitability and alternatives to supply), this aspect of the research is largely explorative. Along with presenting a useful theoretical perspective to examine these supply acts, this research aims to investigate the current approaches to sentencing and policy making for these groups in the UK. In order to achieve this, this thesis will examine the implications of the implementation of the 2012 *Drug Offences Definitive Guidelines* for social suppliers and user-dealers. Finally, the thesis will draw on emergent data to assess how far in policy terms social suppliers and user-dealers should be treated as *separate* to drug dealers (proper), and subsequently will offer recommendations for best practice in regard to the future management of these groups.

## Structure of this Thesis

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of eight chapters, excluding this introduction. In order to begin to conceptualise the drug supply act, it is imperative to trace understandings of particular habitual actions and the factors associated with them to the fundamental basis of sociology, structure and agency. Chapter One will therefore focus on outlining grand sociological theory as a means of broadly exploring the basis for human action. It will then move on to present micro-theories commonly utilised to explore drug trends and behaviours, as a way of exploring the propensity to participate in social supply and user-dealing. After providing this important theoretical foundation, with the

research aimed at exploring how far social supply and user-dealing can be compared to drug dealing (proper), Chapter Two focuses on common understandings of the 'drug dealer' and how s/he has been popularly presented, both historically, and in present day society. This chapter provides an important basis for understanding societal fear in relation to both the character and activities of the drug dealer. It also highlights the implications of these fears and myths and how they impact on all drug suppliers, at an individual and policy level. Chapter Three offers an analysis of what the research base and 'case law' offer in regard to social supply and user-dealing behaviours. This chapter provides overviews of explicit research findings and analysis of wider themes that are thought to add to our understanding of these types of supply. This chapter also draws attention to some contested themes and documents the key research gaps in relation to social supply and user-dealing behaviours. After providing a synopsis of the various theoretical tools for understanding supply (Chapter One), situating the drug dealer within society (Chapter Two) and then building a picture of how we currently understand social supply and user-dealer supply (Chapter Three), this thesis will then move on to discuss the chosen methodological approach. While the methodology outlines core aspects such as my interpretivist epistemological position and rationale for research methods, it also provides a space for reflective consideration of my fieldwork. This includes analysis of the realities of research, emerging challenges and ethical issues, along with an analysis of how data was coded and analysed.

Chapter Five and Six are devoted to exploring the thesis results and are separated into social supply (Chapter Five) and user-dealer (Chapter Six) chapters. Chapter Five develops existing themes associated with social supply, focussing on drug gifts, sharing behaviours and the relationship between the social supplier and the receiver of the drugs. It also discusses emergent typologies, social supply motivations and develops the concepts of 'normalisation' (Parker et al., 2008) and 'drift' (Matza, 1964) as helpful ways



of understanding social supply behaviour. Chapter six explores themes related by user-dealers; here limited distribution, minimal profit and supply as a preferable alternative to acquisitive crime are discussed through a Bourdieusian framework. This chapter also offers a comprehensive overview of user-dealer typologies, as well as findings regarding the logistics of 'doing' user-dealing. Discussion of the findings from the social supply and user-dealer sample will be undertaken in Chapter Seven. Here, findings from the analysis chapters are explored concurrently in relation to their implications for current policy approaches and outcomes for social suppliers and user-dealers. The discussion chapter also provides a space for the production of social supply and user-dealer working definitions. It is here that some suggestions for managing these distinct forms of supply in sentencing and policy terms are offered. Chapter Eight presents a conclusion to this thesis, critically evaluating the research methods and process as well as reflecting upon the limitations of the study. This chapter briefly re-emphasises the key findings from the project, ways forward, and the importance of the thesis, whilst finally offering some suggestions for further research or study in this area.

## Chapter One: Theorising Drug Use and Supply

This chapter seeks to provide a theoretical overview of the various sociological and criminological works that have been considered - not as an exhaustive list - but as most appropriate in explicating drug use and drug supply within society. While micro-theories commonly utilised to explore drug trends and behaviours will feature in the second part of the chapter, the first part will focus on outlining grand sociological theory as a means of broadly exploring the basis for human action. This chapter will examine the emergence of structural sociology, whilst also examining structurally located theories regarding the 'consequences of modernity' (Jarvis, 2007:23). Focus will be extended to the emergence of 'individualisation' and 'responsibilisation' in the context of the reflexive 'risk society' (Beck, 1992). Foucault's post-structuralist works will also be analysed; here, emphasis on discursive formations and genealogy will form a basis for exploring power, classification and the complexities of self-regulation. Since structurally based theories have largely been considered as 'all-powerful' and 'determining' (Sewell, 1992:2), agential theories will be explored and utilised as a means of critiquing what are perceived as some of the shortcomings of the structuralist school of thought. Highlighting the inadequacy of theoretical positions affording structure or agency primacy, this chapter will offer a Bourdieusian framework as a possible way of overcoming the objectivist-subjectivist tension. Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (1990) is therefore presented as a useful method of understanding how actors consciously choose actions, but do so within a constrained framework that limits the range and makeup of the options they are able to choose (Ritzer, 2008). Finally, this chapter will also draw on theories including: 'drift' (Matza, 1964), 'normalisation' (Parker et al., 1998) 'rational choice' (Clarke and Cornish, 2001) and 'strain' theories (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960), all of which are conceived as having valuable application in deconstructing the propensity to supply at a micro-level.

## The Problem: Actor vs. Structure

Wrong (1994), has questioned how as sociologists, we can best understand social organisation and the nature of social life more generally. How far do we choose our own actions and to what extent are we subject to wider social forces that shape and constrain our action? The extensive and largely unresolved deliberation of such questions, has led to this debate becoming labelled as the 'central problem' within social theory (Archer, 1988). While this thesis is concerned with exploring drug supply, it is believed that examinations of human behaviour cannot be contextualised, or located, without reference to the subject-object distinction (Mouzelis, 1995). In the same way as in his educational research Gambetta (1982) asked: 'do they jump, or are they pushed?' (see Giddens, 1984), this thesis seeks to explore these themes in regard to the basis for participation in drug supply activity. In order to begin to conceptualise the drug supply act, it is therefore imperative to trace understandings of particular habitual actions and the factors associated with them (such as addiction), to the fundamental basis of sociology. This is because it is central, not only academically, but in 'virtually all tendencies of social scientific thought' (Sewell, 1992:1), and furthermore, in the lives of every human being (see, Archer, 1988:x). The problem is therefore fundamental; the decisions that social analysts make, determined by the theoretical ideas they accept or reject, will have profound implications for empirical work and for conclusions drawn (ibid).

## Structural Perspectives

Structure has been defined by sociologists as encompassing anything from patterns that organise the social (Sewell, 1992), to arrangements that limit choices or opportunities available (Giddens, 1984). Structuralism initially emerged as a reaction against French humanism and the theoretical concern with the individual and notions of freedom and choice (Craib, 1997). Levi-Strauss has been identified as the 'father' of structuralist

thinking (Kurzveil, 1996), and his ideas in '*Structural Anthropology*' (1958) challenged the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre (1943). Drawing on Saussurian linguistics (Sewell, 1992) and phonemic systems (Ritzer, 2008), Levi-Strauss' structuralism focussed on systematically unearthing mental structures as they manifest themselves within wider kinship and social structures (Kurzweil, 1996:1). Central aspects of structuralism have been postulated as comprising of the recognition that differential relations are key to understanding society, and that utilising *language* and the contingent historical factors that shaped it (Olssen, 2003) as a point of theoretical departure, provides the most insightful way of exploring social life (Lechte, 2007). However, not all scholars followed Levi-Strauss (1958) in conceiving structures of mind as the most fundamental structure. Instead, for example, structural Marxists such as Althusser (1971) and Godelier (1972) prioritised consideration of systems that are formed out of the interplay of social relations, focussing heavily on social and economic structures (Di Tomaso, 1982) in their aim to explore 'the requirements and inventions of revolutionary class struggle' (Althusser, 1971:71). Adding to this, perhaps on a less rigid or dogmatic theoretical level than Marxist structuralism (Hayim, 1980), in '*Rules of Sociological Method*' (1938) Durkheim theoretically aligned himself with structuralism (more specifically structural functionalism), stating that social facts – such as religious ritual, family norms and informal rules (Martyn and MacIntyre, 1994) - should be recognised through the power of external coercion they exercise over individuals (Durkheim, 1938:45). Certainly, for Durkheim, the existence of sanctions, rules and obligation serve to sustain the structure of society and in this sense, how 'explanations of the most individualistic appearing acts are a function of impersonal laws and forces characterising social wholes' (Fay, 1996:51).

## **Macro-Structural Contributions: Modernity, Risk Society and Governmentality**

Following a brief overview of the development of the structuralism school, Beck's (1992) 'Risk society thesis and Foucault's concept of governmentality (1986) are offered as structurally based theories, which provide some insight into the structuring, or constraining features of modernity. While broadly, these theories provide insight into discourse and classification, they also provide a basis for later examinations of changing definitions of what counts as crime, the criminal, the victim and 'fear', (Mythen and Walklate, 2006:382). In the same way, general discussion of individualisation and self-regulation lend themselves to later themes of neo-liberal 'responsibilised' drug use.

### **Foucault: Discursive Formations and Power**

While there can be little doubt that Foucault's early work was influenced by structural linguistics (Olssen, 2003), he later rejected this label, moving beyond this (McNay, 1994) and examining the relationship between knowledge and power (Ritzer, 2007). Popularly conceived as the representative of post-structuralism (Miller, 1993), Foucault's early work concentrated on the significant 'discursive formations' (Rouse, 2005) that governed our potential to discuss different aspects of the social life. Discourses were posited as structuring human consciousness, with the possibility of change provided through 'gaps', which appear through extant discourses (King, 2004). The discourse term refers to historically and culturally specific sets of rules for organising and producing different forms of knowledge (Cuff et al., 2004). These rules are suggested - similarly to the grammar of language - to allow certain statements to be made (Olssen, 2006). Exemplifying this, Foucault (1984) directed his work on sexuality to explore knowledge (Smart, 2002), observing a whole new set of proprietary rules in regard to the domain of sexuality from the seventeenth century onwards (Flynn, 1985). Foucault suggests that

rather than repression or censorship (Cuff et al., 2004), what distinguishes these last three centuries from others, is the proliferation of devices that change the way we speak about sex (Taylor, 2013). Sexuality was thus noted by Foucault to have moved from free expression of sexual feelings and reactions (Rouse 2005), to being constituted in scientific discourses predicated on confession, medicine, reproduction and pathology (Foucault 1978). Derived from Nietzsche, genealogy also allows us to deconstruct power relations between the individual and the State, through investigating the history of the present (Gutting, 2005) and developing an understanding of discursive formation through the 'buried history of thought' (Cuff et al 2004:268). Applying Foucault's genealogy to the present day, Seddon (2011) suggests new classes or categories of people have antecedents, and therefore 'creative work' needs to be employed in order to recover 'the invention of concept and classification' (p.336). Drawing on Foucault's work, Hacking (2007) explains that scientific classification may bring into being a 'new kind of person' (p.285). Utilising homosexuality as an example, he argues that in Ancient Greece, whilst same-sex acts clearly were in existence, categorisations of homosexuality were not (Seddon, 2011). Therefore, the invention or classification of homosexuality redefined what it means to be homosexual and alters the space in which we shape ourselves (Hacking, 1986). In this sense, we are all 'made up' by the range of possibilities that exist in our own time. As Hacking (1986) puts it, 'we are not only what we are but what we might have been and the possibilities for what we might have been are transformed by the invention of new 'kinds' of people' (p. 233).

### **Technologies of Power**

Foucault was critical of theories that consider power as a centralised and sovereign construct (Fox, 1998; Foucault, 1980). Instead, as Purvis and Hunt (1993) propose, 'discourses should be understood as economies (with their own intrinsic technology, tactics, effects of power, which in turn they transmit)' (p.488). Moreover, Foucault's

(1986) concept of governmentality has an implicit association with the government of self, autonomy, compliance and obedience (Marsh, 2006; Gutting, 2005). These ideas can be further and more usefully explored through becoming acquainted with Foucault's vision of 'panopticism' (1977). For Foucault, the ideal architectural representation of disciplinary power is epitomised through Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon; created as a prison design proposed for maximising the control of prisoners with minimum staff (Rouse, 2005). In Foucault's (1977) words, the major effect of the Panopticon was its ability 'to induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power' (p.201). It is in this context that we can understand Foucault's (1984) assertion that power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it *comes from everywhere*' (my emphasis, p.93). Power is not possessed by a dominant agent, nor located in that agent's relations to those dominated, but is instead relational and distributed throughout complex social networks (King, 2004) and relationships (Duff, 2007). Foucault's 'governmentality' thesis is premised on the idea that Western society has developed a unique political power system, which is based upon the control and regulation of 'docile populations', that is, 'a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons' (Foucault, 1978:2). Ruling therefore becomes a reflexive activity (Rose, 1999) and with the absence of a sovereign state or absolute hierarchical power, is conducive to the establishment of a new more pervasive and diffuse (Duff, 2006) form of governance. These capillaries of power are achieved through surveillance and institutional governance technologies towards social subjects (Rouse, 2005). Crucially, Foucault's conceptualisation of governmentality also implies that the *individual governs their own self-disciplining techniques* (my emphasis, Cuff et al., 2004). Here, individuals internalise domination and subjugation (Taylor, 1984) through exhibiting a willingness to cooperate in their own self-regulatory practices (Marsh, 2006; Fox, 1998). In contrast to the utilitarian aims of sovereign power (Foucault 1984), disciplinary power therefore aims to

maximise the productive output of the human body (McNay, 1994), both at an individual and aggregate level.

### Risk, Individualisation and Modernity

Rather than a world less prone to risk, late modernity - characterised by capitalism and wealth – was suggested by Beck (1992) to create a 'risk society' (Jarvis, 2007). In this specific context, Beck uses risk as an analytical tool (Holloway and Jefferson, 1997) in order to understand how the social forms associated with technological innovation and the accumulation of wealth concomitantly serve to accumulate risk (Fox, 1999). In previous epochs, risks were suggested to be characterised by so-called 'natural hazards' (Bauman, 2007). However, paradoxically (Jarvis, 2007), in contemporary Western society, society has instead developed a specific risk profile, which is unique to modernity (Giddens, 1994). Rather than risk being abated by 'the culture of scientism' (Beck, 1992:2), Beck argues that risk might in fact be increasing due to the proliferation of technology, science and industrialism and their contribution in creating an assortment of 'manufactured risks' (Mythen, 2005). However, he also emphasises that risk society does not arise from the fact that everyday life has generally become more dangerous. In this respect, it is not a matter of the *increase*, but rather, of the *de-bounding* of uncontrollable risks (Beck, 2002:41) that is significant. At an individual level, Giddens (1991), whose concerns of the condition of late modernity parallel Beck's (Walliss, 2008; Petersen, 1996), explains that in this milieu, the self becomes 'a 'reflexive project', involving the abandonment of a concept of the life course being shaped by tradition and certainty' (p.74). This 'de-traditionalisation' (Giddens, 1994), whereby processes of reflexive modernisation 'tend to dissolve' traditional industrial parameters (Beck, 1992:82), therefore involved a reduction in economic and social support from the nuclear family. Under these conditions, where class, gender and family recede (but do not disappear), individuals themselves become '*the reproduction unit for the social in the life*



*world* (Beck, 1992:130, original emphasis). In this context, Beck (1992) suggests that individuals are compelled to assume the role of makers of their own 'livelihood mediated by the market as well as their biographical planning and organisation' (p. 130).

### Risk and the Regulated Self

Individualisation processes have been suggested to result in individual biographies becoming 'self-reflexive' and 'self-produced'. In this respect, Beck (1992) explicates the self as effectively becoming a 'do-it-yourself (DIY) project' (Beck, 1992:135), exacerbated by the the compulsion to find and invent new certainties for oneself (Beck et al., 1994). For Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992), late modernity is characterised by 'the self' undergoing substantial change, through the constraints over choice becoming effectively weakened (Giddens 1991; Peterson, 1996) or cut lose (Beck, 1992). In this setting, the individual is confronted with a complex diversity of alternatives, especially in relation to 'life-style' in which they must choose between a diverse array of subcultures, social ties and identities (Peterson, 1996). For Burchell (1996), the emerging (neo)liberal practices of government 'offer' individuals, groups and communities new opportunities to participate 'actively' in various arenas of action, encouraging them freely and rationally, 'to *conduct themselves*' (p.29, my emphasis). Furthermore, these processes of 'responsibilisation', as institutionally dependent processes of individualisation and standardisation (Kelly, 2001; Beck, 1992), incite and encourage the 'individual as enterprise' to 'conduct themselves in accordance with the appropriate (or approved) model of action' (Burchell, 1996). It has also been suggested as requiring the individual to adopt a *calculative and prudent attitude with respect to risk and danger* (my emphasis, Rose 1993:296). As Jarvis (2007) suggests, collectively, processes of individualisation 'generate winners and losers', with the latter category exposed to increased risk, diminished long-term economic security and restricted access to educational opportunities and the labour market (p.27). However, the 'contractual implication' of

these processes is that individuals and communities 'must assume active responsibility for these activities, both for carrying them out, and of course, for their outcomes' (p. 29). These notions have been argued to harbour significant implications (Burchell, 1996) for young people and their families, who must 'responsibilise' conduct as a consequence of individual biographies (Kelly, 2001). Moreover, in relation to public health, individuals are expected to 'take responsibility for the care of their bodies and to limit their potential to harm themselves or others through taking up various 'preventative actions' (Petersen and Lupton, 1996:ix).

### Agential Perspectives as Critique

Theorists of action or agency have responded to the 'subjective critique', that is, 'the rejection of actors meanings' and instead focussed upon events in which the individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that at any point within a given situation, the individual could have acted differently (Giddens, 1984). In contrast to structural accounts, theories that emphasise agency are largely predicated on the notion that voluntary action produces free will, and in turn, free will produces voluntary action (ibid). As such, a free agent acts without being subject to any constraint or restriction upon their will (Barnes, 2000). Sartre (1963) can be considered as one of the central proponents of agent centric theory, his existentialism stressing the 'staggering responsibilities of freedom' (Hayim, 1980:17). Here, it is suggested that an actor owns responsibility for everything they do and ultimately, enjoy complete freedom (Ritzer, 2000). In his methodological writings, Weber (1978) highlighted what he saw as the significance of agent centred theory, proposing that, if societies are simply collections of individuals acting randomly, there could be no social scientific study of 'society'. Instead, for Weber (1978), what makes sociological analysis possible is that people act rationally and engage in 'meaningful social action'. In this sense, motivation can be analysed as a direct explanation for an individual's course of action and therefore, inquiry should concern itself with the intended meanings implicit

in an individual's course of action. In a similar fashion, Parsons (1966) identified the problematic theoretical positioning, which he referred to as the 'utilitarian dilemma' (King, 2004), referring to the previous failure to recognise the impossibility of non-random social intercourse and events (ibid). For Parsons (1966), the key to explicating order in the midst of potential disorder (Di Tomaso, 1982), was through reference to 'common value attitudes in society' (Parsons, 1966:392), which make social action possible. Further challenging reductionist theories of agency, Sewell (1992) has argued that agency exercised by different actors is far from uniform, and that it varies enormously, both between and within societies, according to occupancy of different social positions. These positions offer knowledge of 'different schemas' and access to different kinds and amounts of resources, and therefore, different possibilities for 'transformative action' (Sewell, 1992:21).

While theorists have explored structure in conceptually differing ways, structural sociology is argued to be inclined to treat agents as much less knowledgeable and dynamic than they are (Giddens, 1984). In contrast, opponents argue that to be a human agent is to be purposive and to employ motivation, rationale and reflexivity in thinking processes and action (Mouzelis, 2007; Giddens, 1984; Weber, 1967). As Sewell (1992) suggests, structuralist arguments tend to assume a far too rigid and deterministic causal framework to social life (see also Giddens, 1984). Foucauldian works, for example, have come under attack for suggesting that the subject has no density beyond that of an empty space, or point of convergence for various relations of force (McNay, 1994). This is so despite Foucault's acknowledgement of the diffused localised resistance (Pickett 1996) to the 'complete incorporation of the normalising process of subjectification' (McNay, 1994:166). For Hoy (1999), Foucault insists upon agency and freedom, maintaining that there cannot be relations of power unless subjects are free, therefore postulating that resistance is found in Foucault's social ontology from the start (p.19).

Elsewhere, structural considerations or the pervasive effects of the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) have also been criticised for their lack of interest to the expressive, embodied dimension of the modern self (Petersen, 1996) and bias in their conceptualisation of reflexivity, regarding the body as an object to be 'monitored by the ego or subject' (Lash and Urry, 1994:38). Again such critiques serve to cast structure as reductionist and anti-humanistic; here, agential approaches argue that structural approaches reduce social actors to 'cleverly programmed automatons' (Giddens, 1984:2). While there have been efforts of incorporating aspects of resistance in particular instances and by specific groups at a broader level, there is insufficient acknowledgement of how individuals negotiate rules and regulations in a way that reflects their own contingency on a *daily basis* (my emphasis, Swartz, 2002).

## **Bridging Structure and Agency: Bourdieu's Theory of Habitus and Field**

I can say that all of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules

(Bourdieu 1990:65)

It is now generally considered that approaches which rely on the primacy of structure or agency are inadequate, since: 'to find that some approach is wholly deterministic, entirely objectivistic, or exclusively microscopic, is ground enough for ceasing to consider it a serious claim' (Archer, 1988:x). Positions that afford structure or agency primacy - even if they do acknowledge facets of negotiation and resistance - largely ignore that individuals are both influenced by the structural realities of social life and are free, within limits, to make their own choices and courses of action (Giddens, 1979:49). Instead, sociology has exhibited a requirement to take into consideration the fact that, as Archer puts it, individuals feel both 'free and enchained, capable of shaping [their]...own future and yet confronted by towering, seemingly impersonal, constraints' (Archer, 1988:x). In an attempt to transcend the subjectivist objectivist debate, Giddens' 'structuration' theory

offers a way of understanding structures as both the medium, and the outcome, of the conduct of individuals. Giddens (1984) asserts that 'the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction' (p.297). His works provide an account of agency that recognises individuals are 'purposive actors who, virtually all the time know what they are doing...and why' (Giddens, 1989:253). Moreover, Giddens postulates that 'the actions of each individual are embedded in social contexts' that 'stretch away' from the individual's immediate activities, and 'influence the nature of future activities' (1989:253). Whilst acknowledging the contribution of Giddens' conceptualisation of structure and agency as different sides of the same reality (i.e. the two sides of a coin), brought together through practice (Ritzer, 2000; King, 2004), significantly, there is little acknowledgement of why agents cannot quite avoid social failure under the 'often suffocating pressures of social structure' (Perez, 2008:4). Acknowledging this notion, in this thesis, the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1990) will be outlined as a praxiological alternative, offered as a preferred means of understanding practice.

In attempt to disregard 'the absurd opposition between the individual and society' (Bourdieu, 1999:31) Bourdieu's central ideas regarding '*The Logic of Practice*' (1990) will be evaluated as a potential mode of productively theorising the social life, reconciling dualisms of objectivity and subjectivity (Bourdieu 1989,1985a) The notion of 'habitus' and the central concepts of Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' (1990) evolved from Bourdieu's early empirical studies in Algeria (Navarro, 2006; Ritzer, 2008). Whilst studying kinship structures in this setting, Bourdieu conceded that social actors frequently broke kinship rules in socially recognised ways. As such, the structuralist evaluation as demonstrated by Althusser (1969) and Levi-Strauss (1958), lost sight of the agent and ignored the strategic improvisation that actors engaged in as a means of response (Swartz, 2002). In a similar way, Bourdieu also took issue with the sole reliance on a subjectivist position

maintained by Sartre's existentialism (1938) and related theoretical positionings (Ritzer, 2008), rejecting voluntarist conceptions of human action that emphasised human action as unaffected by social patterning. The outcome of this critical analysis would be the creation of a conception of human practice, which avoided reducing human agency as a subjective caprice, and also rejected any form of external determinism through a strong focus on the individual (Swartz, 2002).

## Habitus

[(Habitus) (Capital)] + Field = Practice

Bourdieu's theoretical conception of habitus (1977) is most notable for its consideration of agency within (and note, not reproduced by) structure (Jenkins, 2002). For Bourdieu, the theory of habitus appoints not just the foundational basis of practices (or action), but it also owns the potential to evade the infamous impasse of subjectivism versus objectivism (Navarro, 2006). Through habitus we can understand the ways in which the body can be found in the social world, along with the ways in which the social world is inscribed within the body (Reay, 2010). For Bourdieu the habitus is defined as:

A system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them

(1990b:53)

Put simply, the habitus can therefore be interpreted as the way society becomes deposited in the body, in the form of dispositions and structured propensities of thinking and acting (Wacquant, 2005). The habitus has also been described as an 'active residue' (Swartz, 2002:635) of an individual's past, which functions to shape the present through 'hexis', the 'embodiment of practice' (Bourdieu, 1977). In practice, the habitus is said to

manifest as our demeanour, manner and comportment of the body (ibid) and generally, how we see and carry ourselves (Jenkins, 2003). The dispositions of the habitus vary according to what position one occupies within the world (Ritzer, 2008) and in this sense, are directly affected by our entire collective history (Bourdieu, 1990b). This social history has been described as including: the class position one is born into (Dumais, 2002), one's socio-cultural history and our personal biography (Reay, 2004). Significantly, it has been widely acknowledged that individuals may be restricted both by their internalisation of their place within the social structure and a guiding sense of what is realistic for an individual in their position (Dumais, 2002). Bourgois and Schonberg's (2007) study '*Ethnic Dimensions of Habitus Among Homeless Heroin Injectors*' draws upon these ideas, portraying how social structural power relations intimate ways of being at the level of individual interaction, thereby showing how everyday practices and preconscious patterns of thought generate and reproduce social inequality in injectors (p.2).

Despite the centrality of personal history, the habitus is not permanent, nor fixed (Navarro 2006) but rather, transposable (Ritzer, 2008) and continually re-structured by the individual's encounters with the outside world (McNay, 1999). Social action is therefore guided by a practical sense (Bourdieu, 1988:782,783), and it is this that allows actors to respond to social conditions in a reasonable way, by providing a sense of which actions are appropriate (and what is not) in a given circumstance (Thompson, 1991:13). The habitus functions to generate *strategies* that allow actors to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations (Bourdieu, 1977:72). These strategies are developed by actors through experience of the social world and can be considered a 'feel for the game' (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986:111) 'and the kinds of situations it can throw up' (King, 2000:419). As Robbins (1993) has suggested, the habitus could be described as 'polythetic'; the idea of agency is positioned at the centre of the habitus concept (Reay, 2004), however, the choices available are also fundamentally restricted by the habitus. In

this sense, the habitus can be seen as an internalised structure that constrains thought and the propensity to choose, however, it does not *determine* them (my emphasis, Myles, 1999). As Bourdieu and Wacquant (2002) purport, 'people are not fools' (p.130), however, they are not wholly rational either; instead there is a sense of logic about their action, a 'logic of practice' (Bourdieu, 1990).

## Field and Capital

Bourdieu did not envisage human action stemming from habitus alone and employed the concept of 'field' in order to situate action within a social context (Swartz, 2002). The 'field' is a relational term, defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) as 'a network of relations among the objective positions within it' (p.97). In Bourdieu's own words, fields constitute 'spaces of objective relations that are the site of a logic and a necessity that are *specific and irreducible* to those that regulate other fields' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:97 – original emphasis). As a result, fields are understood to prescribe *their own values and regulatory principles* (my emphasis, Wacquant, 1992:17) and thus function as 'relatively autonomous microcosms' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97). Such relations are existential to individual will and consciousness and can be better imagined as the social arenas that accommodate the habitus. The occupants of positions within the field, the 'players' can be agents or institutions, but they are firmly constrained by the structure of the field and the 'Doxa', the courses of action available to them (Ritzer, 2008). Fields can become a space for struggle, and although they are not protected from wider participation, the players have a collective sense of the norms of the game and chase after the goals particular to that field (Crossley, 2001). For Bourdieu, the field is a social space of conflict and competition in which agents struggle, depending on their position within the field, to achieve command, or establish monopoly, over the species of capital effective in it (Wacquant, 1992:17). As Richard Terdiman has offered, a useful metaphorical understanding of "field" would be of the 'field' as a magnet:



Like a magnet, a social field exerts a force upon all those who come within its range. But those who experience these "pulls" are generally not aware of their source. As is true with magnetism, the power of a social field is inherently mysterious.

(as cited in Bourdieu, 1986:806).

The agents or institutions situated within the field are therefore subject to the pull of this field, their *position is determined by the relative weight of the capital* they possess (my emphasis Dumais 2002; Swartz 2002;). According to Bourdieu (1986), capital secures ones position in the social order, due to its capacity to give greater, or lesser, access to valued resources. Opposing Marx's reliance on economic capital, Bourdieu identified four main categories of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Emphasising the relevance of culture as a crucial form of capital (Navarro, 2006), Bourdieu associates it with educational credentials, the credentialing system, and the disposition to appreciate and understand cultural goods (Dumais, 2002). Social capital is defined as the aggregate of the 'actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of...relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition' (Bourdieu, 1985:248) and can more simply be thought of as a social relationship that itself allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates (Portes, 1998). As Ritzer (2008) elucidates, 'it is the capital that allows one to control one's own fate as well as the fate of others' (p.407). Significantly, Bourdieu (1993) also advises that whilst situated in the field, the agents or 'players' can employ a range of 'strategies'. Therefore, while agency can be exercised to a certain extent, 'the habitus does not negate the possibility of strategic calculation on the part of agents (p.5). However, in line with Bourdieu's 'constructivist' thinking (Jenkins, 2002), it is proposed that such strategies are not pre-planned and calculated, but rather, they follow objective and constrained lines of action (Wacquant, 1992).

## Bourdieu on Crime

While traditionally, the work of Pierre Bourdieu would not be readily associated with the study of crime, more recently, there have been attempts to introduce elements of his theory to criminological areas of inquiry. Taking on Bourdieu's key ideas, Chan (2004) deconstructs the formation of Police cultural practice, considering the structural conditions and cultural knowledge of policing, whilst emphasising the centrality of agency in linking field and habitus with practice. Within policing, the Bourdieusian concept of habitus provides a theoretical framework for incorporating dimensions of cultural knowledge, including unexamined assumptions, accepted definitions, tried-and-true methods, shared values, as well as bodily display and physical deportment (p.330). For police recruits, the habitus offers explanatory power in exploring police culture as a stable set of dispositions that generate coherent ways of seeing, thinking and acting, requiring almost no conscious thought on the part of the actor (ibid). Focusing on tensions between different ethnic groups of injecting heroin users, Bourgois and Schonberg (2007) have also made use of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Drawing on a Bourdieusian framework, the authors suggest that generative forces of the ethnic dimensions of habitus allows us to recognise how macro-power relations produce intimate desires and ways of being that become inscribed on individual bodies and routinised in injecting behaviours drugs. In the *'Habitus of The Hood'* Skott-Myre and Richardson (2010) use Bourdieusian theory as a means of unpicking the internalisation of often criminogenic or alternative mainstream values and social conditions of marginalised spaces (such as 'hoods'). For Skott-Myre and Richardson, the habitus of the 'hood' plays a crucial role in teaching residents what is and what is not acceptable, it also contributes to the naturalisation of behaviours and attitudes in certain contexts and can also make practices seem inherent to the spaces in which they occur:

Well, I'm from New Orleans. I come up [grew up] bein' around a lot of drug dealers. That's all I knew. Every time I come around outside . . . nothin' but drugs....I been around it all my life. That's all I knew.

(Dunlap et al., 2010:5)

Drawing on the empirical study of entry into drug dealing undertaken Dunlap et al., (2010) the Bourdieusian concept of habitus is also offered as a way of understanding how individuals may come in to contact with distinct contexts that illustrate the 'right' and 'wrong' ways to do things leading to common practices (Skott-Myhre and Richardson, 2010). In this particular example, the experience of growing up in an environment where drug supply represents a relatively normal activity, combined with wider structural factors illustrate how individuals may be restricted by both their internalisation of their place within the social structure and a guiding sense of what is realistic for an individual in their position (Dumais, 2002). Inspired by Bourdieu's (1990) attempts to find a middle road between agency and structure, Grundetjert and Sandberg (2012) suggest a compromise between the 'old' and the 'new' perspectives on women in the illegal drug economy. Focussing on female drug dealers, the authors draw on Bourdieu's concept of capital in order to explore the creative strategies employed to compete with men within a gendered drug economy. Offering the notion of 'street capital', the authors emphasise the significance of street knowledge and competence. For the female dealers captured within Grundetjern and Sandberg's research (2008), both past and present positions influence agents' capabilities and the resources they can access and, thus, the possibilities for their actions (Bourdieu, 1977:82–3). It is hoped that in the same way as Bourdieusian theory may provide an insight into crime, the author's acknowledgement of the interplay of agency and structural forces, along with the impact of capital on offending behaviours, may also offer the potential to develop our understanding of drug supply.

## Critiquing Bourdieu

Despite Bourdieu's ambitious attempt to move beyond the epistemological disputes that have shaped the discipline, his sociology has faced a wealth of criticism from the Academy. Analysis of the literature highlights that numerous scholars have taken particular issue with the 'deterministic' aspects of Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice', stressing an acute under emphasis on the rational, calculative, and reflexive aspects of human action (Jenkins, 2003; Mouzelis, 2007; Robbins, 2000). Although Bourdieu gives credence to the struggles actors face within the social world, it is suggested that neither the struggles, nor the strategies, in Bourdieu's theory consider conscious rational calculation and/or reflexive handling of the norms and actions of players (Crossley, 1999; Farnell, 2000). However, the idea of unconscious and non-introspective habitus was always theorised by Bourdieu to occur in normal and unremarkable circumstances, which through 'polythetic adaptability', required little rational strategy (Mouzelis, 2007). Bourdieu and Waquant (1992) offer incorporation of notions of rational strategy and reflexivity, but this is enacted in the situational context of when 'crises' occur, for example '*when there is a lack of fit between dispositions and positions*' (ibid). In this context, the habitus abandons taken for granted orientations and instead 'adopts more reflexive, calculating modes of operation' (Bourdieu and Wacqant, 1992:131). Another significant criticism of the habitus construct, relates to the idea that Bourdieu appears to fail to consider notions of 'resistance' within his analysis of the structuring structure of habitus (Fowler, 2007). For Lawler (2004) however, Bourdieu's pessimism is often regarded wrongly as determinism and in fact, Bourdieu (2002) does acknowledge the existence of resistance, but sees it as occurring *alongside* domination (my emphasis, p.80).

## Micro-Theories of Drug Use and Supply

Thus far, this chapter has been concerned with grand theories and macro level exploration of how far humans can be suggested to be rational calculating actors, or in contrast, individuals that are structured or constrained by wider social forces. While the basis of these theories can broadly advance our understanding of voluntarism vs. determinism and can therefore be applied to our understanding of drug supply practice, micro theories concerned with drug supply and use also have obvious value in deconstructing habitual drug behaviours in regard to specific populations, or cultural trends.

## The Relationship between Class, Poverty and Drug Use

For many years, sociologists and criminologists have identified persuasive evidence of structurally influenced patterning and distribution of drug use, related criminality and socio-economic disadvantage from a micro level perspective (Auld et al. 1984; Seddon, 2006). Although not all socially and economically marginalised populations will necessarily become problematic drug users, Neale (2002) states that particular sub-groups of the population such as the homeless, those who have experienced mental illness and those in contact with the criminal justice system or welfare agencies, are more susceptible to the various risk factors. Other authors have stressed the tendency for individuals living in areas characterised by poverty and low levels of social capital to engage in illegal drug use as a form of self-medication (Maté, 2013) and as a coping mechanism in response to stressful life experiences, which are the product of living in a disadvantaged community (Boardman et al., 2001; Weiss et al., 1992). The idea of inequality and social positioning has been applied to drug use patterns, suggesting that people with low socio-economic status are more likely to experience negative outcomes

from the same pattern of drug use than people with higher socio-economic status (Room, 2004).

As well as having a connection with drug use, poverty and factors associated with it (such as social exclusion and marginalisation), can also be understood as pre-cursors, or push factors into drug selling. Research studies have described the high incidence of adults' routine exposure to participation in the drug market, as both users and sellers in inner city locales (Dunlap, 1995; Dunlap et al., 2000; Golub, et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 1998). In their research investigating the consequences that macro-level social forces had on the New Orleans drug market, Dunlap et al. (2010) contend that poverty remains the prime reason for continued participation in drug dealing. Dealers often related being unable to find employment that would pay them sufficiently or simply could not find employment at all. Subsequently, the drug market presented an alternative means of acquiring financial capital through the development of illicit business practices. Place is also important in passing along conduct norms for illicit drug use and sales, especially when particular locales are characterised by social disorganisation and are already established as prime areas for drug selling (Yonas et al., 2007; Dunlap et al., 2010). While the family generally provides the foundation of children's normal socialisation, research has also indicated that it can serve as a training ground for deviant and criminal behaviour (Dunlap et al., 2002; Johnson, et al., 1998). This leads to such practices becoming accepted at a young age and as a viable, normal and attractive means by which money and social capital can be acquired (Dunlap et al., 2010; May et al., 2005).

### Strain Theories

Along with the general observations regarding socio-structural determinants of drug use, 'strain theory' has become a popular theoretical way of understanding criminality within the sociological discipline. At a basic level, the idea of strain principally relates to

relationships in which 'others prevent the individual from achieving positively valued goals' (Agnew, 1992:49). The theory can be grouped within structural sociology due to its concern with the disjunction between the rigid social structure and the cultural goals of modern industrial society (Merton, 1968). It is within this disjunction that the 'meritocratic ideal is belied by the reality of inequality in the social structure' (Farnworth and Lieber, 1989:264). Lower class individuals are often prevented from achieving their aspirations (ideal goals) and expectations through conventional, legitimate means (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). Therefore, illegitimate means, such as drug supply (see Fairlie, 2002), may be employed as a way of generating capital in order to gratify the need to obtain commodities and lifestyles that consumerist, 'liquid' society demands (Bauman, 2005). Empirical studies (see Reuter et al., 1990) have supported this theory, suggesting that for young adults, the primary incentive for participation is the perceived income, which is otherwise believed to be unobtainable in deprived communities (Harocopos and Hough, 2005). Adding to this, young people involved in drug sales have acknowledged that income taken from licit employment would not be in any way comparable to their profits from drug sales (Huff, 1996).

The idea of employing illegitimate means in the face of adversity, can also be conceptualised as a form of 'resistance', triggered by the prolonged marginalisation of particular communities, who respond through rebellious practices and an 'oppositional street culture' (Bourgois, 1995:8). In his ethnographic study of Puerto Rican crack cocaine suppliers in 'El Barrio' (East Harlem, New York), Phillipe Bourgois saw the crack economy and dealer activity within this New York district more as a product of structural forces than 'evil' individualistic motivations (Coomber, 2006). Similarly, in their study of norms and values regarding 'drug dealers' in high risk populations in New York, Friedman et al. (2007) suggest that exposure to some of the problems associated with socio-economic disadvantage in such communities (i.e. violence, discrimination, abuse)

could produce political hostility to existing authority. In some instances, this gave rise to young people to accepting drug dealing as a legitimate way to earn money in an impoverished environment. It is important to note that both Bourgois' (1995) research and theories of 'strain' focus on very specific populations and thus their ability to theoretically deconstruct drug use and supply, arguably is limited. Apart from their focus on specific populations, they also fail to account for (amongst others) why individuals from the middle classes and beyond become involved in delinquency, and why only some individuals exposed to strain commit delinquent acts (see Agnew, 1992). Despite these limitations, the conceptualisations explored above provide an important structurally located account of how individuals in particular communities may develop a propensity to become involved in drug use and supply.

### **Subjectivity, Drug Use and Supply**

As well as prioritising the constraining socio-economic effects of particular communities, in contrast, sociologists have also conceived neo-liberalism to be characterised by a form of rule that creates a sphere of freedom for subjects, so that they are able to exercise a regulated autonomy (Petersen, 1996). As explored previously, both early liberal and neo-liberal rationalities of government have been suggested as premised upon the self-regulation of the governed. This form of rational self-conduct is apprehended not so much as a given of human nature (i.e., the interest-motivated, rational ego), but as a consciously contrived style of conduct (Burchell, 1993; Gordon, 1991; Rose, 1993). The language of the entrepreneurial individual, endowed with freedom and autonomy, is now predominant in evaluations of the ethical claims of political power and programs of government (Rose and Miller, 1992: 200). The entrepreneurial subject is cast as one 'capable of exercising a regulated freedom and caring for themselves as free subjects' (Rose, 1993:288). Through the neo-liberal risk context, the hegemonic control of the State over the definition and control of the drug user as a 'deviant' body, have been



embodied through discourses of individual social subjects as 'addicts', 'junkies' and 'dealers' (Radcliffe and Stevens, 2008; Speaker, 2002). Officially, this approach has been suggested to have become less prevalent, in favour of a new harm reduction approach treating drug users as '*responsible, informed and autonomous decision makers and consumers of risk*' (my emphasis, O'Malley, 2004). In this context, the drug user has increasingly become produced as a 'responsibilised' agent whose 'right' and responsibility it is to manage the risks to self and any others associated with their drug use (Fischer et al., 2004; Miller, 2001; Riley et al., 1999). In this sense, citizens are encouraged to participate in 'controlled', 'safe' or 'responsible' drug use (Bunton, 2001; Fischer et al., 2004). While this may arguably offer drug users some of the respect and responsibility afforded to neo-liberal subjects, it also has the potential for neglecting the role played by structural disadvantage and social, cultural and political contexts in shaping risk and constraining agency. The corollary of this may be drug users are further stigmatised by the perception that they are 'failing' the test of neoliberalism (p.3045) and this therefore, may serve to intensify their marginalisation.

Theories from the classical school of criminology have also traditionally emphasised the rationality and freedom of offenders' decision-making processes (Garland, 2004; Roshier, 1989) with the liberal subject positioned at the centre of the thinkers writing as a 'prudent forward-thinking rational actor' (Crawford, 2007:867). Drawing on Bentham, classical criminologists see crime as a product of rational free will and a course of action chosen according to utilitarian calculations of the potential pleasure and pain involved (Muncie et al., 1996). These particular ways of understanding criminality have since been reworked and reintroduced by criminologists through 'rational choice' and 'routine activity theories' (Downes and Rock, 2007). Here, through a rational choice perspective, 'economic man' is said to make decisions centred on issues of risk, effort and reward (Clarke and Cornish, 2001). Crime is thus a purposive behaviour executed to meet the

offenders 'common place needs' for things such as sex, status, excitement and money (Clarke and Felson, 1993:6). Decision making is predicated upon 'bounded rationality' (Clarke and Cornish, 2001) and situational variables such as needs, opportunities and motives that trigger the decision regarding whether or not to engage in a particular criminal activity (ibid). In focussing on notions of rationality in relation to drug suppliers, the drug *dealing* subject, who is generally conceived as a antihero (see Coomber, 2006; McElrath and McEvoy, 2001), can be conceived as an immoral liberal subject, rationally pursuing commercial self-interest but without moral restraint (Dwyer, 2009). The drug *using* subject, by contrast, is chaotic, irrational, undisciplined and unproductive, living a meaningless existence (Brook and Stringer, 2005; Keane, 2002). As Dwyer suggests (2009), although rarely observed, these two constructions must, by definition, be co-existent in the body of the drug-using dealer. This however, produces a complex conceptual tension such that the drug-using dealer is seen to have, and not have agency, is found to rationally pursue self-interest, yet is irrational, and so on (ibid).

### **The Meaning of Friendship: the Relationship Between Drug Supply and Friendship and Reciprocity**

As explored previously, the notion of structure is not always necessarily concerned with the physical manifestation of social institutions (Ritzer, 2000). Indeed, we can define structure as anything 'structuring' another aspect of social existence (Sewell, 1992:2). As such, an additional structure that can reasonably be explored in order to theorise drug use and supply are social networks and the role of structures of friendship in access to drugs. Although friendship will be explored later as a means of differentiating social supply from commercial dealing (see Chapter Three), it will be examined here as a determining structure, through its intrinsic ties to notions of obligation, reciprocity and exchange. Adolescent drug use has historically been popularly tied to notions of 'peer influence' where social networks are identified as risk factors in relation to the tendency

to consume drugs (see Kandel, 1985). However, there appears to be a relative gap in the UK literature when considering social networks as a determining structure in the propensity to *supply* illicit drugs. Elsewhere, in a study scoping 'not for profit' drug supply in Australia, Nicholas (2008) makes an interesting connection between the demographic characteristics of 'generation Y' (an 18-29 year old cohort whose social world is shaped by experiences of familial breakdown and dependency on social networks) and a subsequent commitment by this group to their group of friends, well beyond young adulthood. Supporting this, 'modern' views of friendship have acknowledged the effects of industrialisation and the move from a 'collective past to an individualised present' (Adams and Allan, 1998:9), which has resulted in a weakening and dispersal of social bonds such as kinship and obligation (Bengtston, 2001). In this context, Pahl (2000) has observed that friends may now be taking over various traditional social tasks, duties and functions from family, simply out of practical necessity. Friendship can thus be viewed as freely entered into, but equally formed around economic and cultural forces, and in this sense can be utilised as a resource for managing the postmodern situation (Allan, 1996). For Nicholas (2008), the central importance of friendship and social groups in society, therefore supports the friendship-based pattern of distribution of illicit drugs that is currently witnessed in Australia and beyond.

### Universal Reciprocity Principles

A concept that is instrumental in connecting the social networks and friendships to drug distribution is that of *reciprocity*. Although the term has been interpreted by sociologists in various ways (Gouldner, 1960), its importance as a principle of the social life is summed up well by Simmel (1950), who remarks that social equilibrium would be redundant 'without the reciprocity of service and return service' (p.357). In a similar way, Gouldner (1960) believed the value of reciprocation to be so significant that he asserted that all human societies subscribe to this norm:

Insofar as men live under such a rule of reciprocity, when one party benefits another, an obligation is generated. The recipient is now indebted to the donor, and he remains so until he repays. (p.174).

Marcel Mauss (1924 [1990]) had previously popularised these ideas through a guise of 'obligation' while focussing on gift giving and exchange through anthropological studies of 'primitive' cultures. Although Mauss' study is primarily a comparison of 'economic prestations' in various 'archaic' societies (namely the Trobriand Islands and Polynesia), his work is successful in relating gift exchange and reciprocity to individuals and groups as much as the objects themselves:

One important set of phenomena: namely prestations which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested. The form usually taken is that of the gift generously offered; but the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and self-interest

(Mauss, 1924:1)

For Mauss then, there are no free gifts; instead, gift giving is characterised by obligation. We give because we are compelled to do so and because the recipient possesses some kind of right of property over anything that belongs to the donor. As such, for Mauss, 'to refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war; it is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality' (1924:13).

### **Symbolic Exchange and Obligation in Social Drug Markets**

The notion of reciprocity has found some recognition within commercially based drug markets (Coomber, 2003, 2006). However, there has tended to be a much wider appreciation of the strong propensity for reciprocity and exchange between social sellers (Blum et al., 1972; Dorn and South, 1990; Dorn et al., 1992). Focussing on these so-called 'friend dealers' (Coomber and Moyle, 2013), the research literature has identified the social and symbolic significance of the exchange of illegal drugs such as cannabis, which has been conceived similarly to the trading of other non-illegal items such as

music, make up or tobacco (Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Cullen, 2010). For Cullen (2010), through the means of exchange and reciprocal relations, young women who traded cigarettes were able to begin to gain status and learn of group dynamics and rivalries, as well as owning a social space in which they could engage in identity formation. Cannabis use has also been widely reported as significant in helping to form and sustain user's identities (Bell et al., 1998; Hammersley et al., 2001). Additionally, recent research from Foster and Spencer (2013) has highlighted drug and alcohol use as 'intricately woven into friendship' (p. 223). Narratives from this research indicated that drugs and alcohol furnish young people with a relatively inexpensive pastime, introducing opportunities for intimacy that are otherwise difficult to attain. While it is clear that reciprocity and social change have much significance in adolescent drug transactions, further research could explore how far we can attribute notions of social supply and drug use as a social process centred on exchange and identity building within adulthood, as well as adolescence.

## **Normalisation**

### **Illegal Leisure: The North West Longitudinal Study and its Findings**

The normalisation thesis is based upon the findings of the North West England Longitudinal Study, which aimed to investigate 'illegal leisure' within a cohort of 700 participants (aged 14 at that time) over a five year period, beginning in 1991 (Parker et al 1998). The research was set in a particular context, referred to as 'the decade of dance' (Aldridge et al., 2011) where the evolution of 'scenes' such as 'rave' (1990 -1992) and dance (1993 onwards) began. This particular context is important as it was conducive in attracting a new demographic toward drug related leisure; as Parker et al. (1998) highlight, 'ravers' were not from the 'excluded zones' where junkies lived, instead 'they were younger, of both sexes and from all social classes' (p.7). Significantly, it also saw a

notable rise in particular forms of drug use, namely 'recreational' 'sensible' drug use' (Measham et al., 1994; Parker et al., 1998). It was the recognition of these new styles of use within this 'chemical generation' (Measham et al 2001), which inevitably led Howard Parker, Judith Aldridge and Fiona Measham (1998) to argue that there was a need for new improved understandings of young people's drug experience, and further to this, to put forward the landmark claim that young peoples' drug use was becoming 'normalised':

Over the next few years, and certainly in urban areas, non-drug trying adolescents will be a minority group. In one sense, they will be the deviants...for many young people taking drugs has become the norm

(Parker et al., 1995:26).

### The Normalisation Criteria

In order to ascertain whether we are living in a society that is characterised by normalisation, Parker et al. (1998) offer a criteria signified by six distinct elements. A society symbolised by normalisation therefore was one with (1) a high availability of drugs and drug offer situations; (2) increased 'trying rates'; (3) 'regular' use of illicit drugs; being 'drug wise' or owning considerable knowledge of drug issues; (4) 'future intentions' to use drugs, (5) 'cultural accommodation' of sensible drug use and (6) the idea of culturally embedded risk taking as a life skill (Parker et al., 1998:153). These elements were all found to be rife within the Greater Manchester sample group. Evidence of drug availability was proved through the 'incremental rise in drug offer situations' (p.153). Moreover, Parker et al. (1998) posited that by the age of 18, six out of ten participants disclosed drug trying. Findings further suggested that a quarter of the sample were engaged in regular drug use (p.154) and those that were not actively engaged, showed strong evidence of being 'drug wise', providing considerable knowledge about recreational drugs. For Parker et al. (1998), this demonstrated the relative inescapability from recreational drugs at this time. 'Future intentions' were marked as a further

dimension of the normalisation of drugs, with extensive open mindedness in regard to potential drug use believed as indicative of a normalised recreational drug culture. Rather than theorising drug use as a subcultural phenomenon (as had been previously prevalent within the disciplines of sociology and criminology), Parker and colleagues (1998) suggested that recreational drugs were easily accommodated in a licit lifestyle, and therefore effectively represented another leisure activity. Here drug use was no longer conceived as deviant and unorthodox (Pennay and Moore, 2010), and in contrast, is associated with pleasure (Duff, 2008), excitement and consumption-orientated lifestyles (Measham and Shiner, 2009)

### **Evaluating Normalisation as a Theoretical Concept**

Unsurprisingly, the normalisation thesis - although generating support (see Blackman, 2007; Moore and Miles, 2004; Hammersley and Leon, 2006) - has faced a substantial amount of critique regarding the methodological aspects of the research, as well as the rationale behind the normalisation criteria (Shiner and Newburn, 1999; Shildrick, 2002). At a broader level, Shildrick (2002) questions the basis of the concept in relation to its expansive and generalised application, 'which does not allow for the ways in which some types of drugs and drug use may or may not be normalised for some groups of young people' (p. 47). Another issue with the normalisation thesis has been suggested to relate to an emphasis on agency over structure when it comes to young people's drug decisions (Aldridge et al., 2011). An array of important variables such as social class, socio-economic position, gender and culture have an enormous bearing upon our apparent 'free' choices, in this respect, it is anticipated that a better recognition of how we are constrained by such factors would enrich the thesis (Measham and Shiner, 2009). Methodologically, critics have challenged Parker et al. (1998) in relation to how they engaged with the data, taking issue with utilising 'crude' measures of drug use (Newburn and Shiner, 1997) and identifying an apparent failure to distinguish between 'type' of drug

use along with a tendency to exaggerate the extent of drug use amongst young people (Wibberley and Price, 2000) whilst neglecting the context in which the drug is consumed (Newburn and Shiner, 1997:12). For Newburn and Shiner (1999), 'normalisation' was suggested as portraying drug use as being as 'normal as a cup of tea' and thus they proffer, that the very idea of young people perceiving drug use as being unproblematic, is 'at the very least, guilty of romantic hyperbole' (p.152). Many of these critiques have since been addressed by Aldridge et al. (2011) who highlight that normalisation was never concerned with 'absolutes', and instead was interested in theorising the movement of drug use from the margins of society towards the mainstream (p.219).

### **Towards the Normalisation of Drug Supply?**

Significantly, the normalisation of drug culture and use, may also provide a context for seemingly 'normalised' modes of supply. As Parker et al. (2002) suggest, 'friend networks', whereby 'otherwise fairly law-abiding individuals' access drugs for one another, 'act as a filter or social device that allow individuals to obtain drugs without venturing into the world of dodgy dealers and so risk apprehension or trouble' (my emphasis Parker et al., 2002:945). In this sense, involvement in social supply activity may represent an attractive alternative for drug users (Aldridge et al., 2011), minimising the perceived dangers of the wider drug market, whilst promoting factors such as drug access and convenience (Parker et al., 1998; Measham et al, 2001). With literature acknowledging the blurring of use and supply (South, 2004; Potter, 2009; Coomber, 2004), commentators have highlighted the idea that the majority of users can find themselves on 'both sides of the (drug) transaction' (Parker, 2000). In this respect, at one time or another, many users would have been seen by the law as a supplier (Barton, 2008). With the ways in which drug use is constructed, perceived and sometimes tolerated as embedded social practice (Duff, 2005), it may prove worthwhile to ponder



how far supply, within the context of recreational drug use, can also be considered in this way. While the idea of normalisation has become theoretically popular in respect to its application to *drug use*, the development of its application in regard to supply presents a potentially interesting area for investigation, one which will be explored and in conjunction with empirical research, considered in this thesis.

## Delinquency and Drift

The normalisation thesis explored above provides a helpful theorisation of the relative context in which social supply and user-dealing are situated. Apart from providing indicators that can assess how far drug use is becoming normalised, interestingly, the '*Illegal leisure*' study (1998) also observed distinct transitions (to be explored in detail in Chapter Three) where drug users would, throughout the life course, have lesser and greater access to drugs (Aldridge et al., 2011) and therefore seemed to 'drift' in and out of use. In an attempt to theorise this phenomenon, the literature review will now draw on David Matza's '*Delinquency and Drift*' (1964) and latterly Murphy et al's (1990) application of 'drift' to cocaine dealers, in order to assess its wider application to social and user-dealer behaviours. Conducting his research on a population of juvenile delinquents, Matza's (1964) research highlighted the pronounced fluidity of young people's drift in and out of crime; portraying the extent to which 'the delinquent transiently exists in a limbo between convention and crime' (p.28). For Matza, delinquents are not especially different from us since for the majority of the time, they are 'conventional' in both belief and conduct (Downes and Rock, 2007). Indeed, Matza in earlier collaboration with Sykes (1957) claimed that delinquents were not consciously committed to deviant values, neither were they career criminals but due to low levels of social control, they tended to drift in and out of deviant activity, blurring moral boundaries and rationalising their acts through 'techniques of neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1957):

Drift makes delinquency possible or permissible by temporarily removing the restraints that ordinarily control members of society, but of itself it supplies no irreversible commitment or compulsion that would suffice to thrust the person into the act...I wish to suggest that the missing element which provides the thrust or impetus by which the delinquent act is realized is will.

(Matza 1964:181)

Techniques of neutralisation are therefore intrinsically tied to the management of the 'drift' into deviancy. Ways of controlling the apprehension connected to the infraction - also known as 'techniques of neutralisation' - have been explicated by Sykes and Matza (1957) as the 'extension of defences to crimes, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large' (p.667). The concept is connected with the process of 'drift' where the 'construction of beliefs regarding the technical incompetence of officials' and 'discounting the consequences of effective counteraction' (p.189) enabled the individual to drift into deviance without anxiety or fear of consequences. While most of the time they are law abiding, the situation of 'youth' could be said set individuals free from various restraints and thus, they often drift in and out of deviance (Murphy et al., 1990).

### Drift into Dealing

Along with explicating fluid movement in and out of criminality or 'drift into delinquency', one can also articulate the utility of the notion of the 'episodic release from moral constraint' (Matza, 1969) in terms of its ability to account for dealing behaviour. Although clearly drift may not be able to account for all moves into social supply and user-dealing (or even social supply to dealing proper), its utility lies in its consideration of how principally non-deviant populations transition in and out of drug supply. Murphy et al. (1990) appear to be the first scholars to formally make use of this theory, however, since then, separate studies have also drawn on the idea of drift within drug supply, with Murphy and colleagues again identifying 'drift' into dealing as a 'major' type of initiation

into selling in their study of ecstasy selling in San Francisco (p.viii). This finding was mirrored in a UK context by Ward (2000, 2010), who also observed unintentional drift into dealing within ecstasy markets. Murphy et al's (1990) original empirical work used 'drift' to help make sense of their own participant's fluid cocaine supply histories, and consequently produced some interesting insight which may be applied to social and user-dealer supply activity. Interviewees reported drifting into dealing by virtue of their strategies for negotiating the problems concerned with using a prohibited substance. Here, wider user participation in distribution and drug exchange ensured safety, sociability and a cost effective way of obtaining cocaine. Importantly, Murphy et al. (1990) identified that movements into supply were not always conscious decisions, but rather were a result of risk minimisation type strategies:

Indeed, few woke up one morning and made a conscious decision to become sellers. They did not break sharply with the conventional world and actively choose a deviant career path; most simply drifted into dealing by virtue of their strategies for solving problems entailed in using a criminalised substance (p.325)

This research therefore highlights the possibility that for some, access to drugs through friends eliminated the risk of encountering criminal dealers and provided a convenient point of access for those less comfortable with buying drugs from unknown sources (Parker et al., 1998; Measham et al., 2001; Jacinto et al., 2008). As Murphy et al. (1990) highlight, because the substances they enjoy are illegal, *most regular users become involved in some aspect of distribution*' (p.325). While the concept of drift has important application to users fleetingly dipping in and out of supply, the research has also reported the potential for drift to feature in transitions into more permanent and serious forms of supply. Blum et al. (1972) for example, has previously emphasised the reduction in the immediate prominence of the dealer's social and emotional needs as a trigger for a more lucrative form of supply, thus perceiving it as 'career development'. More recently, Taylor

and Potter (2013) noted how although most dealers still talked about the social foundations of helping out friends and maintaining personal use as part of their current motivation to supply drugs, it became a 'secondary motive to profit' (p.9). Such transitions have been suggested to develop over a long time period (Blum et al. 1972; Murphy et al., 2004) and thus the subtle 'change' may not be acknowledged by the individual involved. This undoubtedly has implications for users who drift into social supply and social suppliers who transition into dealing proper, and therefore, this aspect of supply clearly deserves further research attention.

## Chapter Conclusion

Theoretical perspectives can provide much insight into the various ways in which wider social-economic forces, structures of reciprocity and conditions of modernity can broadly be understood as affecting human action. This chapter acknowledges the value of aspects of agential and structural contributions in understanding drug use and supply at a micro level, but presents a Bourdieusian framework as a possible means of overcoming the binary opposition between these voluntarist and determinist paradigms. The literature review has highlighted how drug supply can be reasonably connected with communities characterised by limited opportunity and poverty. Moreover, it also describes how the neo-liberal context can cast drug users as responsabilised, 'rational actors' for whom crime can be conceived as a choice predicated on economic risk and reward. Reciprocity has traditionally been associated with drug markets and this chapter considers how far it may be of value within adult social supply and user-dealer markets. Finally, the notions of normalisation and drift provide potentially theoretically valuable concepts in exploring how far supply has become part of the general drug use experience for largely otherwise non deviant actors.

## **Chapter Two: Examining the Drug Dealer: Fears, Myths, Media and Marginalisation**

Chapter One focussed on theoretical approaches to understanding drug use, more specifically, providing an overview of the most relevant macro and micro theories that may help us understand drug use and the propensity to supply. Chapter Two shifts attention away from systematic considerations surrounding the rationale and factors for engaging in supply, to an analysis of modern perceptions of people who engage in this behaviour, along with the common sense assumptions we make regarding their conduct. As the introduction to the thesis suggests, drug dealers are widely conceived as 'evil', immoral and predatory beings, despite recent research providing evidence to suggest that this, (in the most), is not the case (Coomber 2010; 2011). In order to attempt to explicate these apparently abstract feelings, this chapter begins with an analysis of fear, examining historical evidence (Berridge, 1999; Davenport-Hines, 2002; Kohn, 1992) and modern theory (Furedi, 2006; Glassner, 1999; Tudor, 2003) in order to assess how and why we have come to consider drug suppliers in such an unfavourable way. Following this analysis, utilising theory (Cohen, 1972; Foucault, 1977), this thesis will then proceed to explore specific discursive frameworks (myths) which have been argued to shape popular knowledge regarding drugs and drug dealers. The chapter will conclude with a theoretical exploration of how fear, myths, media misrepresentation and the penal climate can affect drug suppliers (including social suppliers and heroin/crack cocaine user-dealers). This will be explored in relation to their homogenisation, their stigmatisation and crucially, the translation of this discourse into policy.

### **Early Fears**

Fear has been defined as 'uncertainty' (Bauman, 2006) and is characterised by 'unknowability' (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997) through individualised feelings of anxiety,

vulnerability and stress (Furedi, 2006). Fearfulness is also conceived as a culturally accepted and omnipresent aspect of modern life (Furedi, 1997, 2006; Glassner, 1999; Tudor, 2003) and has subsequently been theorised in a similar way, with scholars largely postulating contemporary fear as a product of 'our time' (Tudor, 2003) and in this sense, symptomatic of postmodernity (Coomber, 2013). Although the modern condition of fear has a particular significance in terms of its distinct culture and pervasive pessimism regarding our prospects for the future (Furedi, 1997, 2006; Glassner, 1999), when focussing specifically on illicit substances and their distribution (or arguably, general fear), a historical analysis is imperative. To begin exploring the historical association between fear and illicit drugs, it is appropriate to analyse the pre-modern relationship with fear more broadly. Fear in the pre-modern epoch was highly connected to religion, belief systems and vengeance (Naphy and Roberts, 1997). Old fears are portrayed as belonging to a now distant world, exemplified as fear of natural disasters – of famine; pestilence; of drought, of earthquakes of being a sinner and thus a fear of eternal damnation (Coomber, 2013). For Febvre (1942), in this era, fear was akin to living in darkness: 'in darkness anything may happen but there is no telling what will' (as cited in Bauman 2006:2). In this sense, darkness provides a culture of uncertainty and within this habitat, fear follows (Bauman, 2006:2). While ubiquitous fear can be said to represent the *broad* character of pre-modern fear, purity and 'dirt' are significant concepts, which also have a particular importance in pre-modern notions of fear. Mary Douglas' (1978) work provides a framework that associates anxiety with 'matter out of place', that is, the idea that anything outside the normative social order is deemed as dirty, dangerous and 'taboo'. In this respect, drug users - due to their external position to the social world - are labelled and stigmatised in this way, perceived as dangerous and dirty, and are therefore marginalised and treated as outsiders (Taylor, 2008). Indeed, public drug use is deemed as 'matter out of place', particularly when the drug using body becomes part of the physical landscape, as is often the case with heroin and crack cocaine users (see Bourgois, 2003; Fitzpatrick and LaGory, 2003; Parkin and Coomber, 2009). As Fitzgerald and Threadgold

(2004) purport, drug use behind closed doors is rarely a matter for intervention; however when drug use is in the public domain, drug users are subsequently subjected to strict exclusion. In this respect, 'an encounter with the signs of the street drug market is not a fear of drugs, but can be a fear of the dissolution of the sensible world' (p.408). Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994), Fitzgerald and Threadgold suggest that in the city context the thing that creates fear is the possibility that the body of the heroin dealer becomes one of the city's permanent features like street furniture, part of the life of the city. In a similar way, fear around loss of control has also been theorised by Van Ree (1997). Again drawing on Douglas' (1978) concept of taboo, the author suggests that as humans, we own an unconscious concern regarding the potential for drugs to transform us to previous primitive or animalistic behaviours. Furthermore, although highly contested, the pharmacological qualities of many drugs have been seen as conducive to a loss of control. In this sense, fear of the breakdown of reason can be perceived as a threat to many of the civilised values (Elias, 1994) and behaviours we hold today.

## **Modern Sociology and the 'Culture of Fear'**

'People in Western societies live in a time of unparalleled security with less pain, suffering and disease than ever before, yet fear seems to be in abundance nonetheless'

Furedi (2006, p.1)

As previously alluded, fear has been widely postulated as characteristic of our age (Furedi 2006; Glassner, 1999; Tudor, 2003), sitting within a contemporary cultural nexus (Coomber, 2013). Although, we can make clear identifications of historically situated fear (Bourke, 2005), many would agree that 'there is something new about the specific architecture of fear that is now being crafted and...the specific 'we' it attempts to craft with it' (Weber, 2006:684). Whether fear is associated with terrorism, crime, climate change, or disease, it has been argued that we are now in a time that is characterised by

more fear than ever before (Bauman, 2008; Furedi, 2006, 2007a; Mythen and Walklate, 2008). Furedi (2006, 2007a) along with others, has provided significant contributions to the sociology of modern fear and has distinctively portrayed contemporary fear as 'unpredictable' and 'free floating' in character. Certainly, within Furedi's (2007a) analysis, fear is transient, 'fear migrates freely from one problem to the next without there being a necessity for a causal or logical connection' (p.4). Fears are also culturally mediated (Tudor, 2003) and constructed socially within specific communities or cultures. In addition, the media is also intrinsically involved in the perpetuation and representation of the way risks can be understood (Ditton et al., 2004; Glassner, 1999; Altheide, 2002); this can explain why some fears gain higher prominence in particular places than others (Coomber, 2013). In this sense, communities may fear the threat of paedophiles and a week or so later we may fear 'happy slapping' or cybercrime (Furedi, 2007a). For Furedi (2006), the emergence of free floating fear within contemporary society is thus sustained and entirely dependent on a pessimistic culture that is 'anxious about change and uncertainty, and which continually anticipates the worst possible outcome' (p.4). Applying the 'free floating' concept to the relationship between drugs and fear, the fact that there has been a *persistent and continued* historical focus on the 'evils' of drugs (Jay, 2011, Kohn, 1992; Musto, 1999) suggests that fear does not float as freely as suggested by Furedi (2007) instead, in broader relation to drugs, it seems to have attached itself quite firmly (Coomber, 2013).

## **Building a Context: The Historical Formation of the Drug Dealer Image**

### ***'Otherness' and Early Drug Fears***

In this thesis, it will be argued that that drug fears are historically anchored and also complemented and perpetuated by the modern, socially embedded (Scruton, 1986) 'culture of fear' (Furedi, 2006) (realised at an individual level). Historically, numerous



authors have argued that the fear of drugs can be strongly associated with 'otherness' or rather our fear of difference or 'outsiders' (Berridge, 1998; Musto, 1992; Coomber 2006). As Joffe (1999) has proposed, the word 'other' generally includes 'those outside of, and implicitly subordinate to, the dominant group' (p.18). This notion has been well exemplified by McCulloch's (1995) review of the work of psychiatrists in Africa, where 'African' was described in terms of everything that the European was not. Indeed, regard for the 'other' is best represented by the 'not me, not my group response' (Joffe, 1999; Petros et al., 2006). This response represents a significant theme that arises throughout the history of drug use in the UK and beyond (Coomber, 2013). Evidence of this reaction can be observed as early as the fourteenth century, where the literature base has provided access to accounts of journeys into the 'new world' (Vespucci 1577, cited in Davenport-Hines, 2001), documenting conquistadores reports of encounters, where they marvelled at the 'native's' use of consciousness-altering drugs (Davenport-Hines, 2002). Old literary works have captured the first hints of disapproval and fear toward the failings or weakness that the 'temperate' home population is able to resist (Coomber, 2006). Examples include Nicholas Monardes' account of observing the traditional Coca use of Peruvian Indians; 'Surely it is a thyng of greate consideration, to see how Indians are so desirous to bee deprived of their wittes' (as cited in Davenport-Hines, 2002:27). Observations also emerged in the East where English travellers remitted tales of opium consumption in Constantinople. As George Sandys recalls; 'the Turkes are also incredible takers of Opium...which they say expelleth all feare, and maketh them courageous: but I think rather giddy headed' (as cited in Davenport-Hines, 2002:34). These narratives provide evidence to suggest that explorers at this time were highly ethnocentric, associating 'others' use of drugs with primitivism, while conceiving their own avoidance of psychotropic substances as more 'civilised' (Jay, 2011)

## Opium and the People

Although the use of drugs by other cultures and races has a long history of disfavour by the West, the use of intoxicating substances in the UK was long tolerated and even encouraged, depending on the quantity, motivation and context of use (Jay, 2010, 2011). The social acceptance of drugs such as cocaine and opium (particularly), remained unproblematic until the latter stages of the nineteenth century, where following the publication of De Quincey's '*Confessions of an Opium Eater*', opium began to be associated with stimulation and non-therapeutic enjoyment (Coomber, 2006; Jay, 2010). Prior to the problematisation of these drugs, opium was freely available to all; produced in numerous forms including pills, lozenges, vinegars and famously, laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol) (Berridge, 1999, Jay, 2010). The high availability of the drug was aided by its wide distribution by a variety of different premises, dispensed openly through druggists, pharmacists, corner shops and even through factory workers wives, who would keep and sell a 'small shop' to supplement their income (Berridge, 1999:25).

The extensive availability of the drug was reflective of the wide variety of uses that opium was qualified for, such as to quieten children, for sleeplessness, as a remedy for excessive drinking, and as treatment for all manner of pains and illnesses such as rheumatism, gout, coughs, cholera and toothache, as just a small example (Berridge, 1999; Barton, 2011; Jay, 2011; Kohn, 1992). The sale of opium and its derivatives was completely unrestricted, and as indicated by the range of uses outlined previously, the purchase and consumption, strikingly normalised (Coomber, 2006). Considering the deterrence based, punitive drug laws we have in operation today (Ashworth, 2010), particularly in relation to heroin, it seems unfathomable that opium, a drug which is best associated today with its conversion into morphine and heroin, could have been used in such an unrestricted and largely unproblematic manner. With this in mind, the question

is, how did we go from a society that embraced the therapeutic and pharmacological benefits of opium (Berridge, 1999; Jay 2011), to one that perceives heroin as arguably the most detested and problematic substance in circulation (see McElrath and McEnvoy, 2001)?

### **The Demise of the Wonder Drug: Opium and the 'Dangerous Classes'**

It was around the time of the publication of De Quincey's '*Confessions of an English Opium Eater*' (1821) that there appeared to be a moral recognition of the blurring of medical and recreational use of opium. During this time, a Quaker founded society, The Society for Suppression of the Opium Trade (SSOT), led a campaign to end the British controlled exportation of opium to China, their objection centred on the belief that non-therapeutic opiate use was 'evil', along with the position that the trade was morally indefensible (Harding 1998:4). As Berridge and Edwards (1987) have highlighted, the somewhat exaggerated recognition of accidental overdoses, working class stimulant use (utilised as a cheap alternative to alcohol) and infant doping, (Berridge, 1999:99) provided physicians and pharmacists – who were keen to secure public acclaim following improvements in public health (Barton, 2011) - with evidence and opportunity to petition for the power to control the working class supply of opium. The temperance theme engendered much support within Victorian society; the 1920's represented a period where the notion of moral degeneracy had developed substantially (Coomber, 2006) and by 1928, noticeable change had occurred in the public discourse surrounding drugs and drug addiction (Barton, 2011). Previously regarded as merely 'unfortunate', drug use was increasingly portrayed through discourses of responsabilisation and thus described as the root of all social evil (Speaker, 2002:201). Addicts were branded as 'dope fiends' (Lindesmith, 1941) and 'wild beasts of savage cruelty', absolutely impervious to any human pity or sympathy of any kind (Laurie, 1927 as cited in Speaker, 2002). Concern was largely placed on lower-class stimulant drug use and 'infant doping' (Berridge, 1999;

Davenport-Hines, 2002; Barton, 2011; Coomber, 2006) practices. As Berridge (1999) notes, campaigns against the working class practice of child doping were culturally and economically insensitive to the situation of working families. They also failed to recognise the use of opiates to dose children throughout the middle classes (Kohn, 1992). Furthermore, the use of opium in 'luxurious' way to stimulate creativity (Jay, 2011) was largely accepted and unlike the condemned, poor addicts, this 'was not considered shameful' (Davenport-Hines, 2002:63). Historical analysis thus strongly points to the position that moves to control and prohibit drugs were 'the consequence not of their pharmacology, *but of their association with social groups that were perceived as potentially dangerous*' (my emphasis, Kohn, 1992:2).

### Contamination, Ethnic Prejudice and Racism

Along with class related concerns, the association between drugs and 'potentially dangerous' ethnic subgroups also provided a strong rationale for the prohibition of drugs (Kohn, 1992). In both the UK and the US, opium initially became associated with Chinese immigrants (Berridge, 1999; Musto, 1999), who were perceived as exhibiting derogatory ethnic qualities, showing a predisposition towards detestable habits such as vice and other socially unaccepted behaviours, such as homosexuality (Smith 1842 cited in Davenport-Hines, 2001). Despite their transient presence, images of the 'lurid opium dens' were propagated throughout Victorian society (Ruggiero and South, 1997), strongly connecting the Chinese community to the domestic smoking of opium and thus detrimentally associating them with 'vile, ruinous indulgence' (Berridge, 1999). As an Englishman reported from Malacca in 1842:

The smoking shops are the most miserable and wretched places imaginable: they are kept open from six in the morning till ten o'clock at night, each being furnished with from four to eight bedsteads, constructed of bamboo-spars, and covered with dirty mats and rattans...In the centre of each shop there is a small

lamp, which while serving to light the pipes, diffuses a cheerless light through the gloomy abode of vice and misery

(Smith 1842:708 as cited in Berridge, 1999)

The establishment of opium dens in London by Chinese Immigrants was widely believed to be a threat to civilised society and the local community (Coomber, 2006). In the opium den setting, the cunning and evil Chinaman wreathed and basked in the drug, and such behaviour was feared to infect the wider population (Berridge, 1999; Kohn, 1992). Hostile and exaggerated literary descriptions in the works of Charles Dickens (*Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) and notably Oscar Wilde in '*Dorian Gray*' (1891) for example, described Chinese inhabitants in the den with 'twisted limbs...gaping mouths and 'staring lustreless eyes'. Arguably, this distorted myth from reality (Jay, 2010) and transformed a *social* problem into a *drug* problem, which was ultimately concerned with racial otherness (Kohn, 1992). As Berridge (1999) has pointed out, there is little evidence to suggest that the dens resembled these colourful descriptions. Further to this, the number of establishments within London was said to be 'minute' (Berridge and Edwards, 1987), and for those that did indulge in opium smoking, the dens were believed not to be causing problems personally, or for the wider community.

So if the number of established dens were relatively small in number and the harms of using opium comparatively small for user and community, why were the Chinese and their use of opium targeted so viciously through myths and stereotypes? For Kohn (1992), the most obvious rationale for the opposition to the Chinese related to the broad cultural differences and the racial incompatibility between the Chinese and British way of life. The Chinese owned a 'different moral architecture' (p.62) and their concentration in a symbolically and strategically important part of London - the dock- at a time of increased national security (Kohn, 1992), was perceived as a threat to the whole city. Increased Chinese immigration, the emergence of economic decline, competition for jobs within the

late Victorian period and the imperialist nature of England at this time, have also been argued to have influenced perceptions of this group (Berridge, 1999).

The treatment of the Chinese was not, however, a new phenomenon. Similarly, in the US, another social subgroup, African Americans, had also previously become subject to 'white fear' (Musto, 1999). Reports from the US regarding the use of cocaine by black stevedores in Colorado in order to aid strenuous work (1880), have been connected to the supply of the substance (1894) and thus, have subsequently become associated with the emergence of fear and intolerance of the drug (Davenport-Hines, 2002). Arguably, in a time of fervent racial discrimination and segregation, (particularly in the Southern States), fear of cocaine was inextricably linked to the prospect that the 'black' would rise above his place (Musto, 1997:7). Similarly to the 'Chinese opium problem', myths surrounding the alleged capabilities of 'blacks' under the influence of cocaine inspired a reactionary response rather than the crime wave that was so widely feared:

Anecdotes often told of super human strength, cunning, and efficiency resulting from cocaine. One of the most terrifying beliefs about cocaine was that it actually improved pistol marksmanship. Another myth, that cocaine made blacks unaffected by mere .32 caliber bullets, is said to have caused the police departments to switch to .38 caliber revolvers. These fantasies characterised white fear, not the reality of cocaine's effects, and gave one more reason for the repression of blacks.

(Musto, 1999:7)

The idea of contamination can also be connected to fears regarding Mexicans pushing drugs on children. Here, Members of the American Coalition (1935) claimed that 'Mexican Peddlers' had been caught distributing sample marijuana cigarettes to school children. In this context, Harry Anslinger, the then head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and author of *'Marijuana – Assassin of Youth (1937)*, became paramount in providing an association between Mexicans, marijuana and crime, making generally

astounding links between the mild use of cannabis to insanity, murder, rape and torture

(Anslinger, 1937):

Is there any assistance your Bureau can give us in handling this drug?...I wish I could show you what a small marijuana cigarette can do to one of our degenerate Spanish-speaking residents. That's why our problem is so great: the great percentage of our population is composed of Spanish-speaking persons, most of whom are low mentally, because of social and racial conditions.'

(Editor of Daily Courier (Colorado), 1936 as cited in Musto, 1999)

The fear of these ethnic subgroups, both in the UK and US, also share a commonality in respect of anxieties between drugs and the idea of 'contamination', associated with sexual contact between white women and 'men of colour' (Kohn, 1992). In the US, marijuana's perceived dangerousness lay in its abuse among Latin-American populations and its capability for releasing the sexual inhibitions and restraints imposed by society, allowing individuals to act out their 'drives' openly. In an analogous way, the fantasy of 'cocainised' black workers from plantations and mines going on drug fuelled sexual rampages with white women created a racist panic. In this context, 'law abiding' and 'inoffensive negroes', through cocaine, were transformed into a 'constant menace' (Davenport-Hines, 2002:200). The Chinese also became subject to discourses of contamination, facing further prejudice through tales of young white girls lying half-undressed on the floor, smoking with their 'lovers' in Chinatown smoking houses (Kohn, 1992). Despite the pervasiveness of these notions, reports of the Chinese man seducing middle-class white girls (for example) are seemingly improbable, since the qualities of opium are said to suppress, rather than encourage sexual contact (Davenport-Hines, 2002:179).

## The Development of the Image of the 'Evil' Drug Dealer

He gives kids free samples,  
Because he knows full well  
That today's young innocent faces  
Will be tomorrow's clientele

(‘The Old Dope Peddler’ Lehrer, 1953)

Although the general association between ‘others’ and drugs undoubtedly contributes towards our generalised fears regarding illicit substances and those that distribute them, we can also make more specific identifications of the emergence of the image of the ‘evil’ drug dealer (Speaker, 2002; Coomber, 2006). Arguably, the first recognition of reports of drug supply can be associated with the ‘dope peddler’ and again, can be fundamentally tied up with the notion of ‘othering’. As Anderson (2000) suggests, a ‘peddler’ was known to be a salesman that carried new and useful goods to outlying areas. The majority were hardworking and honest and it was not unknown for them to build acquaintanceships with customers, at times lodging with them. However, the depiction of the peddler most relevant here, is that of the dishonest, Jewish, illiterate and predatory peddler (Coomber, 2006). Media reports from the time reported the peddler spreading ‘coke’ - a drug that having been associated with exaggerated and false powers (Musto, 1999; Jay, 2011) - throughout the US and it was subsequently reported that ‘there is little doubt that every Jew peddler in the South carries the stuff’ (New York Times 1908). Along with the ‘Jewish Peddler’, later press attention became directed at black and Chinese dealers, who became cast in a ‘rich dope folklore’ (Kohn, 1992) that falsely exaggerated what was seen as a luxurious lifestyle, as well as depicting them as predatory drug pushers, who preyed on white women (Davenport-Hines, 2002). In this context, Chinese restaurant proprietor Brilliant Chang became notorious as ‘the yellow king of dope runners’ (Kohn, 1992), while Edgar Manning, a jazz drummer from Jamaica, was said to epitomise ‘a major folk devil, the drug trafficker, and a minor one, the black delinquent’ (Kohn, 1992:160). With ‘foreign figures’ such as Manning and Chang known as ‘dope kings’ (Kohn 1992), this no doubt provided further fuel to the association between drug distribution and ‘anti alien’ sentiment (Berridge, 1999).



## Transforming Fears into Policy

A significant point to make following the analysis of historical sources is how such fears were *transformed into policy*. During the period 1909 – 1926, the relationship between drugs and society underwent a significant change, moving from a ‘consumer sovereignty model’ to a ‘situation where there were stringent controls on a number of substances’ (Barton, 2011:14). Following pressure from moral philanthropists, medical professionals and wartime leaders (Kohn, 1992), drug supply outside of medicine was prohibited through the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) (1914-1920) and the later Dangerous Drugs Act (1920). The implementation of the DORA, an act implemented shortly after the outbreak of the First World War (Kohn, 1992), eventually led to Regulation 40b, where the possession of opium or cocaine by those other than by authorised professionals became a criminal offence. This was largely based around concerns surrounding the vulnerability of British troops (Musto, 1992; Berridge, 1999) and the fear of drugs association with foreign phenomenon (Kohn, 1992) at a time of great national instability.

While the DORA 40b restricted the possession of opium and cocaine, the 1920’s Dangerous Drugs Act extended these regulations to a wider range of substances (Berridge, 1999). With the enactment of legislation connected with the associating everyday drug use with for example, Chinese opium-smoking parties, (Berridge, 1999), women’s use of cocaine (Kohn, 1992) and working class recreational use of laudanum, such evidence again suggests how association with ‘others’ strengthened demands toward control (Berridge, 1999). In the US, the ratification of the 1914 Harrison Act placed similar restrictions on supply, making it illegal for any person to sell or in any way to give away substances (Schaffer, 1986). This context provided the perfect setting for the establishment of a black market and significantly, provided a clear space for the later development of the conventional image of the drug dealer (Coomber, 2006). Here, such individuals - commonly associated with supply for profit and a reputation for violence as a

normative mode of operating (Murphy et al., 1990; Coomber, 2010) - met the demand from those who were no longer able to purchase over the counter, or via prescription. In these circumstances, they were therefore able to use the context of prohibition to their advantage, in order to make their living.

### **The Relationship between Fear and Drug Dealers**

The association of drugs with 'other' social groups provides an essential foundation for understanding how the image of the 'evil drug dealer' has been constructed historically, and furthermore, why the drug dealer has been perceived with such disdain in both past and present times. It is the contention of this thesis that this theme of 'otherness' forms the basis for fear regarding drugs and drug dealers today, as it appears to have done in the past. Not only are drugs themselves commonly associated with alien or 'othered' groups (Kohn, 1992) - bringing about eminent levels of fear when connected with dangerous classes and non-white populations, but historical analysis also demonstrates that the first recorded drug dealers were also considered as 'others'. These fears are fundamentally tied up with previously explored traditional notions of contagion and pollution (Douglas, 1978), rather than fears that focus exclusively on the distorted or exaggerated pharmacological dangers of substances themselves (Nutt, 2012; Bown, 2010). This relationship could effectively be viewed as a projection of historical stereotypical notions, tying colour or 'otherness' to illicit drugs. Furthermore, it can be witnessed today through quantity-based sentencing differentials between federal crack and powder cocaine convictions (Porter and Wright, 2011), as well as the fact that two thirds of Americans imprisoned for drug offences (including supply) are 'people of colour' (ibid).

In contemporary society these historical antecedents may therefore be conducive to disseminating our fears regarding those involved in drug dealing, this in turn serving to

elucidate our resistance to sentencing reforms relating to drug dealers and drug use. Reflecting on modern notions of fear together with this historical analysis, it could be reasonably argued that drugs policy is fundamentally tied up with historical discourses surrounding 'others.' However, it should be noted that despite the centrality of 'otherness' in relation to our current fears, our modern drug related fears (although historically anchored) appear to be 'topped up', accentuated and operationalised both by our generalised modern day culture of fear and our intrinsic vulnerability (Furedi, 2006). This could be suggested to facilitate the feeling that the threat of drug dealers - together with the dangerous nature of the drugs they supply – is all pervading.

## **Fears and Barriers to Implementation: Media (Mis)representation, Drug Myths and Stigma**

### ***Drug Myths***

Along with the historically situated concern with otherness, drug myths provide a contemporary positioned apparatus, which serve to fortify old fears and support new fears through discursive frameworks. As Coomber (2011) has argued, both our knowledge (what we think we know) and beliefs (our values and attitudes) about certain things are shaped by a conglomeration of hearsay, media coverage, anecdotes and folklore. The societal perception of the drug dealer provides an excellent example of how 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1977) (see page 67), sustained through drug myths, have dominated and furthermore, have affected how many - and in some cases even how drug suppliers themselves - think about drug dealing (Coomber, 1997b; 2006). An exploration of these key beliefs or 'drug myths' is crucial, for as Coomber (2011) states:

These key beliefs provide the broad aggregated framework for how we understand the drug problem and how it impacts on policy activity both at the macro (national and international) level and at the micro (local, community) level. *Without these key beliefs the drug problem would have to be conceptualised very differently and policy options would change*

(my emphasis, p.16)

The following myths are demonstrative of the key beliefs relating to how drug dealers are believed to operate (Coomber, 2006). In addition, they provide insightful context, which can help to explicate the wider rationale for our largely uncompromising approach to drug dealers, both within policy and sentencing structures.

### ***'You Don't Know What's in Them': The Dangerous Adulteration of Illicit Drugs***

The belief that street drugs are 'cut', or rather adulterated, with all kinds of noxious substances, could be argued to be an uncontested and strongly held belief for many (Coomber, 2010) which amounts to 'common knowledge' (Coomber, 1999). As Coomber (1997a,b,c,d; 1996; 2010) has indicated, the rationale behind dealers supposed participation in dangerous adulteration, is essentially associated with two ideas;

1. Street user-dealers are so desperate for their next fix of their drug (e.g. heroin), that in their desperation, they will grasp and use any substance that comes to hand in order to dilute it - caring little what they are 'peddling' - in order to finance their next 'fix'.
2. Drug dealers are so inherently 'evil' in persona, that in their greed-driven quest for profit, they routinely and purposively 'cut' the drug they will supply with dangerous substances such as strychnine or scouring powders that resemble the drug in question.

This belief appears to be endemic in society, to the point that even drug dealers themselves believe the myth. For instance, in Coomber's (1997b) study that explored '*what dealers do to illicit drugs and what they think is done to them*', it was found to be the case that street dealers, assuming heroin had already been cut (Coomber and Maher, 2006), did not adulterate drugs as a matter of course. In his extensive investigation into the reality of drug dealers adulteration practices Coomber (1997a,b,c,d) contended that some cutting of street drugs did take place, but it was neither as common, nor as routine as assumed. In this respect, it was consequently postulated that

the routine cutting of drugs with *dangerous* substances was essentially a myth. More recent research has replicated such findings; in a Rapid Appraisal of Drug Markets in Southend-on-Sea, Coomber and Moyle (2012) found that all the respondents they interviewed believed the drugs in this locale were 'cut' with dangerous substances. This is despite forensic testing indicating almost exclusive presence of substances such as caffeine and Paracetamol (see below). Furthermore, the actual nature and grounds for adulterating drugs is entirely different to how it is commonly understood (Coomber, 2010). Coomber (2006) found that the 'vast majority' of substances added to drugs post-production are 'comparatively harmless' (p.72). Similarly in 'CUT', '*A Guide to Adulterants, Cutting Agents and other Contaminants Found in Drugs*', Cole et al. (2011) collected forensic evidence to suggest that less adulteration than is 'anecdotally' perceived by drug users and dealers actually takes place' (p.4). In addition, analysis of street samples of heroin have indicated that the most common cutting agents are benign in health terms and are there simply for the 'explicit purpose of bulking the drug out and even to 'improve' it' (Coomber, 2006:73). Quinine for example, is believed to heighten the sensation of the rush' (Preble and Casey, 1969), whereas Paracetamol is used as it 'mimics' the effects of heroin, holding the same boiling point and similar analgesic properties (Cole et al., 2010). These findings highlight the *functional* use of adulterants by dealers and in this respect, such evidence serves to undermine common place notions of intent and harm in drug distribution. As Coomber repeatedly found when interviewing drug dealers, along with humanitarian reasons, such as simply not wanting to hurt others, one of the reasons that dealers do not routinely cut drugs with other substances, is that they want to be reputed as selling 'good gear' (1997b,e). Significantly, if dealers need a way to create enough profit for a swift 'fix', there are other means of realising profit, such as buying in bulk and selling smaller deals at inflated prices (Coomber and Moyle, 2012).

## ***'It's so Good Don't Even Try it Once': Instant Addiction and Predatory Pushing***

The idea that particular drugs have qualities that render them instantly addictive is relatively unquestioned in popular beliefs surrounding illicit drugs and remains one of the principal dangers associated with illicit substances (Coomber and Sutton, 2006). This idea is probably most associated with drugs such as heroin, crack cocaine and crystal meth (methamphetamine) (Hammersley and Reid, 2002; Hart, 2013), however, in terms of popular consciousness, instant addiction arguably has the strongest association with heroin (Coomber, 2006). The idea appears to be ingrained as a taken for granted fact within media coverage and through anecdotal and hearsay knowledge. For example, *The Sun* has recently falsely associated Methamphetamine with crack cocaine in relation to its instant addictiveness, when in fact, there is no scientific basis to this (see WHO/UNICRI, 1995):

Hooked on single fix crystal meth is as deadly and addictive as crack - and users can get hooked from their first try

(Wells, *The Sun*, accessed on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011).

Notwithstanding the sensationalist headlines in tabloids newspapers and through other strands of popular culture, it is also apparent that beliefs regarding immediate addiction are to be found in the professional and addictions sector:

Heroin is 10 times stronger than it was years ago...if you're a dealer you're going to give (the customer) the strongest dose so you can get them addicted straight away.

(Spokeswoman for Sequoia Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre, El Camino Hospital, California quoted in the Los Altos Town Crier, 2003 as cited in Coomber and Sutton, 2006)

Evidence however, historically points to the fact that 'street' addiction is not instant and that it often takes months, and in many cases a year or longer for a user to move from first use to daily addicted use (see also Kaplan, 1985; Krivanek, 1988). A study by

Coomber and Sutton (2006) has suggested that the transition to addiction for the majority of heroin users interviewed was considerably longer than was commonly supposed. Here, time from first use to dependency was reported as 'in excess of a year' and the transition from regular use to daily use was estimated as having a mean of 8-9 months' (Coomber and Sutton, 2006:469). Apart from empirical research, which critiques the idea of instant addiction, it should also be noted that there is wider critical debate regarding the nature of addiction per se. Scholars have widely questioned the validity of the biological effects of addictive drugs (see Falk, 1983; Robins et al., 2010; Zinberg, 1984). Here, physiological addiction, which supports the whole basis of the 'instant addiction' myth, is largely reported as owing more to the individuals psychological 'set' and the facilitating environmental setting in which it occurs (Falk, 1983).

Although this myth has no direct or overt link with drug dealers, its very existence is important, as not only can it be seen as politically useful for a wide range of groups (Hammersley and Reid, 2002), but it also provides newsworthy stories, offering a politically sound rationale to promote the dangers of illicit substances. The instant addiction myth also serves to qualify the perceived 'truth' of drug pushing (Coomber, 2013). This idea dates back to nineteenth hundreds and was then associated with the Jewish 'drug peddler' (Coomber, 2006). Hearsay evidence advocates that dealers choose highly addictive drugs to 'hook' young children, most notably illustrated by claims of dealers 'preying' at school gate. This myth also proposes that comparatively benign drugs, such as MDMA and ecstasy, are mixed with addictive ones (like heroin), given away by the dealer to ensure new business, having surreptitiously hooked the 'victim' (Coomber 2006; 2010). Given that evidence widely indicates that heroin and crack cocaine (see Hart, 2013) are not instantly addictive, predatory activity of this kind is therefore lacking evidence and credibility.

## Violence

The assumption that drug markets and drug dealers are by nature, violent, could be reasoned to represent a universal belief. This has been argued to have been proliferated by media sensationalism (Coomber 2000; Taylor 2008) and the extensive reporting of drug market violence associated with the 1980's crack cocaine markets (Coomber and Maher, 2006). The so-called 'evidence' for this notion can be related to the other existing drug myths (see above), and also by the extensive and long held belief that illicit substances themselves, through drug induced psychosis, cause individuals to become violent (Anslinger, 1937; Inciardi, 1986; Werb et al., 2011). While illicit drug markets, as perhaps expected, are more violent than licit markets, this has been suggested to reflect the general nature of a black market economy and does not mean to say that all individuals that operate within it have a propensity toward violence, or are inherently evil (Coomber 2006, 2010). Studies offer competing views on how much violence exists in drug markets. Pearson and Hobbs (2001) have stated that although all drug markets have the potential for violence in relation to maintaining market share in a particular area (Blumstein 1995; Werb et al., 2011), for most, business principles undertaken to avoid unwanted police attention largely prevents violence that may have otherwise ensued (Pearson and Hobbs, 2001; 2003). Extending these notions, the literature also indicates that the popular connection between drug markets and violence is related to the idea that all drug markets and drug dealers are homogenous, that there is 'a' market (Coomber and Maher, 2006; Coomber 2007; Hough and Natarajan, 2000). However, as this literature review indicates, the structure of markets does not simply conform to the hierarchical or pyramid structure widely referenced (Curtis and Wendel 1999 May and Hough 2004; Lewis, 1994). Conversely, research is suggestive of the fact that markets can diverge according to geographical location, or the level of cultural and historical organisation embedded in them (Coomber and Maher, 2006; Golub & Johnson, 1997;



Reuter, 2001; Curtis, 2003), as can the violence that originates from them (Coomber, 2010).

Accordingly, various studies have found fluctuating levels of violence according to the market. In a study focussing on women drug dealers in Melbourne, Denton and O'Malley (1990) found women to be less practiced in the 'rougher modes of the trade' (p.521). This is a finding supported by Grundtjern and Sandberg (2012) who describe the development of active gender specific strategies as an alternative to violence. Alternatively, in studies elsewhere, researchers have emphasised the occurrence of relationships between supplier and seller as characterised by friendship and trust, as opposed to violence (see Taylor and Potter, 2013). Further to this, while it is conventionally assumed that drug dealers are the perpetrators of much of the violence in markets, empirical research indicates that it occurs at all stratas of the market and is often (at a lower level) experienced by user-dealers themselves, who have commonly reported being robbed for their drugs. (Small et al., 2013; Coomber and Moyle, 2012; Coomber and Moyle, 2013)

### **Foucault, Discourse and 'Regimes of Truth'**

While the concept of moral panics may represent a theoretically obvious means of understanding drug fears, its specific application to *drug dealers* is limited in a meaningful way. Cohen's (1972) conceptualisation for example, is primarily focussed on emergent and 'novel' panics, or panics that have been in existence for a long period that suddenly 'appear in the limelight' (p.9). Significantly, in applying these ideas to *drug dealing* and the *drug dealer*, the prolonged longevity of our alarm - documented since the late eighteenth hundreds - indicates that our reaction to drug dealers is anything but an emerging threat (Ungar, 2001) or 'time-to-time' event that is more exceptional than ordinary (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995; Ungar, 2001). Alternatively, Foucault's (1977) analysis of discursive formations may be more conducive to gaining a holistic

understanding of the way society envisages drug dealers, locating the drug dealer in a modern context, but also recognising the historical antecedents that contribute to the formation of its image. As previously explored in Chapter One, Foucault conceived knowledge as an outcome of interrelated historical practices and discourses (Bastalich, 2009) and was particularly interested in discourses that 'seek to rationalise or systemise themselves in the particular ways of 'saying the true' (Dean, 1994:32). In this respect, knowledge, which was at one time used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practices. Foucault (2002) argues that 'truth itself has a history' (p.2). Here, his analytical focus was unconcerned with discovering hidden truths, instead prioritising the consideration of how norms become established in discourse and how this discourse creates a context for potential thought and action, which subsequently becomes legitimised as truth (Olssen, 2006:137):

I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how the effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false.

(Foucault, 1980: 118).

Significantly, all knowledge has consequences when applied directly to the social world and therefore becomes a 'truth' (of sorts); knowledge does not operate in a void, but in fact is put to work through various contexts, institutional regimes, and strategies of application (Foucault, 1977). Critically, Foucault also stressed how power establishes a certain regime of truth where certain knowledge becomes 'admissible' or 'possible' (Armstrong, 1983: 10). For example, what we think we 'know' in a particular historical epoch about for example, crime, has an explicit and direct influence on how a society controls, regulates and punishes criminals (Hall, 2001). Expert institutions are therefore believed to employ discourses of risk to filter information, deflect opposition and reinforce dominant norms. Discourses regulate and discipline behaviour by generating 'truths'

about society, which subsequently become interiorised by individuals (Mythen, 2004:168). Knowledge, as it is linked to power, therefore not only assumes the authority of 'truth', but has the *power to make itself true* (my emphasis, Foucault, 1977:27). In focussing on crime and more relevantly, the almost universal contempt towards individuals who supply drugs (Coomber 2006), Foucault's (1977) ideas regarding 'regimes of truth' could be seen as a valuable means of exploring the myths and common understandings associated with this group. For example, while it can be suggested that it may or may not be the truth that involvement in the supply of drugs presupposes the pushing of drugs on the young and vulnerable, if there is a broad consensus that this is so, then society will experience the real effects of this, and to this extent it will become 'true' (relatively speaking), despite a distinct lack of conclusive evidence that would substantiate its existence (Hall, 2001). In contemporary society we are surrounded by a myriad of social clues that portray the extent to which the discourse from Foucault's (1977) concept of 'regimes of truth' permeate. The myths cited previously provide a wealth of evidence, which arguably demonstrate how the behaviours popularly associated with drug dealers, that have been largely discredited by research (Coomber, 2006), are still believed to be truthful. Foucault's ideas around power and truth therefore provide a useful way of theoretically understanding how myths regarding the drug dealer manifest within our culture. As this chapter has highlighted, mythical notions and stereotypical characteristics associated with drug dealers are not a recent phenomenon (see Kohn, 1992; Berridge, 1999). 'Truths' surrounding their conduct can become alternatively linked to historic discourse associating illicit drugs to 'othered' populations, as well as the exaggerated 'dangers' of the drugs they became associated with. In this way, 'regimes of truth' may have valuable exploratory power in explicating how discourse relating to the activities of the drug dealer creates a context for potential thought and action, which becomes both *legitimised* (Olssen, 2006) and *internalised* by individuals and institutions as 'truth' (Hall and Noyes, 2009).

## Media (Mis)representation

Exaggeration, distortion, inaccuracy, sensationalism; each of these labels has been consistently applied to the reporting of drug related issues in the print and other media over the last 40 years and beyond'

(Coomber et al., 2000:217).

One of the institutions that arguably, has been fuelled by 'regimes of truth' is the media. Historically, there has been a vast amount of evidence to suggest that the media systematically misrepresents illegal drug use and markets, both in the UK and globally (Altheide, 1999; Boyd, 2002; Corina, 1994; Glassner, 1999; Speaker, 2002). Academics have fervently responded to this systematic distortion, by providing data which has portrayed the media as instrumental in the labelling of drug users as 'outsiders' (Becker 1963); as having a significant role in the construction of 'folk devils' and 'moral panics' (Young, 1971) and as adopting insufficient quality controls in relation to their reporting on issues such as illicit drugs (Coomber et al., 2000). What has become apparent is that the (mis)reporting of drug related issues have serious consequences, both in terms of the consequences for those who are engaged in drug use and supply, and also, for the everyday citizen, who may expect what they have read in the newspapers to reflect reality. As Murji (1998) argues:

Media coverage is not just misleading, it can also actually be harmful because it is implicated in the triggering of drug scares and moral panics which led to 'knee jerk' drug crackdowns and punitive responses (p.69).

An obvious and recent example of such consequences is the media coverage of the emergence and rapid popularity of substituted cathinones such as mephedrone, and how drug dealers became implicated in the supply of this new drug. The media's extensive coverage of the rise of the then legal drug 'linked' mephedrone to several fatalities, directly attributing the consumption of the drug as 'the cause of death', when in fact, it was not confirmed that this was the case (Shapiro, 2011). One of the most widely

reported cases of mephedrone related fatalities involved the deaths of two young men, Louis Wainwright and Nicholas Smith in Scunthorpe. Several months later, it was revealed by the coroner that they had in fact taken a mixture of the opiate based drug methadone and alcohol, and had not taken any mephedrone at all (ibid). Such reports have strong parallels with the case of Leah Betts (1995), who died as a result of water intoxication, rather than through the alleged direct pharmacological qualities of ecstasy (Critcher, 2000; Nutt, 2012). The fact that instances of misreporting are still in occurrence portrays the continued erroneous character of news. This arguably results in the oversimplification of drug stories, resulting in heightened public anxiety and beliefs based on factually incorrect media representations (Manning, 2006; Murji, 1998). Along with the misreporting of drug related stories, the strong media focus on the deaths of young white drug users from 'respectable' families such as Hester Stewart (GBL) who "never ever took drugs" and would "never have knowingly taken this substance" (Telegraph 2009) appear to be common (see also Gabrielle Price 2009, Lois Waters 2010). Crucially, headlines such as these, serve to reinforce the idea of the drug user as 'victim' and the drug supplier as 'folk devil' (Cohen, 1972), or as Murji (1998) suggests, portrays a world divided into 'them and us' (p.5).

### **The Effects of Media Representations of Drug Dealers**

The result of the media's inaccurate and persistent reporting of mephedrone and legal high related stories are expressive political knee jerk reactions from politicians, who arguably, are in fear of being perceived as 'soft on drugs' (Nutt, 2012) Accordingly, then Home Secretary Alan Johnson responded to media sensationalism and consequent public concern by banning mephedrone, creating a temporary order that would control new substances by placing them in a holding classification for a year (Birdwell and Singleton, 2011). As well as this somewhat anticipated knee jerk reaction, importantly, The Association of Chief Police Officers lead on drugs, Chief Constable Tim Hollis,

portrayed the extent to which again drug dealers were sought out, suggesting the Home Secretary's announcement 'will...serve to suppress sales and provide police with enforcement powers that will allow us to *target those dealing in this drug.*' (my emphasis, BBC News, 2010). It also appears that the media are frequently at the forefront of campaigns to catch 'evil' drug dealers, for example, as a spokesman for the '*dealers don't care, do you?*' campaign in 2007, Deputy Justice Minister Johann Lamont declared:

Drugs, and the callous criminals who peddle them, are a scourge on our society. Individuals, families and communities can all suffer from this evil trade. "The executive's Drug Dealers Don't Care campaign is encouraging the public to call Crimestoppers and give information anonymously to help get even more dealers behind bars.

(BBC News, 2007)

Arguably, it is rare for law enforcement and the media to summon the public in proactively targeting groups of offenders. In this respect, it could be argued that unlike rapists and paedophiles, the threat from drug dealers is omnipresent and in this sense, the targeting of the vulnerable (Coomber, 2006; Speaker, 2002; Murji, 1998; Measham and Moore, 2009) represents an ever present threat. This threat could be said to be predicated upon their association with violent and predatory conduct (Taylor, 2008; Murphy et al., 1990, Jacinto et al., 2008; Boyd, 2002), but also is further strengthened by the apparently addictive (Coomber 2003; 2006) and dangerous nature of the substances they supply, regardless of the fact that the receiver of the drug may have themselves, sought out their product:

Those who justify high sentences for the importation, supply or production of drugs sometimes argue that it leads to dependency, degradation and death, but those consequences increase in remoteness as they do seriousness. Moreover, they have to pass through some voluntary actions of the people that take drugs, and voluntary acts are normally taken to sever the chain of causation. Of course once the dependency sets in, the degree of voluntariness may diminish; but there is still room for argument about whether the importer, supplier or producer can be held liable to any significant extent for those consequences.

(Ashworth, 2010:154).

As Ashworth (2010) contends, here, one of the crucial rationales for the traditionally high deterrent sentences (ibid) for supply offences relates to both the public perception of the harms associated with that drug – one that has been shown to be largely inaccurate and not based on any scientific evidence (Nutt, 2012). Adding to this, as Dorn et al., (1994) point out, expressive trafficking penalties have more to do with ‘the declaration of disapproval of certain acts than any belief that they ameliorate the drug problem’ (p.133).

### **Outsiders: The Marginalisation and Stigmatisation of Drug Dealers**

The literature review has provided some clue as to the ‘real effects’ of media misrepresentation, myths and ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1977) in relation to drug scares and media campaigns. Before proceeding to explore how this contributes at a policy and sentencing level however, some theoretical analysis will be offered regarding the particular rationale for the targeting of ‘drug dealers’ in particular. Here, it will be suggested that that specific suppliers of substances, particularly that of heroin and crack cocaine, are actively treated as ‘outsiders’ (Taylor, 2008; Becker, 1963), a result of our ‘othering’ (see Joffe, 2001; Coomber, 2013) and stigmatisation of their illicit behaviours. Stigma, a concept focussed on by sociological literature and significantly taken on by Goffman (1963), helps to explicate the relationship between attribute and stereotype, positing that it should be understood from the standpoint of the unequal power relations under which it operates (Simmonds and Coomber, 2009). While stigma is associated with most kinds of drug use (Yorke, 2010), it would not be unreasonable to suggest that of all drug users, users of heroin and crack, particularly those who are poor and otherwise socially excluded, are the most stigmatised (Jones et al., 1989). This has led to many authors noting crack users to be ‘the marginalised among the marginalised’ (Briggs, 2012; Agar, 2003; Bourgois, 1995; 2003). Significantly, as Yorke (2010) suggests, *people who are seen to be responsible for their own stigma tend to be more greatly stigmatised* (my emphasis) (p.7). Research has highlighted how problem drug

users are popularly described as dirty, evil and disgusting (Power et al., 1996) and are believed to be 'dangerous to others', 'unpredictable', and as only having themselves to blame (Roberts, 2009; Crisp et al., 2005). Such associations arguably further enforce notions of 'them' and 'us', developing discourse around heroin and crack cocaine which represents users and suppliers as 'outsiders', and therefore, as a *threat* and a *risk* to 'us' (Becker, 1963; Taylor, 2008). Unsurprisingly, these highly visible problem drug users consequently appear to have become the most high profile targets (Seddon, 2007) for government intervention (Parker, 2007; Radcliffe and Stevens, 2008). The current treatment of this group can be well understood through the gaze of Garland's (2001) 'criminology of the other' - a direct contrast to criminologies of everyday life that tend to routinise crime and allay disproportionate fears (p.135). Indeed, the 'criminology of the other' - described as criminology that trades in images, archetypes and anxieties - functions to *demonise the criminal*, to act out popular fears and resentments and crucially, to *promote support for state punishment* (my emphasis p.137). This is a theme that is developed in relation to policy and evidenced in Chapter Three in respect of themes of proportionality.

## The Politics of Drugs Policy

As well as a cultural climate in which sensibilities, attitudes and concerns (Seddon, 2011) appear to be an obstacle in the implementation of more proportionate drug policy, another barrier can be understood as the particular penal trends of populist punitiveness (Bottoms, 1995) and the criminalisation of social policy more generally (Rodger, 2008; Barton, 1999). Developments in drug policy within the twentieth century have been understood through reference to the broader social change at that time (Seddon, 2007). Indeed, the transition from penal welfarism to crime control (Garland, 2001; Seddon, 2011) and the heroin epidemic of the 1980's allowed the government to become more



able to respond to drugs in a politicised way (Shiner, 2012). With public health concerns relating to the spread of HIV and Aids, as well as emerging academic research providing support for the drug crime link (see Goldstein, 1985, Bennett and Holloway, 2009), a sufficient rationale was presented for coercive treatment and enforcement through focussing on the risks of certain groups of drug users. Here, harm - an idea previously associated with harm *to* users - was effectively re-presented as harm created *by* users (toward non-using populations) (Hunt and Stevens, 2004, Shiner, 2012). Accordingly, in the last decade, UK drug policy has focussed on targeting these users, with strong emphasis on supply reduction, enforcement of drug laws, prevention of drug use and treatment (more specifically of problematic drug users (HM Government, 2010; National Audit Office, 2010). Consequently, although studies have suggested the limited efficacy of domestic enforcement (see Best et al., 2001), drug strategy has continued to attempt to disrupt drug markets, targeting drug dealers, drug users and drug traffickers (Reuters and Stevens, 2007) despite consistent demand. It has been suggested that UK society is characterised by 'populist punitiveness' (Bottoms, 1995).

Penal populism is a notion exemplified through 'a pursuit of a set of penal policies to win votes rather than to reduce crime' (Roberts and Hough, 2005:16). It also holds the ability to allow electoral advantage of a policy to take precedence over its penal effectiveness and precedence within justice (ibid). Focussing directly at public opinion on drugs policy, populist punitiveness is noted through particularly low confidence levels in targeting drug-related crime (Roberts and Hough, 2005) and a strong public concern with the idea that the law works to the privilege of criminals and not victims (Hough et al., 2009). In addition, in their research based around the Sentencing Council's public consultation, Jacobson et al. (2011) suggest that public attitudes to drug sentencing – although affected by mitigating factors – could be broadly considered as 'more punitive than current practice' (p. 37). This is so despite there being no adequate empirical basis that

provides effective justification for the trend in deterrent drug sentencing, nor from increasing sentence levels above what is proportionate (Ashworth, 2010; Moyle et al., 2013).

While not all scholars have seen the worth of the populist punitiveness concept, positing it as inefficient explanation of exploring the complexities of policy development (see Sparks, 2001; Matthews, 2005) it nonetheless provides a theoretical tool that can reconcile the creation and mobilisation of punitive penal policies and the aspirations of 'oppressed' public (Pratt, 2007). Moreover, recent evidence has provided more balanced and even encouraging assessments of drug sentencing with political attitudes altering in respect to acceptance of alternatives to prohibition (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform, 2013; Home Affairs Select Committee, 2012; Newcombe, 2004). Despite this, there is nonetheless a broad discursive tenor to the way the drug dealer has been both historically (see Berridge, 1999; Kohn, 1992; Musto, 1999) and *currently* constructed in the political, media and public mind (Moyle et al., 2013; Coomber, 2006, 2011; see Speaker, 2002). In addition, the reality of the current decriminalisation agenda, as we have seen it overseas, has not tended to include supply (Moyle et al., 2013) and due to the limits on weights considered under possession thresholds' (see Sentencing Council, 2012; Harris, 2011a), small-scale suppliers and user-dealers would not be included in the diversionary approaches that users would (Hughes and Stevens, 2010). Whether we attribute the resistance to more proportionate policy to populist punitiveness, cultural orientation toward risk (Seddon, 2011) or a punitive turn in social policy (Stimson, 2000, Hunt and Stevens, 2004), such themes provide a useful context for understanding the particular resistance toward change or mitigation, whilst also situating the possible challenges ahead.

## Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the relationship between the drug dealer and wider society, providing historical analysis and theoretically situated exploration of why these individuals consistently represent figures that attract fear. Examination of the literature has presented evidence to suggest that fear surrounding the drug dealer can be conceived as 'historically anchored', associated with fears related to illicit drugs and 'others', whilst being further 'topped up' and operationalised by the vulnerable characteristic of the modern day culture of fear (Furedi, 2006). The chapter also sets out some of the key drug myths associated with drug dealers, providing context regarding some of the conventional understandings of drug dealer activity. These myths are subsequently positioned in a Foucauldian framework, thereby offering a useful way of understanding how drug myths become established as 'truths' within society. The chapter finally focusses on the *effects* of these myths, highlighting media campaigns, knee jerk policy reactions and the stigmatisation of drug dealers (particularly heroin and crack cocaine sellers). With this chapter providing an overview that offers some explanatory power regarding our fear towards this group, this will enable a basis for understanding notions of disproportionality, along with our sustained difficulty in sufficiently differentiating levels of supply.

## Chapter Three: Exploring the Field: Social Supply and User-Dealer Supply in Context.

Following theoretical discussion of drug supply and drug use, as well as an in-depth location of the drug dealer in society, Chapter Three provides an investigation of social supply and user-dealer behaviours through the analysis of current and past literature, policy and court reports. Beginning with explanation of the shape of drug markets in society today, the chapter first describes the increasingly social character of drug transactions and supply contexts. To provide some insight into the initial identification of social modes of distribution, the chapter will proceed to outline early typologies and descriptions of behaviour. The chapter will then go on to discuss modern day research that captures drug distribution behaviours for cannabis and 'club drugs', which are believed to resemble conduct more akin to social supply than commercially motivated selling. As a means of setting out the common social supply themes identified in the literature review, empirical findings have been collated into categories, critically examining the key ideas and 'grey areas' related to this activity. There will then be some focus on another supply act, which is argued to be closer in scope to social supply than drug dealing proper, that of 'user-dealing'. This chapter will investigate the current scope of user-dealer conceptualisations, exploring empirically how much is currently known about this distinctive group. In the absence of user-dealer conceptualisations that incorporate acknowledgement of the social contexts of user-dealers, this chapter will draw on wider research on addiction and the relationship between drugs and crime, as a means of outlining the possible broader circumstances of this group. Finally, as a means of situating social supply and user-dealer supply in our current context, the chapter will introduce the new *Drug Offences Definitive Guideline* (2012). This will provide a basis for outlining in the discussion chapter to what extent social supply and user-dealing

behaviours (as found in this research) are appropriately dealt with through current sentencing and policy approaches.

## Supply Contexts: Exploring Society's Drug Markets

Behind any system of retail, there lies a distribution system (Hough and Natarajan, 1999). In this respect, the illicit drugs trade is no different, with the distribution of illegal drugs largely following the same economic principles as the sale of any other product (Bean, 2002; Pearson & Hobbs, 2001; Potter, 2009). However, unlike licit markets, the criminalisation and prohibition of illegal drugs in our society means that our knowledge of how these distribution systems function is especially limited (May and Hough, 2004). Historic research on drug markets tends to have been narrow in scope, with the vast majority of research conducted in North America, and therefore the relevance of application or generalisability to a UK market is questionable (Coomber, 2007). Traditionally, as stated in the introduction to this thesis, the structure of drug markets has been posited as pyramidal or hierarchical (Paoli, 2002; Lewis, 1994) in the sense that systems have been defined by large scale traffickers or importers at the top of the hierarchy filtering down through to wholesale distribution (Pearson and Hobbs, 2001). From this point, drugs are then suggested to reach the middle market and retail dealers, who go on to distribute substances to the lower tier drug runners or foot soldiers (see Gilman and Pearson, 1991; Pearson and Hobbs, 2004; Potter, 2009). Although particular markets may take on a more organised structure, in reality the majority of markets are commonly thought to be relatively fluid (McSweeney et al., 1998), disorganised (Adler, 1993; Coomber, 2006; Lewis, 1994) and characterised by varying levels of competition (Coomber, 2006), rather than monolithic entities that are controlled by a singular criminal enterprise (Curtis and Wendel, 2000; Pearson and Hobbs, 2001). As Coomber (2007) suggests, drug markets can be understood as increasingly 'dynamic, shifting, changing, and diverse' (p.750) and vary according to characteristics such as the socioeconomic

background of both those who supply and purchase the drugs (Bean, 2008; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007), as well as the cultural context of the market and the drug-using scene it supplies (Taylor and Potter, 2013).

### The Shape of Drug Markets

Commentators have historically found it useful to explore the shape of drug markets in relation to the physical place or setting (Curtis and Wendel, 2000). Accordingly, open markets have been largely defined as zones that require no prior introduction between the seller and purchaser (May and Hough, 2004). In this sense, there are few barriers to access and drugs are available to anyone who appears a plausible buyer (Curtis and Wendel, 2000; Hough and Natarajan, 2000; Johnson et al., 1990, Jacobs, 1999); however, this often comes at a price, namely in relation to the increased visibility to law enforcement (Coomber and Moyle, 2012; Dorn et al., 1992; Edmunds et al 1996; May and Hough, 2004). These markets would commonly be identified as 'street markets' and in the UK, are commonly associated with problem drug users, such as heroin and crack cocaine users. This is principally due to the supposedly easy access to heroin and crack cocaine, along with the markets potential to offer drugs on a daily and nightly basis (May and Hough, 2001; Curtis and Wendel, 1999). Unsurprisingly, in contrast to open markets, commentators have also identified the existence of closed drug markets. Whilst they have always been present (Dorn et al., 1992), closed markets are thought to have increased as a response to police surveillance and the rise of technology (Edmunds et al., 1996; May and Hough, 2004). Despite the majority of illicit drug purchases taking place 'indoors' (Curtis and Wendel, 2000: 129), for example in semi-open markets such as pub and club settings (Ruggiero and South, 1995), closed markets are popularly characterised by the presence of the seller and buyer relationship, where often, both buyer and seller will only make a transaction if they 'know' and trust each other (McSweeney et al., 1998; Hough and Natarajan, 2000). This relationship of trust is said

to be valued by many as it ensures the stability of supply and a level of quality in regard to the substances sold (May and Hough, 2004). Whilst acknowledging the high utilisation of semi-open markets, it seems logical that given the choice, most drug users would opt to purchase drugs from friends or sellers they know in a private, rather than public space (Hough and Natarajan., 1999). With this in mind, this chapter now moves to explore what have been referred to as 'friendship markets' or 'social network markets'.

### **Socially Based Drug Markets**

Social network markets can be understood as another type of 'closed' retail drug market. In contrast to the traditional, hierarchical model of supply, social drug markets take a more fluid form, with less structured composition, arguably due to the existence of multiple 'independent entrepreneurs' (May and Hough, 2004:556) rather than a central ownership. As will be discussed in greater detail latterly, research has indicated, that particularly in youth markets, young people have very little contact with 'drug dealers' (Duffy et al., 2008; Parker et al., 1998, 2000; Measham et al., 2001) as their preference is directed more towards associating with people they 'know and trust' (Coomber and Moyle, 2012; May and Hough, 2004; Nicholas, 2008). As Coomber and Turnbull (2007) suggest, social supply and 'friendship markets' can effectively 'sit outside' the wider drug market, cushioning users from more intimidating commercial markets and allowing them convenient access to illicit drugs, which may not otherwise be granted without the assistance of peers and acquaintances. Although friendship markets may be considered rife within adolescent drug markets, research has also started to explicitly highlight reliance on social networks in accessing drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy, mephedrone and cannabis in adult markets (see Deehan and Saville, 2003; Murphy et al., 1990, 2004; McElrath and O'Neill, 2010; Nicholas, 2008; Shearer, 2005; Joe-Laidler and Hunt, 2008; Aldridge et al., 2011). It is arguable that due to the fact that most people know someone involved in drug supply (Coomber, 2010) and that social access to drugs appears

preferable (Measham et al., 2001), that the drugs market may therefore comprise of an increasing proportion of social network markets. Of course, there is a distinct research gap in this area (Coomber, 2010) and more inquiry is required. However, if this is the case, the relative ubiquity of social supply markets will have huge implications for policy and the way we imagine drugs markets and 'drug dealers', today.

## Distributor Types

Following discussion of the shape and character of society's drugs markets, it seems appropriate to provide an overview of the different roles and types of retailers that have been identified as operating within these systems. Broadly, commentators have pinpointed the development and emergence of criminal groups or 'villains' (Lewis, 1989) in drug supply from the 1970's onwards (Dorn et al., 1992). According to Hartnoll et al. (1984), from this time onwards the illicit drugs market became more organised in structure, thereby attracting criminal groups who had not previously been willing to become involved in drug distribution (Dorn and South, 1990). This feature, along with the promise of high profitable returns (Dorn et al., 1992) offered an attractive incentive to move out of more hazardous activities such as robbery and theft, into a more lucrative and perhaps less precarious enterprise (Dorn and South, 1990; Dorn et al., 1992). As previously alluded, the literature provides conceptualisations of the varying roles in drugs markets. Wholesale distribution, a mode of supply noted by a number of commentators (Curtis and Wendel, 1999; Pearson and Hobbs, 2001; Lewis, 1994), broadly denotes the bulk sale of substances at an international, national or local level (McSweeney et al., 2008). There has also been some research attention around the 'middle market', focussing on individuals or organisations who are located in-between importers and retail level suppliers (Pearson and Hobbs, 2001). The middle market, described as notoriously ambiguous and difficult to define (Pearson and Hobbs, 2003), is characterised by various go-between and brokerage activities (Pearson and Hobbs, 2004a; 2004b). The middle



market also effectively provides a point of linkage between someone 'above' and someone else 'below', ensuring they never meet and that the 'middle' remains intact (Pearson and Hobbs, 2004b).

The types of individuals and groups to undertake these higher level supply activities have been identified by Dorn and Colleagues (1990, 1992) as including 'criminal diversifiers' (Dorn and South, 1990), or 'Bread Heads' (Akhtar and South, 2000), described as criminally minded individuals penetrating the UK drugs market in search of profit. There has also been a consideration of the involvement of 'drug entrepreneurs', who have experience of operating at retail level (Desroches, 2007; Lewis, 1994), and 'opportunistic irregulars' (Murji, 1998), who become involved in supply as legitimate or illegitimate (Lewis, 1994) opportunistic sideliners (Dorn and South, 1990). These groups may plausibly be considered as sharing a commonality in the sense that their involvement in supply activity is essentially based around an aim *to gain profit*. With the activities they engage in like any other business aimed at taking advantage of basic economic market principles (Adler, 1985; Adler and Adler, 1992), drug dealing represents on-going market activity (like any other business) in which participants must procure a quality product at reasonable prices, compete for clients, market their drugs, and collect finance (ibid). The individuals partaking in these positions have thus been described as *rational actors* who focus on financial yield, therefore seeking out economic opportunities and taking into consideration the competition, expenditure and attendant risk (Desroches, 2007). Focussing on lower-level distributors, rationales for participation appear to become increasingly complex and nuanced. Retail distributors are suggested to be increasingly likely to also be drug users (Lewis, 1994), whereas higher level actors are presented invariably as non-users (Desroches, 2007; May and Hough, 2004). Despite commentators pointing to the under researched nature of upper level drug trafficking (Coomber, 2007), there is also arguably a paucity of in-depth exploration of low-level

supply roles (Coomber, 2004). This chapter, after providing an overview of the drugs market and distributors, will focus on these small-scale modes of supply.

### **Exploring the Social Aspect of Supply**

After exploring the shape and contexts of drug markets on a more general level, the chapter will now explore the motivations, logistics and intricacies of socially based supply networks. Rather than immediately outlining current definitions regarding how social supply has been conceptualised, instead the review will trace social supply behaviours through time, outlining early descriptions of social distribution that would now be considered as social supply. More detailed consideration of explicit definitions and identifications of social supply will take place later in the chapter (see page 91).

### **Early Identifications: Trading Charities, Mutual Societies and Psychedelic Dealers**

Some of the first notable evidence of early references to social supply are exhibited by Goode (1970), Atkyns and Hanneman (1974), Blum et al. (1972), and latterly Dorn and South (1990). Despite not being conceived as social supply at that time, these behaviours could be argued as strongly evocative of some of the characteristics described in current definitions (see page 91). Goode (1970) for example, highlighted that marijuana was not exclusively sold by highly organised criminals but was often distributed among friends without payment. Similarly, Atkyns and Hanneman (1974) emphasised that suppliers tended to be users of the drugs they sold and rather than dealing for financial reasons, were likely to deal for friendship or free drugs. Complimenting these studies, Blum et al. (1972) provide an in-depth research piece that illustrated the heterogeneity of distribution systems, whilst highlighting the social aspects of supply. Interestingly, Blum et al. (1972) also contended that 'drug dealing' has its partial origins in peer group social activities surrounding illicit drugs, focussing initially on

desires to share an experience, to consolidate friendships, and to prove ones importance (p.113). Blum et al. (1972) referred to these lower level suppliers as 'marginal dealers'. This group were characterised by the fact that '*they were not engaged in dealing primarily for the money, but neither was is it irrelevant to them*' (my emphasis, p.89). In addition, Blum et al. (1972) also argued that although commercial type 'big-time operators' are a far greater threat to society, marginal dealers occur in vastly greater numbers and they provide the entry point or recruitment pool for larger operations. In this respect, the impact they have on other persons as visible models of dealing is significant.' (p.89).

### **'Mutual Societies'**

Following Blum et al. (1972), Dorn and South (1990) (and latterly Dorn et al. (1992)) provide a broad typology of 'specialist drug distributors'. While the majority of typologies relate to commercially motivated retailers (as explored previously), two of these typologies may be considered as encompassing social supply characteristics, due to their association with friendship ties and their primarily non-commercial intent. One of these typologies, that of '*mutual societies*', describes 'friendship networks of user-dealers who support each other and sell or exchange drugs amongst themselves in a reciprocal fashion' (Dorn et al., 1992:xiii). Mutual societies are thus characterised by their primary involvement in using drugs (user-dealers) and their interest in exchange based supply, embarking in the exchange, trade and selling of drugs so as to support their own and their friendship group's drug supply. As Auld (1981) highlights, reciprocity is the name of the game and in this sense, 'members may support each other in a variety of ways including co-operating to ensure the supply of drugs and to keep out unwelcome outsiders' (as cited in Dorn et al., 1992:182). While Dorn and South (1990) point to the breaking down of these particular groups of dealers in the 1980's in response to proactive policing, the utility of the term remains clear. Coomber (2006), associated this

categorisation with those who could be described as ‘friend dealers’; individuals whom in the eyes of the legal system, would be seen as ‘dealers proper’ but ‘do little more than pass a drug from one person to another taking no cut or benefit from the transaction’ (p.151). Moreover, despite Dorn et al. (1992) suggesting that this supply type fits best with cannabis networks, such behaviour may easily be paralleled to the networks evident in dance drug circles such as ecstasy and ketamine (Coomber, 2006). This typology is also central in operationalising themes of reciprocity (see Chapter One), highlighting the reliance on members of the group, along with the preference of keeping supply localised and avoiding external outsider connections (see Measham et al., 2001; Parker et al., 1998; Parker, 2000). Another important aspect of the mutual societies’ conceptualisation relates to the intermittent and sporadic nature of supply whereby, ‘some of the users, some of the time will supply drugs to others’ (Dorn et al., 1992:10). This idea therefore highlights the *potential for haphazard and variable patterns of social supply behaviours*. In this respect, users may dip in and out of selling when they need to, with many of these individuals ‘no more deviant’ beyond their drug use and dealing than other ‘normal’ law abiding citizens’ (Coomber, 2006:152).

### ‘Trading Charities’ and ‘Psychedelic Dealers’

Dorn et al.’s (1992) characterisation of ‘*trading charities*’ can also be helpful in exposing another ‘social supply’ type dealing behaviour. ‘Trading charities’ can be likened to Blum et al.’s (1972) ‘*psychedelic dealers*’, a group evocative of the ‘hippy era’ of the 1960’s, mostly involved in the sale of marijuana and hallucinogens. This group have been described as holding strong and progressive ideas (believing drugs are good things for themselves and their children), locating themselves both emotionally and ideologically against the police and the drug laws of that time. Similarly, Dorn et al. (1992) describe trading charities as ‘involved in the drug business because of ideological commitments to drugs, with profit as secondary motive’ (p.xiii). Again, this dealing behaviour also has its

roots in 1960's supply culture where buying and selling drugs was a sociable process and there was said to be 'no violence, no rip offs...when you bought or sold' and instead, 'dealer and client invariably sat down and got stoned together' (Dorn et al., 1992:3). Although conceptualisations from Dorn and South (1990) and Blum et al. (1972) may be suggested as largely nostalgic, or based upon a past era, there are facets of this dealing practice that may have the potential to resonate with social supply behaviours captured today. A key aspect that has relevance to contemporary realisations of social supply conduct is the idea that dealers 'are not primarily (and definitely not solely) financially motivated' (Dorn et al., 1992:3). Therefore, although there may be some financial form of profit taken by the dealer, his act of supply is not *motivated* by the desire to gain a profit and anything gained is secondary to the ideological and social motivations for helping people access and experience the desired illicit drug. Put succinctly; Dorn et al. advocate that:

The trading charity dealer ties involvement in the supply of drugs to a particular facet of their social life and socialising within it. This may not amount to a full on ideology or world view but it does mean that *a goal of profit accumulation is subsidiary to, or strongly tempered by a commitment to, or enjoyment of the social and cultural aspects of using the drug and the context in which this is done.*' (my emphasis, 1992:10)

The trading charity was clearly conceptualised at a time when there was perhaps more of a subcultural commitment to drug experimentation (see Young, 1971; Becker, 1953). However, as the quote below from Murphy et al.'s (2004) qualitative study of ecstasy sellers in San Francisco indicates, it appears that in certain social groups, the ideological allegiance to the culture and the pleasurable properties of certain drugs (see Hunt et al., 2007; Duff, 2004; Measham, 2004) still provides grounds to help friends experience these drugs:

Those sellers we identified as drifting into dealing began by enjoying and valuing the ecstasy experience. They wanted to continue using ecstasy

themselves and they *wanted to provide the experience to their friends. Most saw themselves as providing a service assuring their customers a quality product that was available and reasonably priced*'

(my emphasis, Murphy et al., 2003:20)

It therefore appears that the desire to provide friends with the means to experience drugs such as ecstasy may be seen as an incentive to become involved in social supply. In order to ascertain the extent to which this motivation is representative of social supplier's rationale for participation in current times, arguably, further research exploring the prevalence of this theme is required.

## Indirect References to Social Supply

### The Supply of Cannabis: 'It's a Social thing' (Duffy et al., 2008)

Considering the widely documented literature base relating to the social nature of the subculture surrounding cannabis use (see Becker, 1953; Goode, 1970), and given that cannabis it is still considered as the most prevalent drug in UK society (Aldridge et al., 2011; CSEW, 2013), it is perhaps unsurprising that social supply is arguably most popularly linked with the distribution of cannabis. As previously stated, the social aspect of cannabis dealing was identified early on by Goode (1970), who purported that cannabis dealers were motivated 'less by financial profit than by the status derived from supplying friends or by free consumption' (cited in Atkyns and Hanneman, 1974:37). Following this, further research corroborated these themes, stating that marijuana dealers were simply taking part in a lifestyle that conceived distribution as part of the social milieu (Douglas, 1972). In addition, it has been reported that the likelihood of cannabis users knowing a range of supply sources, presupposes users to move into their own supply role. Within the contemporary research base one of the most significant studies, undertaken by Coomber and Turnbull (2007), has provided important findings

that substantiate Atkyns and Hanneman's (1974) work, as well as providing data which can be paralleled with the work of Blum et al. (1972) and Dorn et al., (1992). As outlined in more detail in the first chapter, Coomber and Turnbull (2007) have highlighted the idea that most young people are involved in what could be described as a symbolic rite of passage and 'acting out' of social exchange. This supports the idea that the social supply of cannabis can be conceived as a functional, identity forming adolescent behaviour (see Hammersley et al., 2001). Significantly, the authors found that for nearly all the young people who participated within the research, use was negotiated through peers, with 92% suggesting they brokered for friends. Reaffirming the importance of the social network to young people's cannabis transactions, utilising the same data set, Duffy et al. (2008) report that only 6% of participants reported buying cannabis from an unknown seller. Instead, suppliers were described as 'very good friends' (friendship often preceding cannabis transactions) or 'a friend', with only 21% of respondents having bought from an 'acquaintance' (viii, 2008).

Complimenting this literature, wider research relating principally to cannabis cultivation has also described a high propensity for home growers to distribute cannabis to friends, with or without the expectation of recompense (Bovenkerk and Hogewind, 2002; Hough et al., 2003; Potter, 2010). Rationales for this practice have been related to concerns regarding the threat of detection (where growers will supply friends to get rid of surplus amounts of the drug (Potter, 2006). Social supply practices were also described to be employed as a means of avoiding drug dealers and the wider drugs market (Hough et al., 2003), as well as delivering social rewards associated with the satisfaction of growing a good quality product and being able to share this with friends (Weisheit, 1991; Hough et al., 2003). Social supply behaviours have consequently become strongly associated with cultivation. Here, research findings suggest that those who grow and use cannabis are

*highly likely* to be involved in some form of social distribution (Potter, 2006, Decorte et al., 2011).

### **Pills, 'Ket' and Coke: Social Supply into the 'Club Drug' Arena**

It has become increasingly apparent that sourcing illicit drugs via social supply is not exclusive only to cannabis. In fact, club drugs and new psychoactive substances such as ecstasy, MDMA, mephedrone and ketamine, are also being distributed in this manner, both in the UK (Birdwell et al 2011; Deehan and Saville, 2003; Parker et al., 1998, 2000; Murphy, 2004; McElrath and O'Neill, 2010; Measham et al 2001; Riley et al., 2001; Simpson, 2003; Ward, 2000, 2010; Winstock et al., 2001), as well as overseas (Fowler and Kinner, 2007; Lenton and Davidson, 1999; Nicholas 2008; Shearer et al., 2005). Similarly to the behaviours outlined in the preceding cannabis section, literature suggests that respondents who used Class A or psychoactive 'club drug' substances, displayed similar group buying behaviours, showing a high preference for collective purchases (Dorn et al., 1990; Police Foundation, 2000; RSA, 2007; Measham et al., 2001). This has been highlighted as related to group purchases representing a convenient and cost-effective option for use, particularly for young people (Measham et al., 2001; Potter, 2009). Recent official documents (Home Office, 2013) have also confirmed the prevalence of Class A drugs such as MDMA, ecstasy and cocaine at festivals; with research indicating that individuals often purchase their drugs before-hand (Lenton and Davidson, 1999), implying that social supply may have a high prevalence in festival buying – an area that requires more analysis.

Apart from the logistical benefits of acquiring club drugs through friends, literature suggests that a key feature of supply through social networks is its use as a harm reduction strategy (Paolli, 2002; Measham et al., 2001). Buying from a friend or as part of a group, ensured greater security in the sense that the user felt there was less possibility



of being supplied low quality or fake drugs, increasing the perceived levels of safety of psychoactive substances (Measham et al., 2001; Murphy et al., 2004; Jacinto et al. 2008). Notably, social supply also allowed drug buyers to avoid utilising the infamous 'drug dealer' (Aldridge et al., 2011; Jacinto et al., 2008; Murphy et al., 1990, 2004, Parker et al., 1998), effectively protecting them from the wider drugs market (Paolli, 2002; Parker, 2000) and the heinous activities associated with them (Atkyns and Hanneman, 1974; Coomber, 1997a,b,c,d; 2006; 2010; Murphy et al., 1990; Speaker, 2002; Murji, 1998). Although of course some members of the group come into contact with the wider market (Potter, 2009), this arrangement allows less connected, or less confident members of a peer group to obtain what may be perceived as more 'risky' Class A drugs (Murphy et al., 1990, 2004; Parker, 2000; Parker et al., 1998) Adding to this, the social nature of distributing to friends was said to facilitate the sharing of experiences (see Becker, 1953) and communication of 'street wisdom' regarding the effects of specific batches of drugs (Measham et al., 2001). The use of psychoactive party substances has been indicated as deemed more dangerous and uncertain than that of cannabis (Gourley, 2004; Shewan et al., 2000). Therefore, interestingly, the combination of the social acquisition, distribution and use of these drugs has been described as further minimising the potential harm of these substances, negotiating the risks relating to the pharmacological properties of the drugs and the ways in which they are used (Parker, 2000).

## **Social Supply is...? Explicit Definitions of the Concept**

As the evidence suggests, the propensity to choose to access drugs through friends is comparatively high, not just in relation to cannabis but for a wide range of psychoactive substances including Class A drugs (Murphy et al., 2004; Measham et al., 2001). With this in mind, we might expect a range of conceptualisations or definitions to have

emerged in order to distinguish exactly what social supply is (and what it's not). Although not an explicit definition, the Police Foundation Report (2000) of the Independent Inquiry Into The Misuse Of Drugs Act (1971) first associated the concept of 'social supply' with 'small-scale consumption among friends' that 'may well involve supply and indeed supply for gain' (p.25) (see also). Academic literature has since begun to conceptualise these behaviours and currently, the two most important *explicit identifications* have been formulated by Hough et al (2003) and Coomber and Turnbull (2007). Citing social supply in relation to cannabis cultivation, Hough et al. (2003) state social supply could be defined as 'the non-commercial (or non-profit making) distribution of cannabis to non-strangers' (p.36). Alternatively, Coomber and Turnbull (2007) also provide a valuable reference to the term suggesting that 'the issue [of social supply]...is important because it delineates a separate category of dealing whereby friends supply or facilitate supply to other friends' (p.845). In the same year, the RSA (2007) utilised the term, defining it as 'sharing with friends or buying on their behalf' (p.277), inferring a differentiation between this practice and that of commercial or drug dealing (proper). Potter (2009) adds to these explicit references of social supply, offering a conceptualisation of the term as 'supplying friends where profit is not the primary motive' and further contributing that such a concept should be positioned in opposition to the traditional consideration of 'upper level dealing or commercial supply' (p.58).

Definitions have also emerged from International sources. Recently, in a review of the Misuse of Drugs Act (1985), the New Zealand Law Commission refers to social supply as being evident where 'supply is of a very low level, among friends or acquaintances, without profit or with a very small profit, and with no significant element of commerciality' (p.194). Legal interpretations of social supply have also been cited in courts in England and Wales with references to social supply and 'quasi-social supply' (see Evans [2010] (EWCA Crim 1090), corresponding to characteristics such as the absence of dealing for

commercial gain; limited circulation – that is, the non-random distribution of drugs (limiting distribution through keeping drugs off ‘the street’) and defendants as ‘non-stock holding’ – where no stock of drugs were found on the person or premises by the police (Moyle et al., 2013).

## **Deconstructing Social Supply: Social Supply Characteristics**

### **Social Supply as ‘Dealing to Non-Strangers’**

In order to begin to consider a definition that could capture the essence of social supply, it is critical to try to deconstruct and encapsulate the common features of this behaviour and attempt to identify emerging themes. One of the central themes that appear to encompass the social supply definition, is the notion of friendship. Strong narratives regarding high coincidences and proportions of friend type supply (as opposed to use of a ‘drug dealer’) have emerged, whereby the likelihood of a user accessing drugs through friends by far outweighs the use of a drug dealer. Significantly, typical findings have presented meaningfully high proportions of sample populations having received illegal drugs from friends (Murphy et al., 2004; Nicholas 2008; Riley et al., 2001; Fowler and Kinner, 2008). While friendship is commonly focussed on, there has also been broad consensus relating to the fact that drug users not only use ‘friends’, but also utilise ‘acquaintances’ to access drugs (Hough et al 2003; Duffy et al., 2008; Murphy et al., 2004; Potter, 2009).

The idea of ‘acquaintanceship’ could be argued as particularly problematic in the conceptualisation of social supply. The issue with ideas of acquaintanceship and social supply relates to the complexities regarding the point at which a stranger stops being a stranger, and becomes an acquaintance (Morgan, 2009). Commentators have pointed to acquaintances being represented as more than non-intimates or non-strangers and

instead, as characterised by a strange mixture of intimacy and distance (Morgan, 2009; Planalp and Benson, 1992). This complexity also features when attempting to understand the relationship between social suppliers and receivers of illicit drugs. Indeed, as Potter (2009) has indicated, the scope of social supply as found in the literature also appears to include known individuals, who are not quite friends but are not strangers. Accordingly, Potter (2006) argues that supply to 'non-strangers' (p.69) may be a helpful way of defining such networks. This is reasoned as suitable since friendship is itself a subjective conception and therefore it is problematic - particularly at policy level - to base the definition of social supply solely on this idea. In illustrating the premise behind this notion, it is also useful to look at the empirical observations made by Measham et al. (2001), who stress the emphasis placed by young clubbers on building up a good relationship with their supplier through regular contact. Themes such as these again serve to reflect the increasingly 'blurred distinction between 'dealer' and 'friend' (Parker 2000; Potter, 2009; Taylor and Potter, 2013) and the complexities of constructing an accurate definition.

### **Social Supply as Not- For- Profit**

The idea of social supply as owning an inherent non-commercial element appears to have been widely supported in the literature base (Hough et al., 2003; Coomber et al., 2007). Qualitatively, the reciprocal nature of social supply, as initially established by both Blum et al. (1972) and Dorn et al., (1990), together with the altruism loaded within sentiments of 'helping friends out' (e.g. Coomber and Turnbull, 2007 and Duffy et al., 2008) has emphasised the non-profit element of social supply. 'Normalisation' research (Aldridge et al 2011; Parker et al 1998; Parker, 2000) and literature elsewhere (Hough et al 2003; Duffy et al., 2008) has also portrayed the regularity and high incidence of sharing and 'chipping in' together. This has been identified as a significant means of providing access to those without contacts within drug supply networks, well as allowing

users to share drug costs. In addition, studies (see Parker et al., 1998; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007) have also found a high prevalence of young people obtaining illicit drugs as *gifts*, with research suggesting that (young) age and gender are the most important indicator that an individual will receive drugs as gifts (Hamilton, 2005). This is supported by findings from Aldridge et al. (2011) who report that recreational drug users in their study were as likely to have their drugs for free as purchasing them (p.158). Drawing on this idea, it would be useful to investigate how far this notion extends into adulthood and in this respect, whether we can suggest that social supply is characterised by 'gift' giving and/or symbolic transactions at this stage of the life course.

Another theme that is prominent in regard to the character of social supply transactions relates to the idea of individuals buying on behalf of a group, whereby one member would be nominated to purchase a drug with the combined financial capital from other group members (Police Foundation, 2000). In this situation, better connected individuals within a group would make the purchase and therefore would facilitate access for the less active group members (Measham et al., 2001). This can again be viewed as a functional action as it provides access to those who otherwise would be unable to obtain drugs. In addition, this practice can also be adopted as a risk management, or harm minimisation technique since clubbers are then enabled to make 'considered purchases' (Measham et al, 2001:153) regarding the quality of drugs (see Parker, 2000; Parker et al., 2001; Measham et al., 2001). The occurrence of group purchases have highlighted a further complexity to the idea of not-for-profit supply, as it has been proposed that those who are involved in the supply transaction on behalf of the group occasionally get given free drugs or a monetary contribution for their troubles and risk (Parker, 2000; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007). In a similar way, it has also been posited that one of the most common motivations for selling drugs relates to funding the seller's drug use (See Atkyns and Hanneman, 1974; Goode, 1969; Dorn et al., 1992; Waldorf, 1983; Murphy et al.,

1990); this again arguably indicating that some form of gain may be routinely featured in social supply transactions.

### **Social Supply as 'Real' Dealing?**

Due to the amount of myths regarding the conduct of 'drug dealers' (proper) within the visual media (see Boyd, 2002; Shapiro, 2011; Speaker 2002) and public discourse (Brook and Stringer, 2005; Foucault, 1977) (see Chapter Two), it would not be unfair to suggest that there is a largely implicit universal agreement regarding who and what the drug dealer is (Coomber, 2006). However, perhaps because of this, within the academic literature there has been limited overt debate in respect to what qualities of types of behaviour constitute 'proper' dealing. This is an important area of enquiry as by theorising on what drug dealing is, we can therefore show what social supply is not. Parker (2000) for example, has suggested that a vast proportion of social suppliers do not see themselves as dealers, with findings illustrating that 77% of study participants claimed they had sold drugs to friends but did not perceive themselves as drug dealers. Clearly, this is a considerable proportion and thus provides another important rationale in examining how we can define a 'real dealer'.

Murphy et al. (1990, 2004) and latterly, Jacinto et al. (2008) have also made notable contributions to knowledge in this area, collecting valuable qualitative data that focuses on this theme. For example, in their study of cocaine dealers (1990), Murphy and colleagues define a dealer as a person who 'fronted' or buys quantities of drugs for sale. They contend that in order to be considered a dealer one must conform to four characteristics, to (1) 'have one or more reliable suppliers; (2) make regular purchases to be sold in smaller quantities; (3) maintain a consistent stash for sale; and (4) have regular clients or customers' (p.26). Further to this, Jacinto et al. (2008) include data that

illustrates the different perceptions that participants had regarding what constitutes a real dealer:

'I mean dealer to me is more like, you know, just mad, large amounts of quantities or whatever, you know...someone who's just moving lots of pills' (p.429)

'I mean anyone can say 'oh you sold E one time, you're a dealer,' but to me like the word dealer means that like once you're kind of out, you're looking to replenish it...to sell more. That to me is dealing because you know you're dealing some out and then you're getting some more...hence the word dealer, you keep making deals' (p.430)

Potter (2009) is critical of conceiving social suppliers as different to dealers and utilises Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralisation as a theoretical means of exploring the reluctance for social suppliers to conceive their actions as drug dealing. This theory explicates 'extension of defences to crimes, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large' (p.667). Here criminals redefine their activities in ways that minimise their apparent immorality – employing the following possible rationales as examples of direct attempts to minimise their personal culpability; 'I'm not really dealing drugs, merely helping my mates out', 'I'm actually helping my friends by keeping them away from real criminals' (p.65). Following this, Potter (2009) goes on to state that any attempt by academics to distinguish between social supply and other forms of drug dealing is, in part, buying in to this denial or risk minimisation technique. This is because 'social suppliers may not see themselves as dealers, but they get drugs from real dealers' (p.65). Furthermore, recent research has gone so far as to suggest that while social supply may be seen as distinct from real dealing, it nonetheless seems to be an important stage in *becoming* a real dealer (Taylor and Potter, 2013). This project will provide data that will explore how far we can consider social supply as a 'stepping stone'

into 'real dealing'. Furthermore, it will also examine how far we can conceive the social supply concept as a means of neutralising deviance in relation to drug dealing.

## User-Dealing: Building a Conceptualisation

### Exploring Existing User/Dealer Concepts

Social suppliers are not the only drug sellers that can be conceived as somewhat different to conventional understandings regarding the activities of drug dealers (proper). One of the key features of social supply that has been argued to separate it from drug dealing is the absence of a significant element of commerciality (Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Potter, 2009; RSA, 2007; New Zealand Law Commission, 2011). This is a characteristic that has also been found to be resonant in the case of user-dealers of heroin and crack cocaine. One of the earliest observations of a dealer who consumes his/her own drugs was observed by Preble and Casey (1969), who recorded the emergence of 'a juggler who is the seller from whom the average street addict buys, he is always a user' (p.11). Since this 'type' of dealer was originally identified, the term has been most widely exercised as a conceptual and actual cross over between networks of dealers who supply *and* use drugs, with profits contributing toward their own use (Fagan, 1989; Potter 2006; Jacobs, 1999). However, the term has more recently become better associated with an individual who 'only sells drugs in order to *maintain his or her own drug habit*' (my emphasis, Pearson 2007:77). Significantly, this association has provided an important acknowledgement of supply being associated and driven by problematic or compulsive drug use behaviours. Indeed, as Lewis (1994) highlights;

The user-dealer label is not just a description of drug dealers who are also drug users. *Instead it seems to be applied most usually to the drug user who consumes so many drugs that they need to deal to raise the money to cover their own drug expense*

(my emphasis, as cited in Potter, 2009:58)



Coomber (2006) suitably defines user-dealers as individuals that 'we might understand as users first and dealers second who primarily supply to support their own drug use' (p.141). This is a theme that has also been emphasised by May et al. (2005) who found that this group did not necessarily recognise themselves as dealers. Significantly, Akhtar and South (2000), in their study '*Heroin Use and Dealing within an English Asian Community*', further expand the scope of the definition by again stressing that user-dealers' 'prime motive is to support and regulate one's own habit', adding that the act is generally chosen as 'an *alternative* to shoplifting or burglary' (p.160). A review of legal case evidence shows that this distinct context and type of supplier has also historically become recognised within the court environment through reference to '*Afonso*' – an offender who serviced a £150 a day crack cocaine addiction (Stone, 2005). Afonso was identified as representing a particular group of drug-dependent, unemployed users, who became involved in supply as one of limited options to fund their habit. First identified by *Lord Justice Rose*, Afonso subsequently became a 'guideline case' within UK courts. Describing the characteristic of an '*Afonso*' case in 2004, Rose LJ explained:

These are offenders who are out of work drug addicts, whose motive is solely to finance the feeding of their own addiction, who hold no stock of drugs and who are shown to have made a few retail supplies of the drug to which they are addicted to undercover police officers only. *An unemployed addict has, in practical terms, three means of financing his or her addiction – prostitution, theft or supplying others, and sentencers should realise as a consequence, his culpability is likely to be less than that of many other suppliers.*

(my emphasis, [EWCA Crim 2342 [3]])

The use of Afonso [2004] as a guideline case offers further example of user-dealing being separated from conventional ideas of what supply is, both in terms of the supplier's behaviour, their motivation and importantly, their culpability. The research outlined has added some sense of the distinctive motivations and circumstances these dealers may find themselves in. However, there is arguably an absence of in-depth exploration and

expansive typologies, which include some of the important issues and circumstances often associated with drug dependent individuals. As a means of providing some more detail relating to the social context of the user-dealer, these themes will now be outlined.

### The Nature of Addiction

While there have been many variations on the exact scope of the term of addiction (EMCDDA, 2013), scholars often prioritise notions of compulsion, loss of control and dependence - despite adverse consequences (ibid; Best, 2012; Matè, 2013) - as characteristic of how individuals experience problems relating to addiction. Despite not being able to provide a conclusive definition of the term, for the purposes of this thesis, addiction is understood as a 'multi-factorial health disorder that often follows the course of a relapsing and remitting chronic disease' (World Health Organisation 2007:2). There has been a range of cross disciplinary attention surrounding addiction, which can only be but alluded to here. For example, biochemical approaches have focussed on brain circuitry, where addiction is linked to the disruption of the prefrontal cortex (Volkow, 2011; Compton and Volkow, 2006). Elsewhere, research has highlighted how personality traits such as impulsivity and compulsivity combine with neurotransmitters that control feelings of drive and desire (such as dopamine along with endorphins and serotonin), numbing pain and give meaning to experience (Nutt, 2012; Koob and Le Moal, 2001).

Adding to Neurological understandings of addiction, social factors have also been argued to influence addiction. Zinberg (1984) urges us to consider the influence of both mind set and social setting on the ability to control drug use – including addiction. Drawing on the work of Robins et al. (1974, 2010), Zinberg points to the comparatively low levels of addictive behaviours exhibited by Vietnam veterans *after* their departure from the Vietnamese wartime setting. Taking this into consideration, Zinberg (1984) therefore postulates that it was the '*abhorrent social setting of Vietnam*' that led men who ordinarily

would not have considered using heroin to use it, and often to become addicted to it (my emphasis, p.12). In a similar vein, Coomber and Sutton (2006) highlight how psycho-social factors such as employment structures, relationship structures, close peer group drug use and the individual's housing situation (as just a small example) all contribute to addiction (p.469). Commentators have also argued that the draw of heroin addiction is related to its potential to aid the establishment of powerful social relationships, a sense of community (Gossop, 1996) and a strong feeling of belonging (Lalander, 2003). Here it is argued that the social aspects of using heroin, such as the sharing of needles, contribute to a strong sense of intimacy and trust in supportive social relationships (Rhodes, 1997). The pursuit of these feelings and relationships have been contextualised by some scholars through structurally located references to the conditions of modernity, where the self becomes a reflexive project (Giddens, 1991, 1992). Here addiction is linked to 'self-destructive' (Neale, 2002) drug use associated with the loss of self, insecurity and meaninglessness that is commonly associated with modernity (Granfield, 2004; Alexander and Roberts, 2003). Whilst noting the merits of conceiving drug use and addiction as symptomatic of modernity (particularly the identification of risk management in drug supply patterns), scholars have noted the failure to consider drug use as a way of experiencing pleasure (Duff, 2008; Hunt et al., 2007; Reith, 2005) or recognising addiction as a creative, complex (Alexander and Roberts, 2003), autonomous, 'project of self' (Duff, 2003).

### **Getting High from Supply? The Relationship Between Drugs and Acquisitive Crime**

Whether it is understood through a biochemical, genetic or social gaze, or a complex interplay of all these factors, the literature has long provided links between drug addiction (or dependency) and the propensity to commit crime in order to fund its use (Goldstein, 1985, Bennett and Holloway, 2009; Degenhardt et al., 2009; Potter and Osiniagova, 2012). This relationship is largely based on 'problem' drugs such as heroin and crack

cocaine and has been widely documented in public policy papers. Evidence suggests that between a third and up to a half of new receptions to prison are estimated to be problem drug users (equivalent to between 45,000 and 65,000 prisoners in England and Wales) (UKDPC, 2008). Adding to this, the cost of this group to society is estimated at around £15.3 billion a year (2003-04 estimate) - 90 per cent of which is attributable to drug-related offences such as theft and burglary committed by problem drug users (National Audit Office, 2010). Goldstein (1985), who is well known for his research depicting the 'drugs violence nexus' has theorised the link between drugs and crime by providing an 'economic compulsive model' which, rather than suggesting drug intoxication produces pharmacologically irrational states, suggests drug users commit crime to fund a habit. The model is premised on the assumptions that (1) drugs are expensive and (2) drugs are addictive (Faupel et al., 2004) and as Collins et al. (1985) suggest, dependency creates an 'inelastic demand'.

Although criticised for issues relating to methodology and reliability (see Stevens, 2011), Goldstein's (1985) typology of 'economic compulsive violence' nevertheless highlights the need for some drug users to engage in economically orientated violent crime such as robbery or burglary in an attempt to support costly drug consumption. Goldstein's theory has been found to support research findings from at least several studies (for example see Bennett and Holloway, 2009; Briggs, 2012; Curtis et al., 1995; Debeck et al., 2007), which report injecting drug users engaging in prohibited income generating activities as a means of funding dependency. Due to the addict's lifestyle, one very often reported as incompatible with legitimate opportunities for funding their dependency (Small et al., 2013; Bourgois, 2003; Stewart, 1987; Coomber and Moyle, 2013; Briggs, 2012), empirical research subsequently suggests that an addict is often faced with *limited options* other than committing crime to finance their use.

Due to concern with the determinism of the drug crime link (Bean, 2008) and an effort to provide a more nuanced analysis of the relationship, challenging the psychopharmacological link between drugs and crime, commentators have put forward other considerations that are worth noting. Highlighting the idea that drug users may not always be reduced to participate in criminal activities through the pharmacological properties of the drug, Stevens (2011) has instead suggested *social context* can also have a significant impact on drug users' relationship with crime. Stevens' (2011) research therefore related how crime is not always simply a result of the local drug markets, but can also be understood as an active response to social and economic exclusion, and the marginalisation of those who reside there (see Bourgois, 1995; Bourgois, 2003; Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009; Lalander, 2003). Taking this further, Stevens (2011) has put forward 'subterranean structuration' as a way to make sense of these values, with drug users engaging in the pursuit of intoxication and crime in order to establish a life which meets their wish for 'pleasure, status and meaning' (p.51). For user-dealers who have experienced marginalisation, the sense of community and 'collective effervescence' available in this subculture may be empowering (Dyer, 2003), enabling the addict to create a meaningful life for oneself. As Blum et al. (1972) emphasise; 'to be a dealer is to be one of the few things that fit...the business can provide feelings of empowerment and self-worth' (p.111). Adding to this, as Preble and Casey (1969) long ago argued, the 'hustle of buying, selling, and using can provide 'a motivation and a rationale for the pursuit of a meaningful life' - albeit a socially deviant one (p.21).

### **Supporting a Heroin/Crack Cocaine Habit: Grafting, Hustling and Robbing**

While it may be too simplistic to suggest that there is a *causal*, or even simple relationship between drugs and crime (Bean, 2008), it cannot be denied that there is a clear and significant statistical relationship (Bennett et al., 2008; Potter and Osiniagova, 2012; Stevens, 2011), albeit one that has been greatly exaggerated (Baker et al., 1995).

It has been suggested that a lack of employable job skills, past criminal histories (Debeck et al., 2007) and a chaotic lifestyle (Briggs, 2012; Lalander, 2003; Stewart, 1987) can be identified as factors influencing substance dependent individuals to engage in income generating behaviours (Debeck et al., 2007). The academic and official literature scoping heroin and acquisitive crime, details a range of illegal acts that dependent drug users participate in, in order to obtain the financial capital required to buy drugs. Drug related acquisitive crime is reported by official bodies to make up a third to a half of all offences (National Audit Office, 2010), with illegal offences such as petty theft (Allen, 2005), shoplifting (Bennett and Holloway, 2009; Potter and Osiniagova, 2012) and robbery most popularly associated with acquisitive income generation. Cross et al. (2001) have reported that frequent crack users less often resort to burglary and rely more upon theft and minor property crime as a way to raise funds to support their crack consumption. Elsewhere, Bennett and Holloway (2009) highlight the propensity for problem users to directly exchange stolen goods for drugs, or use the proceeds of theft as a means of funding drug dependency. Empirical research has also investigated the relationship between sex work and drug use (see Inciardi, 1995; Debeck et al., 2007), with studies reporting the strong presence of high risk sexual behaviours (Booth et al., 2000; Inciardi et al., 1993), as well as high frequency sex-for-drug behaviours (Baseman et al., 1999), particularly in relation to crack cocaine (Maher, 1996; Briggs, 2012).

Apart from more distinguished acquisitive offences like theft, burglary and sex work, literature has also focussed on less well known activities problem drug users can employ in order to support their habits. The term 'hustling' largely relates to the unconventional activities that are employed by heroin users to produce narcotic or economic gain (Fields and Walters, 1985), with the concept being widely cited in ethnographic work and biographical accounts (see Preble and Casey, 1969; Burroughs 1970; Stewart, 1987). Hustling invariably involves users engaging in acts such as begging and 'grafting' - doing

licit and illicit deeds for others, notably dealers (Walters, 1985) - as a means of supporting their habit. In addition, this activity is often described as a way of life (Walters, 1985; Lalander, 2003) for dependent users, who spend most of their time in pursuit of the financial and social connections they require to maintain their habits. Whilst noting these illegitimate income generating activities, it should also be noted that numerous addicts do not commit acquisitive crime. The reasons why - in part - relate to evidence that suggests they still make rational choices (see Tierney, 2013; Hart, 2013). In this respect, other options such as reducing their habit (Decorte, 2001), going into treatment or saving their money, also represent possible (but less researched) ways of funding a habit (see Coomber and Moyle, 2011)

### What Do We Know About User-Dealing?

Fields and Walters (1985) suggest that drug-related activities, including street-level dealing, represent one of the best 'hustles' and advise that there are a variety of illicit drug sale activities that enable user-dealers to support their habit. Accordingly, similarly to the broker role described in social supply research, Small et al. (2013) have reported a 'go-between' (Murphy et al., 1990) role undertaken by heroin and crack cocaine users. Described by the authors as 'middling', this practice describes taking someone else's money and purchasing from a supplier, with the 'middler' retaining a proportion of the drugs as means of payment or being invited to use with the group at point of consumption. Complimenting this, Stewart (1987) has pointed to the low-level nature of heroin transactions, describing how users often buy 'small bits' now and then from a personal friend, who is 'not, in any formal sense, a regular dealer' (p.37). Along with this mode of distribution, studies have also identified the existence of a 'low-status pusher' or 'juggler' role (Preble and Casey, 1969; Waldorf, 1983) where the user, who gets the drugs on consignment (Fields and Walters, 1985), takes out a small amount for personal use and distributes the remainder to fellow addicts in their neighbourhood (Biernacki,

1979). Conceptualised by Small et al. (2013) as 'freelancing', this way of selling drugs appears to provide the user-dealer with the independence to supply the drug in whichever way they feel fit, but still binds the user-dealer to their dealer until they repay the finance on the weight they sell.

To what extent are these user-dealing behaviours found to be common within the drug economy? Research has, through time, related the high proportion of user-dealers found within heroin and crack cocaine markets, with Johnson (1985) suggesting there to be 'many' users being involved in heroin distribution on a full time or part time basis. Similarly, Jacobs (1999) states that 'by an overwhelming margin', dealers 'that use' dominate the crack scene (p.35). More recently Debeck et al., (2007) highlight that 41% of their sample had generated money for drugs from dealing, while Small et al (2013) relate that 'most' of their injecting drug user (IDU) sample had experience of more than one type of dealing.

## **The Legal Dimension: Social Supply, User-Dealing and the Law**

### **An Eye for an Eye? Proportionality and its Presence in UK Supply Law**

The themes emerging from the literature review in relation to social supply and user-dealing behaviours could be argued to provide some insight into these styles of supply, along with the motivations behind these activities. With many researchers drawing attention to the qualitative differences between these modes of distribution and drug dealing (proper) (see Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Potter, 2009; Taylor and Potter, 2013; Duffy et al., 2008; Nicholas, 2008), it is important to assess how far this is also recognised within the sentencing of these groups – and therefore, to what extent they are treated proportionately. Most popularly associated with the philosophy of Kant (1999), proportionality is based upon a measure for measure punishment, determined by the levels of harm such behaviours cause to others and wider society (Lai, 2012) and is a



principle that has set the scene both in terms of sentencing theory and policy guidelines internationally (von Hirsch, 2009; see Moyle et al., 2013). The emergence of an overt concern with commensurate punishment or 'just deserts' within legislation emerged in the early nineties when the 1991 Criminal Justice Act (CJA 1991) propelled itself into the policy agenda. This legislation introduced a considerable revision of both sentencing powers and principles predicated on the two central themes of justice discourse, proportionality and retribution (Collison, 1993). The Criminal Justice Act was expected to establish an innovative framework for sentencing 'based on the seriousness of the offence or just deserts'. However, as Ashworth (2010) highlights, there was no reference to proportionality as the primary rationale within the legislation, and thus the Act was subject to substantial misinterpretation. In addition, the concern with neo-rehabilitation sparked by the Halliday Report (2001), ensured that the 'just deserts' mantra became further concentrated, and consequently the legislation became rendered incoherent and ambiguous. The consequent implementation of the 2003 Criminal Justice Act appeared to insist on proportionality (Moyle et al., 2013), stipulating that the court consider a range of matters relating to the offence before establishing sentence (Ashworth, 2010). Furthermore, this new legislation also stated that custody must only be imposed when neither a fine or community sentence can be justified and should be imposed only for the *shortest term commensurate with the seriousness of the offence* (my emphasis, see also section 153(2)).

### **The Runciman Report: Exploring the Recommendations of the Police Foundation.**

While it appears that there has been a historical statutory prerequisite for proportionality in all sentences, it will now be explored how far this was realised in the sentencing of non-commercial drug suppliers in relation to the appropriateness of sentences before the advent of the new Drug Offences Definitive Guideline (2012). As related above, in 2000, the Police Foundation report positioned 'social supply' within official criminal justice

discourse. As stated previously, this took place in a context where the (relative) normalisation of illicit drugs (Parker et al., 1998) was becoming increasingly apparent, particularly in respect of groups of young people. Subsequently, there was a feeling that drugs legislation was capturing groups such as these within a punitive net (Cohen, 1979) and there was a consequent disjunct between the formal intentions and the actual consequences for those prosecuted (Coomber, 2010; Duffy et al., 2008). It was this lack of legal differentiation between commercially orientated, large scale, drug supply and smaller acts of social supply that led the Police Foundation (2000) to call for a reassessment of the legal framework and its treatment of those we now refer to as social suppliers. For Viscountess Runciman – commissioned to complete the report – the consequences of ignoring these distinctions would portend that drug use and smallscale consumption among friends could be charged under the same legislation as an organised criminal group, supplying in substantial commercial quantities for profit (Police Foundation, 2000). Far from suggesting that criminal law should not respond to acts of social or group supply, the Police Foundation (2000) recommended that it should be a legal defence for a person accused of supply to ‘prove his membership of a small social group that supplied a controlled drug’ (section 30). The proposed revaluation of supply laws would thus seek to recognise a social supply-related offence; however, it would acknowledge that social supply processes are distinctly different in essence from ‘dealing proper’.

Regardless of the scope and various limitations of the Police Foundation (2000) report, its recommendations on these issues were strongly rejected by the Home Affairs Select Committee (2002), who whilst recognising the ‘different scale’ (section 82) of social supply refused to acknowledge any lesser culpability for sharing or not-for profit supply offences (section 83). Considering that historically, the courts appear to informally use mitigation to identify small-scale social supply cases (and thereby indirectly separate the

behaviour from drug dealing proper), it could be argued that adopting this approach would not, at this point, represent a radical and incomprehensible change, but rather a progressive move towards proportionality and a standardisation of sentencing outcomes for social suppliers.

### **Case in Point: The Use of Social Supply Descriptors in the Court Environment**

Prior to the publication of the Drug Offences Definitive Guidelines (2012), in the absence of any official guidance, which distinguished between different levels of seriousness in supply, case law appears to indicate that courts in England and Wales were adapting to the lack of differentiation between supply offences through the use of mitigation. A review of a selection of recent court cases has exposed the prevalence of both *explicit* references to conduct as 'social supply' and the identification of characteristics and descriptors that may fit within categorised as social supply behaviours. Take, for example, the case of Clarke [2009] (EWCA Crim 2780), who was found in possession of eighteen packets of cocaine, which he claimed he was going to distribute to friends and family for no financial gain. In passing sentence, the judge stated that he took account of 'his age, his good character and the fact that this was social supply rather than selling drugs on the street' (our emphasis) (section 7). Similarly, in the case of Milson [2010] (EWCA Crim 2189) – who was also found in possession of cocaine – the appellant alleged that of the quantity a proportion was for himself and the remainder was to be supplied to friends with no profit of any description taken. Milson's Counsel entered a plea to the effect that 'he had bought for social supply on behalf of three unnamed friends' (my emphasis), (section 14). Adding to this, the case of Evans [2010] (EWCA Crim 1090) is littered with references to 'quasi-social supply' (section 12) and 'extended social supply' (section 6). Further to the explicit references outlined above, within mitigation there is also evidence of consistent references to social supply characteristics, with mitigating factors including the absence of

dealing for commercial gain; limited circulation – that is, the non-random distribution of drugs (limiting distribution through keeping drugs off ‘the street’) – and defendants as ‘non-stock holding’ – where no stock of drugs were found on the person or premises by the police.

Despite evidence of a concerted effort by sentencers in identifying lesser levels of culpability in supply offences prior to the implementation of the 2012 guidelines, there is also a certain ambiguity and inconsistency in disposals, along with conflicting messages about the legal treatment of social supply behaviours. Although the courts appear both to be identifying and managing social supply on a case by case level, the lack of standardisation within sentencing is problematic since disparities in sentencing are often only identified at the *appeal* stage. In addition, there also appear to be conflicting messages regarding the possible sentencing outcomes for social suppliers. For instance, in the case of *Barang* [2009], the judge sentencing at first instance intimated that social supply conduct would not be treated differently to any other supply case:

The message must go out that those who get themselves involved in the drugs culture – the Class A drug culture, who buy drugs, share them amongst their friends (so-called social supply) can only expect to receive not insubstantial custodial sentences.

(para 5 [2009]EWCA Crim 1364)

And similarly, in the case of *Branton-Speak* [2006] EWCA 1745

It must be recognised that obtaining these kinds of drugs for supplying others involves going to others who are in the business of supplying cocaine. You are thereby fuelling the distribution of those drugs which is prohibited and indeed to be deplored. Supplying cocaine is not a trivial matter of little consequence to anyone. By buying these drugs you are providing the supplier with the means to carry on their business, and you are assisting with their distribution. Anybody who involves themselves in drug dealing in this way must expect a prison sentence. (para 12)

Not only do these statements appear to have an intrinsically moralistic and deterrent tone; they appear (particularly the latter) to be consequentialist in the sense that they perhaps unfairly see social supply acts as supporting commercial suppliers and affecting higher levels of supply through the ‘unintended consequences’ of the offence (Ashworth, 2010: 153). It could be suggested that relying on such criteria is an unrealistic and disproportionate way of sentencing social suppliers. Crucially, these statements also portray the significant ambiguity and variance in UK court settings. Although social supply is recognised, as mentioned previously, the fact that the majority of the sentences outlined above were quashed on appeal for shorter sentences (see also Sullivan [2003] EWCA 2517; Williams [2003] EWCA Crim 1704) is problematic since it highlights the inconsistency in sentencing outcomes within courts, whereby social supply is recognised but often at a later stage of the prosecution process. Such processes could be argued to represent a resource issue and this – along with the evidence of less tolerant attitudes towards social supply by some members of the Judiciary – implies that many other cases are not picked up and sentenced appropriately. This represents a significant divergence from commensurate sentencing and the principle that penalties be proportionate in their severity to the gravity of the defendant’s criminal conduct (von Hirsch, 1992: 55); in essence what proportionality – and its application in the 2003 Criminal Justice Act – is all about.

### **Social Supply, User-Dealer Supply and the Advent of the Drug Offences Definitive Guidelines**

Perhaps as a direct response to the absence of formal direction in UK courts, the Sentencing Council published a consultation (2011) followed by a ‘definitive guideline’, intended to become the ‘main point of reference’ (Sentencing Council, 2011:4) for sentencers. The guidelines, which became live in February 2012, are constructed upon a sentencing matrix that considers the offender’s role (ranging from lesser, significant,

leading) and the resultant 'harm' (relating to quantity – ranging from category 4 up to category 1). The guidelines have broadly been suggested as progressive in their approach, for the first time officially differentiating roles in drug supply and thereby exhibiting some recognition of heterogeneity in supply activity (Moyle et al., 2013). In order to analyse the effectiveness of these guidelines, this new drug sentencing framework will be analysed with reference to the findings from this study and wider research. This analysis will be undertaken in the discussion chapter, where examination of the realities of social supply and user-dealer behaviours will be counterpoised with the categories offered by the Sentencing Council (2012). There will also be some assessment of whether this new framework provides an effective means of sentencing social suppliers and user-dealers and furthermore, whether the framework is successful in providing more proportionate outcomes for these groups.

## Chapter Conclusion

While there is no explicit definition of exactly what social supply encompasses, the chapter has portrayed the routine association of social supply with the (non-profit) sharing of cannabis to friends within youth populations (Hough et al., 2003; Duffy et al., 2008). Although exploration of the literature has provided evidence to suggest that this makes up a substantial part of social supply, this chapter offers persuasive evidence which indicates that this mode of distribution is *also inherent within (adult) psychoactive markets*. In this sense, contrary to definitions of social supply that prioritise low-level sharing behaviours, wider literature has provided empirical evidence that suggests social supply may realistically be characterised as extending beyond the realms of friendship and non-profit making. This chapter has also identified 'grey areas' in regard to the scope of social supply, with commentators emphasising the potential for an 'artificial distinction' (Potter, 2006:70) between social supply and drug dealing (proper). In this respect, the relationship between social supplier and drug receiver requires further consideration, so

it is possible to verify how well both young people and adults 'know' those they consider 'friends' (Potter, 2006). In relation to notions of profit, the literature base suggests that social suppliers may receive discounts, free drugs, or some money to cover their effort and risk, as a reward for their supply role (Parker, 2000; Measham et al., 2001). Further study is required to examine this gain, to ascertain the quantity of free drugs received along with the level of financial capital acquired as recompense. Exploring the relatively limited literature surrounding user-dealing, this chapter highlights that there is a clear space for a more nuanced conceptualisation of the behaviour. While drug dependency has now become conceptually embedded with the user-dealer concept (Akhtar and South, 1992; Pearson, 2007), there is little discussion of implications for user-dealers culpability. It has also suggested that supply is one of limited options for funding a habit for heroin and crack cocaine users (Small et al., 2013; Coomber and Moyle, 2013). Further research is required so there can be some discussion regarding how far this group are subject to limited options, to what extent they are found to take profit after deduction of their drug expenditure and finally, how far their actions and motivations can be said to be in keeping with conventional notions of drug dealing (proper). In the next chapter the methodology will outline the methods of inquiry for conducting fieldwork that will seek to address these questions.

## Chapter Four: The Research Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methods used, grounded by an exploration of the epistemological and ontological positioning of the study. The methodology is based upon idealist and interpretivist principles, and the chapter provides some description of these schools of thought. The attributes and limitations of the qualitative methodology will also be outlined. Here, some practical solutions, including that of employing reflexivity and transferability, will be offered as a means of attempting to minimise these constraints. This chapter will also provide an overview of the research aims, the sampling framework, ethical considerations, the methods used, and the rationale for choosing them. Following this, there will be a discussion of practical issues that emerged through ‘doing’ the research, relating to adaptability, power relationships and undertaking interviews with intoxicated populations. Finally, there will be some description of the research analysis; this will describe the process from data collection through to coding, and the eventual assembly of findings.

### The Rationale for Research/Ontological Positioning

Before discussing the methods used to explore social supply and user-dealing, it is essential to provide a justification, or logic, for utilising the proposed method. ‘Ontology’ refers to our assumptions about how the world is made up and the nature of things (Crotty, 1998). The ontological basis for this particular research project stems from an ‘idealist’ outlook. Unlike the realist paradigm, the idealist tradition asserts that knowledge is socially constructed and ephemeral (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Dharamsi and Scott, 2009). Moreover, it suggests that there are *multiple* truths based on one’s construction of reality (Sale et al., 2002). Idealism therefore advocates the notion that we cannot begin to ‘know’ the social world until we understand the mind; in short, reality can only be known through ideas (ibid). In this respect, research findings are mutually connected



within the context of a particular situation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and are only comprehensible in the form of the various intangible mental and social constructions relating to the perceptions of reality of that individual or group (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In contrast, the traditional Realist paradigm stands in polar opposition to this account, holding that epistemologically, the researcher and the participant are separate beings and that the researcher can investigate any given area without affecting the researched or the findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Sale et al., 2002). This assertion lends itself to the proposition that there is one ultimate truth and an objective reality can be found (Slevitch, 2011). This reality is seen to be independent of human consciousness and is instead premised on natural laws that govern the social life, allowing traditional realists to 'predict and control the outcomes of human action' (Sarantakos 2005:32). My own idealist ontological positioning rejects this realist doctrine and instead, in a similar vein to Letherby (2002:3.9), I do not claim to have uncovered the 'absolute truth' regarding what 'social supply' and 'user-dealing' are. Additionally, I do not believe that uncovering this objective reality is necessarily an achievable aim, but I *can* suggest that this thesis clearly defines what social supply and user-dealing *are not*, as well as challenging and widening existing debates around these issues.

## **Epistemological Considerations and 'Choosing' Qualitative Research**

The idealist ontology tends to be linked to an interpretivist epistemology (Deshpande, 1983; Slevitch, 2011). This particular epistemology looks for 'culturally derived' and historically situated interpretations of the social world (Crotty, 1998:67), where the meaning of human expression is context bound and cannot be divorced from its original environment (Smith and Heshusius, 1986). Thus, if meaning is only real within this specific context, it is therefore unachievable to present an objective interpretation. Therefore, the aim of qualitative investigation is to acquire an understanding of the issue

from the perspective of the participant (Bryman, 1988; Slevitch, 2011). As Denzin and Lincoln (1998) describe:

There is no clear window into the inner life of the individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the world of the observer and the observed. Subjects of individuals are seldom able to give explanations of their actions and intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why'. (p.37)

Qualitative research often faces criticism for its lack of generalisability and the subsequent inability to apply findings to a general population. This is because the qualitative method is said to be limited in its ability to control the research environment and thereafter make predictions about future (Hammersley, 1992; Sarantakos, 2005). However, in actual fact, as Shacklock and Smyth (1998) have argued, 'to not acknowledge the interests implicit in a critical agenda for the research, or to assume value-free positions of neutrality, is to assume an obscene and dishonest position' (p.7). Rather than depending on what could be argued as an unfeasible model, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that we must instead reverse our priorities and draw on the 'naturalistic enquiry paradigm'. Therefore, in line with this approach, rather than aiming for conventional notions of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity, this research strived to be credible, transferable and dependable (Searle, 1999). In order to attempt to meet these alternative criteria, I produced a reflexive research journal and implemented 'member checks' (see Searle, 1999:45) where I asked participants to review my understanding of their narrative through asking them to listen to me relaying their answers in my own words. Adding to this, rather than advocating generalisability as an achievable research aim, Cronbach (1975) for example, prescribes a shift towards 'transferability', where the researcher gives 'proper weight to local conditions [and] any generalisation is a working hypothesis not a conclusion' (p.124):

Generalisations decay. At one time a conclusion describes the existing situation well, at a later time it accounts for rather little variance, and ultimately it is valid only as history. The half-life of an empirical proposition may be great or small. The more open the system, the shorter the half-life of relations within it are likely to be

(Cronbach, 1975:122)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that these ideas demonstrate that it is futile to strive for generalisation since there are always factors that are distinctive to a particular context. However, as enquirers, we do have the ability to appreciate the 'uniqueness' found in such situations. We are therefore able to establish a 'fittingness' between two contexts, and in this sense 'transferability' is an *achievable research aim*. Within my own research I will utilise this criteria to replace what I see as an unachievable aim - 'applicability' or generalisation. Therefore, rather than aiming for conventional notions of reliability and objectivity, consistent with Searle (1999), I will instead utilise rich description so that readers can make their own decisions regarding whether the research findings are transferable to other contexts that they are familiar with.

### The Suitability of Qualitative Research

I accept that the use of qualitative research has limitations in regard to broad representativeness and reproducibility (Martin and Stenner, 2004). However, in terms of its suitability within this research proposal, which is aimed at exploring the motivations, meanings and intricacies of social supply and user-dealer behaviours, quantitative methods are considered too narrow and limited for studying this particular aspect of the social world (ibid). In contrast, qualitative research has traditionally been used to appreciate the lived experience and the social meanings that participants attach to drug use, along with social processes by which such meanings are created, reinforced and reproduced (Rhodes, 2000). Adding to this, qualitative studies are thought to be valuable in demystifying myths surrounding drug use (Neale et al., 2005). They are also key to

considering how drug behaviours occur and how they are understood in different contexts among different social groups (Rhodes, 1995) – aspects that are central in understanding social supply and user-dealing. While embracing the potential of qualitative research in exploring and understanding the meanings and contexts surrounding drug related behaviours, the limitations of this approach must also be considered. In the context of this research, issues associated with reliability will be managed through making my views on truth and knowledge as transparent as possible. Therefore, I accept that through an interpretivist epistemology I can only aspire to gain data that describes how a collection of particular individuals interpret social supply and user-dealer behaviours, and in this respect, I cannot claim to provide findings that can be representative of the wider social milieu as my findings are socially situated. Instead, while they are not generalisable to the wider population, my findings may be transferred to similar populations and contexts (see Searle, 1999) .

### Reflexivity as a Means of Transparency

Although the interpretivist epistemology has tended to argue that ‘all research accounts are partial and constructed by the researcher’ (Temple, 1997:2.4), significantly, this does *not* necessarily suggest that this aspect of the qualitative research process affects or undermines the quality or rigour of the findings (Searle, 1999). As Williams (2003) argues:

Whilst it’s absolutely right to maintain that research will always be influenced by psychological dispositions and social location of the researcher, it does not follow from this that the researcher should abandon attempts to be objective and rigorous, no more than medical researchers should abandon the search for a cure, because cures cannot always be found.’ (p.53)

Instead, qualitative researchers have pointed to the way in which we can understand the construction of multiple realities and employ techniques to improve both the quality and the credibility of research (Slevitch, 2011). One of the most frequently discussed ways in which qualitative researchers demystify the constructed worlds and the provisional

knowledge that builds them (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) is through reflection or 'reflexivity'. As Hertz (1997) suggests, in essence reflexivity involves understanding the research process in a different way; it is something that is achieved through 'detachment, internal dialogue and scrutiny of what I know and how I know it' (p.viii). This introspection is instrumental in recognising what Bourdieu (1990,2000) labels as 'intellectualist bias', turning research inside out or invoking 'interpretation of interpretation' (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). Ultimately, reflexivity allows the researcher to draw attention to their epistemological and ontological positioning, reflecting back and considering 'how and under what circumstances social scientific knowledge is received, evaluated, and acted upon' (May, 1999:173). In other words, this process is essentially tied up with having awareness of how underlying assumptions shape the way I might formulate my research questions, and why I choose to both interpret and present my findings in a particular fashion (Ruby, 1980). Reflexive practices can also be employed by the researchers whilst actively in 'the field'. Asking questions such as 'what effect will my presence have upon those I research' (Williams, 2003:55) allows researchers to assess how our identity (as for example, a PhD Student, as a woman and even my accent, or the way I present myself) has methodological consequences (Hallowell et al., 2005), and can affect the way the interviewee constructs their narrative. As previously suggested, as a means of incorporating reflexivity in this thesis, I have produced a reflexive research journal that captured my reflections on the fieldwork process. Excerpts from the journal are exhibited below where I consider research issues and how my presence impacts on the thesis findings.

## Research Questions

Now that the epistemological and ontological positioning guiding the research has been outlined, the chapter will move to describing the methods employed and the researcher's experience of conducting the fieldwork. While the project is largely explorative, there

were a number of research aims that guided the project. Outlined below, this project aimed to:

- Explore the nature of the social supply and user-dealer supply of recreational drugs in comparison to drug dealing (proper) and seek to provide a working definition.
- Explore how social supply develops among young recreational users with particular regard to concepts of normalisation and social exchange.
- Explore how early social supply episodes transpose onto later practices of social supply and user-dealing when adult.
- Explore the various roles adopted by social supplier and user-dealers.
- Explore the extent to which user-dealing, like social supply, should be understood as being considered as separate to drug dealing (proper in relation) to drug policy and sentencing for these groups

Due to a deficit in focused studies on social supply and user-dealing (Moyle et al., 2013), the research questions encompass *broad aims* which largely explore the activities and behaviours that are exhibited by these groups. Exploring the nature of social supply and user-dealing involves investigating the scope of these acts in relation to the drugs used, the relationship between supplier and receiver of the drugs, as well as the amounts normatively supplied. As a consequence of the literature review, however, the research questions also prescribe an emphasis on some themes that have already found recognition in the social supply and user-dealing research base. Here, concepts such as normalisation and reciprocity, as well the processes that lead to individuals to move from using to *supplying* a drug, all represent areas that were pursued through the fieldwork process. Through exploring the nature of social supply and user-dealing, some especially key aims will be to provide a typology of the various roles for both groups, as well as developing definitions of these behaviours. The final research aim, involves exploring how far social suppliers and user-dealers should be treated differently to commercially motivated drug dealers in policy terms. This is evaluated through reference to the nature and scope of their behaviours, which will then be compared with our conventional understandings of drug dealers (proper).

## Interviews

Since the research questions require an in-depth exploration of the processes and motivations inherent in social supply and user-dealer behaviours (and furthermore my ontology and epistemology prescribe qualitative methods), interviews have been selected as the preferred research tool. This is principally due to the fact that they allow an 'appreciation of the social world from the view of the offender' (Noaks and Wincup, 2004:13). The general advantages of interviews lie in their ability to allow the interviewer the opportunity to explore complex social and personal matters in a detailed way (Jupp, 2006), whilst also providing a chance to follow up and probe responses (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Noting the value of qualitative interviews in research relating to drug issues, Power (1995) has suggested that the illegality, social stigma and chaotic lifestyles associated with drug use can lead to such populations becoming hidden. However, the trust and rapport reported as emerging during qualitative fieldwork can often enable researchers to permeate the complex social networks that link drug users and their peers together (Neale et al., 2005) – a factor especially important in this research. While other qualitative methods such as focus groups could potentially have been employed as a method in this research, due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions, which related specifically to offending behaviour, it was deemed more appropriate to interview participants individually. This is because, as Madriz (2000) suggests, individuals may not always feel comfortable with sharing intimate details about their lives and therefore this has the potential to impact the quality of the data.

Due to the nature of the research aims focussed on (see above), the *in-depth semi-structured* interview was selected as the most appropriate method of enquiry since it is generally organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, but allows opportunity for data to emerge from the unstructured dialogue between interviewer and

interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Two separate questionnaires were designed for social supplier and user-dealer sample populations. The interview questionnaires were devised through a thorough investigation of the existing literature in regard to social supply and user-dealing behaviours. They were also guided by data collected from separate but related studies (see below) that I was directly involved in, conducting interviews, literature reviews and analysis. These research studies effectively acted as pilot interviews, providing some indication of the kinds of issues that might be of import or consideration in this research. While the questionnaires were largely pre-structured, they included many broad open ended questions with prompts and probes. They also featured closed questions which were integral for providing, in the absence of a strong literature base, demographics and important information regarding the quantities and frequency of drug supply. In this sense, while the questionnaire did contain closed questions, in practice, after this data was collected, it served as a guide that steered the interview. This was because during the interview process it was often the case that interviewees would relate the themes that they perceived as most important. Similar to a grounded theory approach, questions were modified throughout the research process to reflect emerging theory and conceptual notions (Charmaz, 2000). This approach was found to be particularly important when interviewing user-dealers, due the clandestine nature of their activities, and a shortage of research that provided insight into their supply behaviour. For example, when questioned regarding the quantities of heroin and crack cocaine the user-dealers distributed, it was found that a number of these user-dealers were supplying relatively substantial amounts of heroin and crack; however it was not immediately obvious that these quantities were supplied '*on tick*' (provided on credit) by a commercial (mostly non-using) dealer. After the initial emergence of this data, the questions were adapted with relevant prompts in order to capture this developing theme, which turned out to be significant in the creation of user-dealer roles.



## The Use of Case Studies

The case study has been described as the investigation of the complexity of a single case (Stake, 2005) or an empirical inquiry that investigates 'a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, where multiple sources of evidence are used' (Yin, 1984). Although they have been previously criticised for their lack of rigour (Yin, 1984) and inability to produce a generalising conclusion (Tellis, 1997; Bryman, 1988), the use of case studies within this research project are deemed as epistemologically and ontologically suitable, since they complement the exploratory nature (Yin, 1993) of the research questions. The case study also enables the researcher to examine data at the micro level, providing better insights into the detailed behaviours of the subjects of interest (Zainal, 2007). Adding to this, the qualitative accounts produced in case studies not only help to explore data in real-life environments, but also potentially assist in explaining the complexities respondents find themselves in, which importantly, may not be captured through experimental or survey research (ibid, 2004).

Similarly to South's (2004) research looking at the 'borderline between legal and illegal markets', case studies are employed in the social supply sample in order to gain insight into the drug distribution activities of those 'living between the legal and illegal' (p.553). The use of the case study will therefore act as an accompanying secondary source (complimenting the thematic data collected from semi-structured interviews), utilised as a valuable tool in providing extra detail and further exploratory power (Bryman, 2008). As Yin argues, the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation (2003:41) and therefore, case studies from interviewees who were deemed as 'typical' of the wider population were added to the social supply analysis chapter. The value of case studies lie in their ability to focus on representative individuals over the *life course* (Zainal, 2007), an element that semi-structured interviews did not

have the capacity to effectively investigate. Through employing two case studies from 'Charlie' (see Figure 3) and 'Tim' (see Figure 4), it is hoped that their narratives situate social supply in a micro context, enabling the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the background context and complexities of these supply careers. While it was hoped that there may be a possibility to provide case studies of the user-dealer population, due to the chaotic lifestyle and the difficulties of contacting respondents (see Briggs, 2012), unfortunately I was unable to provide case studies for this group.

### Integration of Complimentary Studies

Adding to the primary data collected from this field, I have also drawn upon separate but related research I was involved in throughout the process of this thesis. During 2011, I acted as a research assistant, conducting 30 interviews for a project focussing on 'transitions into social supply'. The research aims of the study were as follows:

- To explore the meanings of supply to university students and how they have changed/are changing since entering this context.
- To explore the processual aspects related to transitions around supply from 'social' to something more conventionally understood as 'dealing proper' from both the user and supplier perspective.

This project was primarily concerned with understanding social supply within the context of everyday exchange networks that young adults engage in. It also aimed to understand how adolescent exchange relationships, within a context of (more) normalised recreational drug use, get transposed onto young adult exchange practices around recreational drug use within the student population. The interviews were conducted with students who received illicit drugs from friends or acquaintances, or had themselves supplied drugs to friends or acquaintances. The respondents' age ranged from 18-37, and the sample was comprised of a 70% male and 30% female demographic. Respondents came from a range of subject areas (nursing, sociology, geography,

computer science) and stages (undergraduates ranging from first to fourth year). This study has provided detailed information regarding how arguably, the university context can be conducive in increasing students' drug use (consumption and range of substances) as well as their propensity to become involved in drug distribution on both a greater and lesser scale. The vast majority of the social supply themes that are outlined in this research were a product of *the principal research project* (the 'Somerset sample'). However, data from this 'transitions into social supply' study, due to its focus on the micro processes of transition and initiation into drug use and supply, has also been utilised in the social supply analysis chapter to provide a greater level of detail around such themes. Adding to this, showing the developing nuances and differentiations between the student sample and principal study was felt to be an important aspect of the research, portraying how meaning and motivation around social supply can alter according to context. For the ease of the reader, it is made explicit when data from this separate study is utilised within the social supply analysis chapter, through stating that data is taken from the 'student' or 'Somerset sample'.

Along with drawing on this adjunct social supply study, findings from a commissioned project entitled '*A Rapid Appraisal of the Illicit Drug Market in Southend-on-Sea, Essex*' (2012) are also utilised in the research. This project was designed with a view to understand the form and nature of the local illicit drug market and inform drug policy within the Southend locale, and I was directly involved in undertaking interviews and analysing subsequent data. This research study primarily focussed on 'problem drug users' and consequently recruited many respondents who were found to have engaged in user-dealing activity. While research findings from this project were not utilised in the analysis chapter (as the 'transitions' work is), themes surrounding 'minimal profit', addiction and distribution were instrumental in providing a basis for the construction of the user-dealer interview schedule.

## Ethical Considerations

Following an application to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at Plymouth University, the research was granted approval (March 2011) according to the proposal put forward. Ethical guidelines (see British Sociological Association, 2002; British Society of Criminology, 2006) stipulate that the social researcher must strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research (British Sociological Association, 2002). Accordingly, a principle of confidentiality was operationalised whereby all participants and the data provided were protected by appropriate anonymising actions. The research respondents were fully informed through the provision of an information sheet. For social suppliers, whose interviews were predominantly prearranged, this was administered through email. Where possible, user-dealers were briefed by staff prior to the interview and given an information sheet to take away. User-dealers that were interviewed opportunistically were given an opportunity to read the hand-out whilst waiting to interview. Realising that the likelihood of a thorough reading was relatively low, I made a point of ensuring that I talked through the hand-out with the participants before asking them (and the social supplier sample) to give their verbal consent, if appropriate. This space proved to be an important time for explaining the research further and also for establishing some rapport with the respondent. Due to particularly sensitive information relating to offending behaviour, all confidential information (recordings; identifiers) were kept either in a locked filing cabinet and a password protected account on a local computer. Only the gatekeepers and myself knew the identities of those interviewed. When gatekeepers knew of respondent participation, in such instances, all information was kept confidential from third parties and data was anonymised in such a way as to protect identities. The interviews were conducted in an open and honest manner, with all participants fully informed of the aims, the methods,

the attendant risks, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time (for user-dealers, without risk to their relationship with the DAAT).

Acknowledging that some of the participants may require explanations in simplistic terms (particularly the user-dealer section of the sample), I made an effort to avoid academic terminology, or where it was being used, provided a clear explanation of exactly what was being explored. Although the research has direct bearing on the funding partner's activities (as is proper with a CASE studentship), the principle of academic independence and impartiality was positively applied to all aspects of the research. While no obvious or predicted harms towards the respondents were anticipated in this research, I anticipated that phase two of the research project *may* potentially inadvertently trigger memories of bad experiences relating to the use or supply of heroin and therefore may potentially bring up topics that are sensitive to the participant. There were a few instances when reflecting on their own problem drug use or avenues into supply prompted participants to ponder on some difficult times or situations. While reflection on these themes was not desired or encouraged, some participants appeared to want to explore them. In these circumstances, I felt that it was appropriate to listen, allowing them to express themselves before resuming the interview when suitable.

## **Gaining Access to Hard to Reach Populations**

Due to the illegal status of both drug possession and supply, along with the serious criminal penalties that are incurred for those involved in these acts, the researcher is invariably faced with accessing a 'hidden' population of potential participants. As Adler (1990) suggests, these deviants are more difficult to locate, befriend, and investigate than other subject populations (p.94). Given the sensitive nature of research into illegal and deviant activity, along with the relative invisibility (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) of those engaged in it, normative 'probability based' sampling methods are largely deemed

as unsuitable (Penrod et al., 2003) since there is no accessible sampling frame, and identification of membership in these populations would be potentially harmful to respondents (Heckathorn, 1997). Instead, snowball or 'respondent driven sampling', where respondents offer referrals to those who possess similar characteristics that are of interest to the researcher (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) were considered most suitable. In practical terms, this sampling method also allows the researcher to 'identify one member of the population and speak to him or her, then ask that person to identify others in the population and speak to them' (Bachman and Schutt, 2001:132). There are a number of issues relating to the use of snowball sampling, most notably in relation to wider parallels of representativeness in comparison to random probability sampling techniques (Griffiths et al., 1993), but also including the problem of selection (Van Meter, 1990) and 'gatekeeper' bias (Groger et al., 1999). Despite the limitations of snowball sampling, within the context of this thesis, it is believed to represent the most appropriate way to build a research population, having been previously utilised in the arena of deviant drug behaviours (see classic studies in the field such as Lindesmith's (1968) fieldwork on opiate addiction; Becker's (1953) work scoping '*Becoming a Marijuana User*' and beyond this, later studies of drug use (see Avico et al., 1988; Griffiths et al., 1993; Kaplan et al., 1987).

### ***Researching Friends and Acquaintances***

Initially, it was thought that the respondents recruited in the student '*transitions into social supply*' project (many of which had left their email address and stated they would be happy to participate in this research) would provide a means of gaining access to a social supply population in the Plymouth locale. I was however, unable to gain access to these individuals, many of which had since graduated and left Plymouth, and therefore a new research strategy was needed in order to obtain access to this group. In the absence of a potential social supplier sample population in Plymouth, as a potential solution, contact

was established with an individual known to have been involved in social supply both historically (within a university environment) and currently (five years later). Over a number of conversations regarding the scope of the project, this gatekeeper intimated he was keen to help with the research through undertaking an interview, and felt confident that others would too. From this point forward a snowball sampling process was commenced. The initial details of potential respondents were passed on and it became apparent that a large number of them were old university friends and acquaintances, who I had met on different occasions throughout my undergraduate studies. Drawing on personal contacts, acquaintances and friends as a point of access is not unusual in sociological and criminological research; for example, in her study of 'drug sellers' Ward (2008) used participant observation as a means to investigate drug distribution practices within her friendship group. Similarly, in a study of middle market drug dealers, Adler and Adler (1974 - 1980) 'opportunistically' made use of 'key informants' in order to explore middle market dealer activity. The use of friends within academic research has since faced criticism in relation to so-called powerlessness of participants exposed to this dynamic (Ward, 2008; Duncombe and Jessop, 2002). Despite being very aware of ethical considerations in the research process generally, I felt confident that these particular issues were not of concern in my own study as my respondents conveyed a keen and confident demeanour throughout the interview process.

### **Social Suppliers: An Initially Reluctant Research Population**

Once a new social supply group had been identified through my gatekeeper and certain individuals had been flagged as showing interest in the project, I began to approach contacts individually to set up interview dates and times. Despite initially designing a relatively narrow inclusion criteria for social suppliers, this was adapted to include not just 'regular' social suppliers, but anyone over the age of eighteen who had distributed illicit drugs to friends or acquaintances 'for little or no profit' *in the last year*. This change was

implemented so to increase participation, as the gatekeeper had suggested that many social suppliers had been involved in supply 'fairly regularly', but not on a monthly basis. The social supply fieldwork ended up being undertaken in two phases. The first phase involved travelling to Somerset where this group of known contacts and friends were located and 10 of the 30 qualitative interviews were undertaken. While several of these respondents' participation was easy to secure, since I knew them and they were happy to 'help me out' (and gain a 'bonus' payment), the remaining proportion of individuals I only 'knew of', and consequently they proved more difficult to *secure* for interview. Sensing this before my departure for the fieldwork, the decision was made to increase the interview contribution from £10 to £20. The rationale for the implementation of this strategy was that it was reasoned that this largely 'professional' sample (including teachers, architects, and financial executives) would 'take or leave' £10, and this may be the reason for an apathetic response. The increase in contribution value *considerably* increased interest, and consequently generated enough respondents to fill this first fieldwork phase. Although initially it was thought that the original gatekeeper was able to provide access to a range of potential respondents on my planned return visit, in the absence of a high take up rate (explained by respondents as fear of repercussions from their profession if identified), it became clear that more participants were required to meet my social supplier sample targets (n=30). Fortunately, the final day of interviewing in the first fieldwork phase lead to a valuable opportunity in which an interviewee - after hearing of difficulties in recruitment - volunteered to get friends and acquaintances involved in the second phase of the research, and thereby became a new gatekeeper.





**Figure 1: Social Media Recruitment**

The advertisement of the research to a large group of friends via social media (Facebook), proved to be instrumental. As portrayed above (fig 1), the gatekeeper's advertisement, which described how he participated and also benefitted from the research, was not only successful in recruiting the remainder of the sample (n=20) in phase two of the fieldwork, but also in obtaining a group of individuals who were well integrated in the social supply scene and eager to participate in the research. In line with my research aims, the combination of phase one and two of the fieldwork produced 30 social supply interviews, of which 86% (n=26) of the sample were male, and 14% (n=4) female.

### **Capturing Heroin and Crack Cocaine Using Populations**

Due to the collaboration with my 'gatekeeper' and Case Partner Plymouth DAAT (Drug and Alcohol Action Team), initial research contact with user-dealers was secured through access to services and service users within the context of Hamoaze House and Ocean Quay. This privileged access enabled me to liaise with service managers in order to secure an appropriate date and time to situate myself at a service venue. Usefully,

appointed gatekeepers were able to approach service users who broadly fitted the inclusion criteria prior to the interview date. This inclusion criteria was defined as including 'any active or previous users of crack cocaine or heroin over the age of 18, who had any experience of supplying amounts of these substances to support their habit'. Many of the service users that were interviewed were recruited prior to the interview date, but others were recruited opportunistically on that day, with their applicability to the research assessed by reception staff. In a similar way to the social supply sample, the rationale for recruiting participants who 'had experience' rather than those who were 'active' in supply related to discussion with the various service providers (Hamoaze House, Ocean Quay) who felt that there might not be enough *active* user-dealers to populate the research. While initially it was felt that recruiting inactive user-dealers may be a risky strategy as data may not be so 'current', it became clear that this group often dipped in and out of this practice. Interestingly, there was no shortage of potential users, who once hearing of the project and the opportunity to participate, were very keen to become involved. In total 30 user-dealers of crack cocaine, heroin and amphetamine were recruited, of which 65% were men (n=20) and 35% (n=10) women. While the £10 contribution offered to respondents for participation may be assumed to be the key factor for involvement, many of the participants volunteered *before* being informed of the contribution, or were reluctant to take any currency at the end of the interview, believing it to be my own money. There has been much concern within the research community regarding the ethical issues of paying respondents (see Russell et al., 2000; Lemmens and Elliot, 1999) particularly those who are users of drugs (Seddon, 2005; Ritter et al., 2003). However, similarly to Fry and Dwyer (2001), rather than being motivated purely by the aim to purchase more drugs, many respondents verbalised being motivated by curiosity in the research project, or simply by the desire to access or gain knowledge.

## ‘Doing’ the Research: Issues and Reflections on the Research Process

After providing some description of the methodology and methods employed, the remainder of the chapter will address the reality of undertaking the research. The next section of the methods chapter will describe the operationalisation of the reflexive approach outlined previously, describing the issues that arose through data collection, and outlining the data analysis process.

### Reflexivity in Practice: Assessing the Self

Apart from the social environment in which the interview was conducted, it became clear that my own relationship with the respondent also had an effect on the depth and arguably, the honesty of the data. My relationship with the respondents ranged from known individuals from mutual groups (known but not introduced), to good friends. The majority of the sample was comprised of the former, with only a small number of ‘good friends’ who were more involved in gatekeeping roles. The extract below, taken from my research journal, explores the ways in which the relationship between myself and the respondent was believed to impact on the research:

Something that really struck me more today than ever before is the way in which the different dynamics of friendship, acquaintanceship or even just knowing ‘of’ someone, (or someone knowing ‘of’ you) can really effect the honesty of frankness of the narrative, and therefore the whole tone of the interview. Today, when I interviewed ‘*Sophie*’, I immediately felt that because we had a mutual friendship group who are, and always have, had a strong association with drug culture, that she on some level perhaps recognised the fact that I understood their group and therefore wasn’t likely to judge her drug related behaviours. In complete opposition to this, when I interviewed *Damien* this evening it couldn’t have felt more different; because I’m good friends with his housemates, I felt that he was quite guarded towards me. Even though I had thoroughly explained all of the details regarding informed consent/confidentiality/anonymity it seemed like he was suspicious of my questions – he was particularly defensive when I asked him about his drug use and experiences of supply and I can only guess that he was worried that I might share his data with *Mike* and *Ben*.

(Research Journal, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

The capacity to conduct the interview in a style that recognised the notion of drug use as a 'normal' feature of respondents day-to-day lives (see South, 2004), appeared to set the vast majority of the respondents at ease. Establishing this dynamic was deemed to be especially important, as my early experience of defensive response (as described above) demonstrated the potential consequences of participants showing fear of judgement from the researcher. This has been noted in research, where it has been suggested that addressing behaviour which is illicit or stigmatised may result in respondents becoming alarmed by the broaching of the topic (Lee, 1993; Brannen, 1988). Considering the widely attributed stereotypes and stigma directed at drug suppliers, this was an unsurprising and anticipated aspect of the research process. Accordingly, in order to quash these concerns as much as possible, it proved useful to assure respondents that their views and actions were not being situated in a moralistic framework, but instead, were being considered as a valued resource for enabling the understanding of social supply and user-dealer selling behaviours. Moreover, similarly to Ward's (2008) observations in her ethnography following drug sellers, I found respondents to be analytical regarding their roles within the drug world, fluctuating between a so-called 'deviant identity' in their recreational drug using worlds and conventional identities in their work, home and family lives. While carefully recognising-respondents' identities as multiple, shifting and 'fluid' (Giddens, 1991; Ward 2008) - and therefore avoiding attributing master status to their drug supplier role - it was also important to avoid downplaying the seriousness of some of their actions, acknowledging respondents' levels of risk in some circumstances.

### **Interviewing 'Under the Influence'**

As Aldridge and Charles (2008) state, intoxication is a potential problem for all researchers, but is further increased in contexts in which participants are likely to be intoxicated. Issues in regard to conducting research with potentially intoxicated

populations have been associated with a few key ideas. To begin with, it is likely that being intoxicated could affect a participant's capacity to understand fundamental issues regarding the use of the research, as well as their capacity to make decisions about participation. The impairment of normative thought processes and judgements (Parker et al., 1998) have also been argued to affect the reliability of data (Aldridge and Charles, 2008). With my data collection arena comprising of drug drop-in centres and needle exchanges, the likelihood of *not* encountering individuals who had been using heroin, crack cocaine, benzodiazepines or alcohol was perceived as being highly unlikely. Indeed, with the recruitment strategy being partly opportunistic and staff being partly responsible for referring suitable individuals for interview, there was limited opportunity for the assessment of their 'state' before commencing the interview. Moreover, as stated in my research journal, due to my initial inexperience of recognising the signs of narcotic intoxication, it was not immediately apparent that the respondent was 'under the influence':

A real mix of data quality today. A couple of the interviews were quite difficult as I was sure that some of the respondents were exhibiting the signs of recent heroin use. Speech was slurred, pupils dilated and they seemed to find it very difficult to concentrate. When this happened for the second time and I was more certain that they were intoxicated. I decided to cut the interviews short by leaving some of the more complex questions out since the participants were not in the right physical or mental state to participate. The difficulty with this issue was that it wasn't always obvious to me until the interview had begun that this was the case...

(Research Journal, 1st October 2012)

Commentators have put forward strategies for managing issues of intoxication in research, citing screening and exclusion as possible ways of dealing with this population (Aldridge and Charles, 2008). However, given the unique situation I was in, I felt that commencing the interview, evaluating the respondents' ability to proceed and then making a decision of whether to continue normally or skip through the questions (in order

to subtly cut short the interview) provided the best means in that context to deal with intoxication. This technique allowed me to make a more considered analysis of their 'state' and also, in the case of respondents showing themselves to be obviously intoxicated, provided a way of closing the interview process without alarming respondents or providing any reason for confrontation. While managing this aspect of the research process was challenging, I agree with Aldridge and Charles (2009) who argue that 'intoxication is just one of a number of 'altered states' (including anxiety, depression and heightened emotion) in which individuals find themselves. In this respect, excluding the intoxicated from research conflicts with the principle of justice through promoting discrimination and stigma (Schuklenk, 2000), notions already all too easily associated with this group (see Yorke, 2013; Taylor, 2008)

### **Marginalisation and Power within Research**

Interpretivism has previously been critiqued for its disregard of both the role of institutional structures and the impact of wider social forces on the individual and the dynamics of power relations inherent in everyday life (Sarantakos, 2005). However, as Seale (1999) argues, 'in studying the world from the position of an interacting individual, one can uncover ideological, political and economic oppression' (as cited in Williams, 2001:53). As such, through investigating the position and experiences of those involved in social supply and user-dealing, qualitative research can effectively uncover notions of disproportionality and inequity (albeit on a micro scale). One of the key aspects of this research project is to explore to what extent social supply and user-dealer supply can be understood as being relatively separate to the type of predatory drug dealing normatively considered as drug dealing (proper). The interview schedule itself was designed in a neutral way, that is to say, there was space and questions designed to capture supply considered more in line with commercial 'dealing' as well as small-scale behaviours. At quite an early stage, it became apparent that the groups the research was dealing with

(particularly the heroin and crack cocaine user-dealers) engendered a strong sense that they themselves, and their actions, were characterised by unfairness, misunderstanding and prejudice (this was *especially* true for the user-dealers). While all interviews and data was analysed with a critical gaze, the data collected allowed research participants to break silences and express their views, whilst effectively becoming experts within the interview context (Charmaz, 2006). My reflections on these ideas are related below through discussion of the user-dealer sample within my research journal:

Another aspect of 'doing' the research that also struck me today related to the idea of power relationships within interviews. As a sociology/criminology student, when undertaking research it's almost drummed into you that as a researcher you own a significant amount of power over those you are interviewing. Although I know this to be true to a certain extent, today, it really felt as though the user-dealer sample revelled in their positions as 'experts' in drug markets and small-scale supply; in this sense I really believe they were (in that moment) in some small way empowered...

(Research Journal, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012)

Certain scholars have suggested that research with marginalised groups may actually serve to exacerbate inequalities, with these populations argued to be disenfranchised through the control implicit within the generation and dissemination of knowledge (Lynch, 1999; Bergold and Thomas, 2012). However, in this specific research context, one characterised by mythical and stereotypical understandings of drug suppliers (Coomber, 2006, 2010) – particularly those selling heroin and crack cocaine - the importance of providing context and evidence regarding differing motivations of groups such as user-dealers, cannot be understated. In this respect, in a similar vein to Bourgois and Schonberg, (2009) (but of course, at a less significant level), I felt to some extent that it was my responsibility to 'carry messages...across class and cultural divides' (p. 13) and put forward the realities of my respondents' stories without sanitising or distorting them (Bourgois, 2003).

## The Data Analysis Process

After completing the fieldwork for social supplier and user-dealer populations, the next stage involved beginning the data analysis process. The interviews collected spanned from 20 minutes to 90 minutes. The typical duration for an interview was around 45 minutes and the shorter ones tended to be those in which the respondent appeared intoxicated (see page 134). The lengthier interviews, which spanned over 45 minutes, were normally those where I knew the participant and the interview was naturally more informal. Generally, I found the vast majority (but not all) of social suppliers and, to a lesser extent, user-dealers to enjoy the interview process. For social suppliers, there appeared to be some novelty in the association between drugs and academic studies, and respondents were inclined to perceive research around social supply as very positive. With many of the social suppliers' recreational drug use spanning at least 5 years, they also simply appeared to enjoy talking about the 'drugs scene'. A comment captured in my research journal could be conceived as indicative: 'thanks for asking me, I *love* chatting about drugs and I just got *paid* to do it! (laughs)...cheers!' (17<sup>th</sup> July, 2012). A considerable amount of data was gathered from the interviews and case studies; I decided to transcribe it myself, as it has been suggested that this process can be instrumental in promoting familiarity between the researcher and the data (Rose and Webb, 1998). I found this process to be especially important as it allowed me to 'get a feel' for the data; it also enabled me to compile memos regarding significant themes that reoccurred, which would significantly benefit the coding process.

While grounded theorists traditionally see the memo writing stage of analysis as coming after the coding of the data (Charmaz, 2006), in contrast, I engaged in this process at the transcription stage, and continued to do so up until the drafting of the data analysis chapters. After the transcription process, the data was uploaded into a computer assisted



qualitative data analysis software programme (NVivo 9), where codes were generated. Coding has been suggested to provide a 'pivotal link' between collecting data and developing emergent theory (Charmaz, 2006:46). Although the review of the literature provided some ideas for consideration which were consequently integrated within the interview questionnaires, many of the themes were generated through the use of codes and memos (see fig 2 below).

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Drugs used	21	21	15/11/2012 12:24	LM	15/11/2012 13:14	LM
First SS experiences	11	12	15/11/2012 15:25	LM	26/11/2012 13:20	LM
Friend as dealer	6	8	15/11/2012 14:32	LM	26/11/2012 21:40	LM
Group buys	11	12	15/11/2012 14:12	LM	26/11/2012 16:57	LM
Intent	0	0	15/11/2012 11:17	LM	15/11/2012 11:17	LM
Motivation	26	139	15/11/2012 10:58	LM	15/11/2012 12:37	LM
Bravado_Status	7	9	15/11/2012 11:03	LM	26/11/2012 11:57	LM
Convenience	11	12	15/11/2012 15:19	LM	26/11/2012 14:30	LM
Economies of Scale	19	34	15/11/2012 11:08	LM	26/11/2012 22:03	LM
Opportunistic	6	9	15/11/2012 11:16	LM	26/11/2012 15:55	LM
Reciprocity_Rational act_friendship	9	11	15/11/2012 11:09	LM	26/11/2012 11:49	LM
Regulation of use_group activity	7	9	15/11/2012 11:16	LM	23/11/2012 10:53	LM
Responsibility to group Mutual Society	11	16	15/11/2012 11:04	LM	26/11/2012 22:09	LM
Risk management_harm minimisation	12	17	15/11/2012 11:11	LM	26/11/2012 22:01	LM
Social thing	13	22	15/11/2012 14:25	LM	26/11/2012 17:15	LM
Neutralisation	11	13	15/11/2012 11:48	LM	26/11/2012 22:23	LM
Normalisation	15	19	15/11/2012 11:33	LM	26/11/2012 21:35	LM
Party_Festival Buying	11	14	15/11/2012 11:38	LM	26/11/2012 14:50	LM
Profit	0	0	15/11/2012 11:40	LM	15/11/2012 11:40	LM
Quantities	2	2	15/11/2012 11:34	LM	26/11/2012 15:44	LM
Reciprocity_indebtedness	20	28	15/11/2012 11:41	LM	26/11/2012 22:02	LM
Relationship with reciever	0	0	15/11/2012 11:37	LM	15/11/2012 11:37	LM
Risk and Reward	8	8	15/11/2012 11:19	LM	26/11/2012 21:28	LM
SS logistics	16	19	15/11/2012 19:02	LM	26/11/2012 22:10	LM

Figure 2: NVivo 9 Social Supply Analysis

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that comparing and contrasting data with existing literature can lead to 'fuller, more specific and denser' (p.96) analysis. This practice was implemented in my own work where several of the themes found in previous research such as normalisation, drift and neutralisation were located in relation to the behaviours described by respondents (and coded as such). Following the development of memos and codes, sequential themes were developed from the data and relevant quotations noted to support them, these themes proved to be instrumental in developing typologies and working definitions of social supply and user-dealing.

## Chapter Conclusion

Beginning with an exploration of my epistemological and ontological positioning, the chapter considers how my epistemology places limits on the representativeness of my research. Through an interpretivist standpoint, I suggest that while I cannot claim to provide an objective truth regarding exactly what social supply and user-dealing is, I can define what social supply and user-dealing *are not*, as well as challenging and widening existing debates around these issues. The chapter also describes some of various criticisms associated with the qualitative method, relating to bias, rigour and transferability. Whilst recognising these limitations, through utilising reflexivity, I hope to promote transparency as much as possible. Throughout my research, adopting a reflexive research practice has been an essential pre-requisite at each stage, allowing me to consider how my presence as an interviewer affects the research. Taking on a reflexive approach also permitted me to consider wider factors including issues relating to power, researching friends and conducting interviews with intoxicated populations. The chapter finally describes the practicalities of undertaking the fieldwork, discussing the various adaptations which were undertaken, such as broadening my inclusion criteria, utilising new gatekeepers and increasing financial contributions. Finally, the chapter describes how the data analysis process was operationalised through the use of memos and codes. This process proved to be instrumental in the formation of themes that will now go on to be outlined in Chapters Five and Six.

## Chapter Five: 'Sorting' Supply: Exploring the Scope and Nature of Social Supply Behaviours

The findings presented below, are the result of coding and thematic analysis through the NVivo 9 software programme; this chapter has been organised according to the themes identified, a structure that is expected to portray the flow of ideas in a natural style. The social supply analysis draws on two sample populations. The 'Somerset Sample', is the research population studied for the purposes of this thesis and the 'Student Sample', refers to data that was obtained through a separate study, which explores student transitions into social supply in the university environment (see page 124). Unless otherwise noted, the findings presented here are based upon the fieldwork undertaken for this thesis, and data from the 'Student Sample' features in instances where there is either notable support or diversion from the key themes found in this fieldwork. This analysis aims to provide the reader with broad demographic information regarding who social suppliers are and how they fit into the wider demographic, in respect of their drug use. The chapter will then go on to explore social supply in the context of the life course, focusing on the university as a noted site of transition. In line with the key themes resulting from thematic analysis, social supply will then be considered in the context of social exchange and reciprocity, drawing on data relating to sharing, gift giving and expectation. The analysis also produces key typologies that give an overview of some of the dominant modes of social supply that became evident through analysis. The chapter will then discuss the contextual or environmental factors that contribute or facilitate a particular individual's journey into social supply. There is also some discussion of the personal qualities and structural factors that appear to, within the context of this study, heighten a drug user's propensity to move into regular social supply activity. Finally, the analysis will draw on key theoretical concepts of 'normalisation' (Parker et al., 1998) and

'drift' (Matza, 1964; Murphy et al., 1990), as a means of understanding the prevalence of this mode of drug distribution.

## Social Supplier Demographics

Before any analysis of the activity of social suppliers begins, it is essential to provide some background as to who this group is, in terms of their demographic and their basic drug consumption behaviours. As stated in Chapter Four, the inclusion criteria aimed to capture individuals who accessed illicit drugs for friends or acquaintances, for little or no profit. Of the sample 86% (n=26) were male and 14% (n=4) were female. The age of the respondents ranged from 23 – 32 years old, with the average age being 27. All respondents were employed at the time of interview, with a range of roles including media executives, teachers, chefs, construction managers, journalists and architects. Social suppliers were most likely to have had their first drug use experience at the age of 15, with ages ranging from 11 to 17 years old. Consistent with wider literature (Aldridge et al., 2011; Pedersen et al., 2001), for 91% of the sample, cannabis was the first drug used. Other initiation drugs reported were ecstasy and solvents. In terms of their drug use at the time of the study, 87% of the sample had used drugs in the last month and 83% had provided access to drugs (social supplied) in the last six months. At the time of the research, respondents reported *regular* use of cocaine (28%), MDMA (23%), cannabis (17%), ecstasy (15%), ketamine (11%), Valium (2%), mushrooms (2%) and mephedrone (2%). Use of lesser known hallucinogenic substances, such as 2C-B (4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine) and 2C-I (2,5-dimethoxy-4-iodophenethylamine), were also cited. In regard to the amount of drugs social suppliers themselves were using, cocaine users most commonly stated using 1 gram (range 0.2g – 2g), MDMA users 0.5g, ketamine consumers 1 gram, and cannabis users a 'teenth' (1.75 grams) per occasion (modal quantity). In terms of cost, this group indicated spending anything between £10 -

£200 a month on drugs, and average expenditure was reported by social suppliers as being around £70

## Transitions into Social Supply

Initial social supply experiences were found to be most common at the age of 17, but occurred between the ages of 15 -19 (range). The findings suggests that the respondents who participated in social supply at a school and college age, tended to be those who were actively using drugs, rather than experimenting with them. The first social supply event was overwhelmingly described as one where cannabis was purchased on behalf of the group at a school or college age. This social supply role conforms to what Duffy et al., (2008) would describe as a 'broker', or in this research, a 'designated buyer' role:

Like ages and ages ago...it's got to be mid-nineties...actually, I know exactly when it was, I would have been at school, so I would have been 15...just a guy in the year above me supplied me and got it for me and a couple of my mates. That was a one off but the links were there for next time, so you know you can get it the next time...it was like that's cool I've just scored some hash! It wasn't like some premeditated kind of 'I'm going this to make money' sort of thing, it was more of a case of seeing if I could get it, as opposed to trying to get it for specific reasons.

*Andrew (28), Somerset Sample*

For the vast majority of the sample, this activity was limited and irregular and not pursued in a meaningful way. Interestingly, many neglected to class these early episodes of 'brokering' (Duffy et al., 2008) as supply type behaviours, and instead, suggested their first supply experience to be one that was characterised by purchasing larger quantities of substances or taking some benefit from the exchange.

## The University as a Micro-Site of Transition

At what point did social supply move from something tried, perhaps once or twice, to something that could be conceived as all together more regular? For most, after this

initial 'flirtation' with social supply; the data indicates that the university was by far the most common micro-site for transition into regular social supply. This finding supports early work from Blum et al. (1972), who also pinpoint a 'lag' between use and supply. Importantly, the university context represented a site in which the increased access to drugs appeared to be conducive to transitions in peoples use. There were a group of individuals, who provided evidence of relatively extensive recreational drug use careers before university, who showed no real transition in regard to their drug consumption. However, the majority of the sample presented evidence of the university context providing an important stage of the life course (Sampson and Laub, 2005), in terms of both their levels of drug consumption, their frequency of use and the range of substances consumed.

Well, it's more widely available and you're surrounded by more people who have been involved in it in the past. Yeah, it's kind of like a learning curve, isn't it, I suppose, so we're just trying out different things and it's just ... I don't know, it seems wrong calling it opportunities but (laughs), that's kind of the way I see it, it's just the opportunities have been there since I've come to university. And also I'm more sort of free and independent, I live by myself, so I'm sort of capable of making those decisions.

*Dylan* (20), Student Sample

I smoke a bit when I go home, but not as much as I do at university...Well, just, it's almost like it doesn't ... at university it sort of almost becomes, it's not good, but it kind of becomes part of a routine. So when you're at home, and it's not part of a routine, it's not even something you think about.

*Carl* (19), Student Sample

Consistent with the findings of Williams (2013), respondents attributed the transition into independent living and this physical distance from parents or guardians as facilitating drug taking. These findings also supported control (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1995) and developmental criminology perspectives. Similarly, the findings exhibited within '*Illegal Leisure Revisited*' (Aldridge et al., 2011) suggest that independence effectively loosened the (age related) social controls, previously imparted on them. This 'turning point'

(Carllson, 2012) appeared to have a great influence on transitions into social supply. This was because the greater the level of use and the more normalised drug use was felt to be, the more likely respondents were to become involved in social supply activity. Moreover, aside from the propensity for the context of normalisation to impact on drug use behaviours, factors relating to heightened availability and the interconnectedness of the student population (in the university context), also appear to 'cultivate' social supply transition. With a higher proportion of drug takers than the general population (Mohamed and Frizvold, 2012; Newbury-Birch et al., 2001), university students provided a captive population of sorts, in terms of their lack of drug supply contacts in a new geographical context, and a consistent level of demand for drugs:

The first time, probably wouldn't have been until the second year of university, so about 19 probably and that was because I started taking it more and knew more people that I could get it from. People knew I could get it and would say 'can you get me some of this' and I'd say 'sure'. People asked, that's all, people asked and it was friends, it wasn't strangers or anything, so I was more than happy to help. And we were at university so...

*Dan (23), Student Sample*

These findings are also consistent with wider research that postulate that drug use can be considered as 'processural', that is, related to social setting and the ever changing nature of social networks that individuals find themselves in (Moore, 1993). As Aldridge et al. (2011) suggest, *over time, friendship patterns or intimate relationships changed or ended, and thus often so did access to different drugs*' (my emphasis, p.191). This idea has much resonance with these findings. For both the 'Student' and 'Somerset Sample', the university context was suggested as an arena that contributed to expanding drug repertoires and increasing rates of use. Increased participation in drug use events, consumption of different drugs, and use of greater quantities of substance, as tolerance increased, served to increase the propensity for a drug user to become involved in supply at a small-scale or higher level. The data also suggests that *exposure* is also an

important factor in increasing an individual's propensity to become involved in social supply. In this respect, the more supply avenues available, or the more costly the drug habit, the higher possibility that this individual could take on a variety of supply roles. All these factors appeared to be heightened in the university context, consistent with this environment being identified as a key site of social supply.

## Co-operative Purchases

The findings are suggestive of the idea that the existence of co-operative purchases, or 'group buys', were endemic throughout both the 'Student' and the 'Somerset Samples'. Described by Duffy et al. (2008) as 'chipping in' (pooling funds to make a buy), these findings also provide evidence to suggest that group members would club their funds, with one, or most often, a couple of nominated members making a purchase of a larger quantity of substance, on behalf of the group (see below). The group buy tended to be a planned rather than spontaneous supply event and arrangements for the quantities of drug required, along with the accompanying caveat of the amount actually available, were discussed through social media, texts and most commonly, in social meetings leading up to the transaction:

Ok, so its normally planned, others will normally go and get it, although it has happened that I'm with those who go and get it...so it'll just be kind of messages, organising what other people are getting, what's on offer, what everyone wants, so you kind of put an order in and work out how much everyone else is getting and I suppose that ensures everyone is going to be on the same high. Because if people are like "I don't want that much, I'll only have this much", then you might say "actually I don't want that much either" so you kind of work out how big a night everyone's going for and then, umm, somebody picks up and then I suppose gives it to everybody in the night or day that you're going out, and then everyone has their own and it's down to them...

*Natalie (28), Somerset Sample*

Respondents commonly described meeting at the suppliers house to 'pick up', or alternatively, if a good friend, the supplier would deliver the drugs to the receivers



residence, combining the supply transaction with a social visit. Consistent with the findings of Nicholas (2008), this style of supply could be conceived more accurately as 'lounge room dealing', rather than street dealing. For those who used cannabis, similarly to Dorn et al's (1992) explanation of the activities of 'trading charity' supplier types, the drug supplier and receiver would often use drugs together during the exchange, this process potentially aiding the establishment of friendships outlined below:

I mean when I, when I'd go and pick up he would always invite me in for a smoke, so I'd say 'yeah'. I mean we'd spend a lot of time with each other just kind of smoking away.

*Ben (27), Somerset Sample*

Group buys were also on the whole put forward as the preferred way of obtaining drugs. For cannabis users, group buying and use often came hand in hand, with many respondents reporting the benefit of 'chipping in' (Duffy et al., 2008; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007). Group purchases allowed users to club funds to buy a 'weight' of cannabis that could be shared by the group, and also offered a type of social event for those involved. In contrast to this, consistent with the findings of Measham et al. (2001), preference for group buys of psychoactive substances was largely attributed to the convenience and safety associated with obtaining drugs through friends, as opposed to drug dealers (proper). However, a theme less noted in extant research, is related to how group buys enabled users to purchase relatively small amounts of psychoactive drugs, such as MDMA, cocaine and ketamine - a quantity that could be purchased to use over the course of a night. Respondents, (both 'Student' and 'Somerset Sample'), regularly expressed the difficulty of obtaining 'smaller deals' of these 'club drugs' and described their preference for purchasing a small amount for one occasion, rather than having a larger amount, which they may be tempted to use. Again, in this sense, buying as part of a group appeared to be a harm reduction technique of sorts, which regulated consumption of both stimulant and hallucinogenic substances.

## ‘Like Buying Someone a Drink’: Gifts, Sharing and Reciprocity

Without exception, *all* of the respondents interviewed (‘Somerset’ and ‘Student Sample’), confirmed that they had shared drugs for free and/or given drugs as ‘gifts’ to friends. The frequency of this behaviour was most popularly referred to as occurring ‘most of the time’ and ‘all of the time’, complimenting existing studies which advise that (young) age and gender are the most important indicators that an individual will receive drugs as gifts (see Hamilton, 2005), and that proportionally, young people are as likely to have drugs for free as purchasing them (Aldridge et al 2011; Dunn et al., 2007). Supporting previous research (see Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Duffy et al., 2008; Pavis et al., 1997), explanations for drug sharing within social circles, most popularly revolved around notions of sociability and shared experience:

And I think if you go in it and do it all together, it’s more of a, you’re all doing it. Whereas if you all go out and buy your own, and then come back and then do it on your own, it’s more like ... I don’t know, it separates you all a bit, sort of thing. I think it’s more social if you go in and get it all together, and then do it together as well.

*Tom (27), Somerset Sample*

As well as representing a more social way of *purchasing* drugs, all respondents, who indicated sharing substances, put forward the reason for doing so as relating to including others and aiding sociability between a group:

I think if I was having some and somebody was there I’d always offer it around whether I knew they’d have it or not just because...yeah, I suppose you do want to have the same experience and I wouldn’t have a drink without offering it to someone else (laughing), so I think it’s just part of the social situation, but yeah, it’s just because if they don’t have it I’d want them to have the same experience and not to have to...miss out...? That sounds really bad but...

*Natalie (28), Somerset Sample*

Further to the sharing and gift giving of drugs to enhance a social occasion, this form of distribution was put forward as a method of ensuring inclusion in drug experiences for all members of the social group. Users of a range of substances described a high incidence of sharing and gift giving behaviours, consistent with Duffy et al., (2008), this was largely attributed to drug use being conceived as 'a social thing'. Cannabis users appeared to be most committed to this practice, with many commenting of the high expectation for users to share, with one participant describing it as an 'unwritten rule'.

### Sharing of Psychoactive Substances

The data also portrayed a high incidence of the sharing of cocaine, MDMA and ketamine. While this was still explained as a 'social thing', the sharing of psychoactive substances seemed to also have a slightly more functional purpose. A notable proportion of the sample related their need to share, as a harm reduction technique. Here, knowing others were also using the same substance, (and furthermore, the same 'type' of pills or a substance taken from a particular batch), offered the sharing individual assurance and perceived safety:

I think I've done it once on my own but ended up with people doing it with me, and it ... you feel very ... I feel very vulnerable, I don't feel safe. Whereas, even though obviously I know I'm not as safe as I would be if I was sober, when other people are doing it with you, you feel okay, like you feel that you all look out for each other, you keep an eye on each other. Whereas when you're on your own you don't, don't feel [safe] ... I get very paranoid

*Joanne (23), Student Sample*

Apart from entering into sharing for harm reduction type purposes, sociability and convenience, the vast majority of those interviewed generally remarked on the value of sharing. This is due to the practice providing a certain amount of back up in times of drug shortages, when access could not be obtained, and when financial capital was low. On a general level, the sharing of cannabis and psychoactive substances, was frequently

conceived as no less normal than buying a friend an alcoholic drink back, and was considered an obvious and polite thing to do.

### Friends as Dealers, Dealers as Friends.

The relationship between the social supplier and the receiver of the drug, ranged from an unknown 'friend of a friend', to very 'close friends'. Consistent with the work of a number of national and international academics (see Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Shearer, 2007; Nicholas, 2008; Lenton and Davidson, 1999; Joe-Laidler and Hunt, 2008), the social suppliers in this research study confirmed that they *all* supplied friends, and furthermore, this group represented their primary supply population. Interestingly however, the data revealed that labelling the receiver of drugs supplied, simply as 'friends', could not be taken at face value. While all participants from the 'Somerset Sample' were involved in supplying 'good friends', where friendship had preceded the supply relationship (and they describe being friends for a number of years, many from childhood, college or university days), the Student Sample's categorisation of friends as receivers of drugs, was more ambiguous. Even though many students instinctively described drug consumers as 'friends', further probing suggested that many of these friends were made through like-mindedness and a mutual enjoyment of the drug:

I'd say yeah, because we ... I mean when I, when I'd go and pick up he would always invite me in for a smoke, so I'd say yeah. I mean we'd spend a lot of time with each other just kind of smoking away and that way we've become really good friends like over the time, I suppose, yeah. So yeah, definitely

*Reuben (20), Student Sample*

This finding bears a similarity to that found in research scoping the subcultures of recreational drug users (Duff, 2007; Duff et al., 2007; Gourley, 2004), where friendship could be suggested to be established *through* the supply relationship, rather than existing before distribution had taken place. Both the 'Somerset' and the 'Student Sample'

reported supplying acquaintances. Acquaintances were most popularly described as 'fellow drugs users', 'friends of friends', or those 'familiar faces' who were 'known on the scene':

Mainly friends but if they're acquaintances then they're friends of friends, always...they almost come endorsed so it's always like, that's ok, don't worry that's fine. It might be a night out thing, it might be a pre-planned thing as well, so say I was going up to London then you'd chat to a friend and say 'oh are you bothered' and he'd be like 'yeah I'm bothering' and then 'is there any chance you can add me on to your order', 'yeah that's fine' and it's just about respecting your friends really and knowing that they're going to be decent and not dangerous...it's trust, definitely.

*Tom (27), Somerset Sample*

Several commentators have highlighted the idea, that for dealers, trust is an important issue and therefore selling to 'friends' can be a form of risk management in an otherwise unregulated market (Potter, 2009; Taylor and Potter, 2013) where friendship between supplier and customers can be conceived as mutually beneficial (Werse, 2008). Although trust was undoubtedly a quality valued by social suppliers, data from this study indicates these relationships, *as they had developed*, were described as transposing any functional or risk management features. Although many were initiated through a market based association, a significant number had flourished to the extent that participants keenly talked of how they would be friends regardless. In this respect, these relationships certainly did not appear to be employed as a primary means of neutralising their offences (Sykes and Matza, 1957) or deflecting culpability (see Potter 2009, for a full discussion).

## Social Supply Typologies

The following typologies represent the most prevalent styles in which individuals would become involved in social supply. Although of course, these typologies cannot be expressed as representative of social suppliers per se, they were quite clearly evident in the data gathered in this project. It should also be noted that these roles were not definitively adopted by individuals; instead, they represent differing modes of supply that

social suppliers drifted in and out of in a fluid fashion, according to the wider context or situation.

### **‘The Designated Buyer’**

The ‘designated buyer’ represents the most common form of social supplier identified within this data set. As suggested by the title, the typology refers to an individual who will buy a quantity of substance on behalf of the group, that once purchased, will be split between those other group members who will have ‘chipped in’ to finance the deal before or after the transaction takes place. A typical example of this act is presented below:

If it’s a night out at ‘Motion’ or something then what would probably happen is that you’d, like all four of you from the office are going out so it’s like what do you fancy doing...a few grams of cocaine or something. We’ve all got a couple of numbers that we can ring up, we can drive somewhere...if one number doesn’t work, I can ring my guy and he’ll meet me at the pub. I’ll get the money, go in there and then maybe go and meet at the terrace, or meet at the pub...sometimes you can meet at a venue, but obviously then there are concerns around travelling with it, especially in nightclubs...so it’s always a good idea to meet up first because it’s not fair for one person to take the full risk of carrying everyone else’s drugs in.

*Tom (27), Somerset Sample*

Consistent with academic research elsewhere, which has previously identified this kind of supplier (Police Foundation, 2000; Duffy et al., 2008; Potter, 2009), the data reinforced the fact that a ‘designated buyer’ acts on behalf of the group, and is simply the actor who happens to be chosen to ‘pick up’ the product. The data is therefore supportive of the point made by the Police Foundation Report (2000), that each member of the group shares a ‘common objective’ or intention, in the pursuit of and personal consumption of these substances and does little more than pass on a drug from one person to another (Coomber, 2006). The activity undertaken by the ‘designated buyer’ can be likened to that of the ‘broker’ (see Duffy et al., 2008), a role characterised by helping others access a drug without profit. A common scenario in regard to the ‘designated buyer’ typology

outlined by the respondents, relates to group of three friends (average) 'chipping in'. In this situation, the designated buyer would purchase the substance (most commonly reported as cannabis, MDMA or cocaine) and distribute to the group, taking no discernible financial benefit for their part in this transaction, apart from perhaps a small 'hassle tax' (see page 158). However, the data also portrayed an increased likelihood of the 'designated buyer' taking a small recompense as the size of the group increased:

Because at the moment its non-profit, £40-£100 of weed a month, it's different with each deal but when it's almost...when I'm getting it for a close 2-3 people it's different to getting it for a 4-6 people, so then the monetary aspect comes in and you take the orders and work it out rather than just getting some and having a smoke with some of your mates.

*Johnny (23), Somerset Sample*

The narrative exhibited above, is emblematic of the vast majority of this particular type of supplier, whereby the size of the group and also, the perceived level of friendship, provided the basis to decide whether some form of gain should be taken for their time and effort. It should be noted, that even for those who could not be described as adhering to the purely broker like style of distribution, the 'profit' obtained was rarely little more than a relatively small-scale mark up, or a taste of the buy (see Murphy et al., 1990; Moyle et al., 2013).

### **'The Party Buyer'**

The 'party buyer' typology describes a supplier who purchases larger amounts of drugs for a specific occasion or event, most notably music festivals. The 'party buyer' is characterised by his or her distribution of a relatively sizable quantity of drugs for a large group of people. If distributing for a festival, this may require supplying enough drugs to cover members of the group for two, if not three days. Entrée into this typology is not established through the individual's frequency or experience of drug supply. Instead, it is predicated on the party buyer's access to a large quantity of drugs at the particular time

that coincides with the 'party'. In the context of this data, this portends that party buyers were often individuals who had some experience of acting as a 'designated buyer', but who had not drifted into an entrepreneur role or drug dealing (proper), a finding that may appear surprising, due to the quantities of drugs purchased and the number of receivers. As the narrative below displays, even for the party buyer, describing the combined quantity of substance portrays at a superficial level, higher level supply activity than they felt was inherent in the act itself:

If I'd been to a drug dealer it would be for a *lot* of people, it would be for...I mean I've bought for ten people before so that would be over £100, so that would be over 100 pills it might be even 200 pills or something...it sounds stupid to say it out loud. I mean, that's a serious amount of drugs! But yeah if you're going to a festival or something and you've got 10-15 people, that's not even that much and then they've got girlfriends or friends that want some, so yeah...it sounds stupid to say it out loud! But yeah, I've done that before...

*Andy (29), Somerset Sample*

However, for many of the party buyers, the only differences between party buying and acting as a designated buyer lay in the amount of drug purchased and the individual from whom the drugs were purchased. The act itself was rationalised through deconstructing the quantities purchased in relation to the amount of members of the group they were providing for, as well as the amount of days for which the substances were required. The party buyer is therefore an individual involved in irregular and exceptional supply events; examples from the 'Somerset' and 'Student Sample' suggest that these events may only occur once or twice a year. Due to issues surrounding gaining access to this amount of drugs, many of the 'party buyers' identified in this research, had occupied this role once or twice at the most. 'Party buyers' were more likely to 'pick up' drugs from individuals labelled as 'drug dealers'. It was most common for them to have been directed to this individual through a friend or an acquaintance, and 'party buyers' described sourcing a range of substances from these sellers. In terms of quantities and the amount of money



spent on drugs, the quantity varies according to the occasion length and the amount of people attending, and arguably, the size of their drug habit.

### ‘The Entrepreneur’

‘Entrepreneurs’ are individuals, who, when the opportunity arises, buy a ‘weight’ (most popularly cited as an ounce or more) of a particular substance, in order to distribute as a means of earning financial capital. For the eight ‘entrepreneurs’ found in this research project, their involvement in this more serious level of supply was not something that was actively sought out, or that they necessarily aimed to be involved with again:

It was an opportunity that kind of came out of the blue and I kind of just saw it as a one off chance to make a bit of money...I wouldn't ever have wanted to carry it on afterwards but it was just kind of an opportunity that sort of came around and I sort of thought...why not? So it was a real one off situation, it was a fair amount and I was able to make some money...so yeah...

*Jacob (29), Somerset Sample*

Although the relatively large quantities distributed may ordinarily indicate a potential customer base made up of strangers, the ‘entrepreneur’ seller *primarily* distributed to those described as friends and acquaintances. Despite the socially orientated aspect of distribution, the act itself could perhaps be seen as fitting more within the parameters of *commercially motivated* supply, due to the respondents’ primary aim for supply acting as a means of obtaining financial profit. Many of the respondents who were involved in this distribution style had substantial experience of previously acting as a ‘designated buyer’ or a ‘party buyer’. Blum et al. (1972) suggest that getting ‘acquainted with dealers’ can be taken as being essential for later dealing. Indeed, it appeared that the propensity to take on a number of social supply roles, the consequent contacts at a higher supply level and potential customers gained, provided the necessary social capital (Bourdieu, 1990) that enabled transition to opportunistic selling. This social capital placed ‘the entrepreneur’ in

a position where they were increasingly likely to be able to gain access to 'weight amounts', that they felt confident in being able to distribute:

Yeah, probably a couple of years, probably because there were the links and I suppose a bit of business sense so it was like, might as well...and then I suppose I had a friend that could get a big amount and previously, I wouldn't have known that...you gradually mix with more and more people maybe, and you know it's just one of those things...and then you probably will eventually hear of opportunities like that and they become available. So you think "I might as well go and do this" so instead of £40 for one [gram] you pay £400 for 28 [grams] so that means think I've only got to sell 10 and then...it's free (laughs). So yeah, but then you are aware that you're taking a bit of a risk...(laughs).

*Jack (26), Somerset sample*

Being active in supply for a number of years also provided the opportunity buyer with knowledge of how supply worked and how best to distribute, in order to minimise hassle and provide an adequate profit. For all 'entrepreneurs', their involvement in this activity was predicated on the promise of earning enough financial capital or 'free drugs', in order to make the risk they were taking worthwhile. We might conceptualise this as a rational decision, much like the 'cost-benefit' decisions described by Parker et al., (1998) in relation to young peoples' drug use. Here, 'entrepreneurs' reported analysing the potential rewards available against the ease of distributing these substances (how many potential customers who would want to buy) and the prospective risk of being found in possession of these substances. The 'entrepreneurs' found in this research, were far more likely to be individuals who saw themselves as being in financial difficulties. For the students 'dipping' in and out of supply, similarly to Murphy et al.'s (2004) findings, this gain became particularly appealing due to the high costs of course fees and general living expenses at university. For those who had significant previous experience of social supply, high levels of social capital (Bourdieu, 1990) very often offered supply opportunity, in which they were able to earn extra cash to supplement their income or drug use.

## ‘Stash User-Suppliers’

The ‘stash user-supplier’ was a noticeably less evident role undertaken by social suppliers within the study, particularly in relation to psychoactive drugs (‘Somerset Sample’, n=2). The reason for this is perhaps related to the level of consumption required, to make bulk buying the most appealing option in view of the attached risk factor. The stash user-suppliers identified were characterised by the purchase of large quantities of drugs. However, they differed from ‘party buyers’ since the common intention behind the buy was to satisfy their appetite for that particular substance and to do so in the most economic and convenient way possible:

Yeah, sort of often, because if you want to buy to get drugs cheap then you have to buy a certain amount and that costs quite a lot of money. Until recently I didn’t have that much money so...it was mainly because it was cheaper. It’s not much fun getting ripped off and going to see these random people, it’s much easier to sort it out and then you’re done for a month or whatever...it’s just convenience. If you want some, you don’t have to go out and get some, you can just go to your drawer and go ‘hello, let’s go out’.

*Jamie (29), Somerset Sample*

Similarly to Murphy et al.’s (1990) typology of the ‘stash dealer’, this supplier voiced the rationale for participation as being a cost effective way of purchasing sufficient substances to satisfy their high use of drugs. While this was found to be the case for cannabis stash user- suppliers, in contrast, these findings suggest that the rationale behind stash user-supply was to purchase the drugs for a cheaper price, rather than buying with the intent of subsidising their use through further sale. Once the stash user-supplier had purchased a weight of substance for themselves, they described consuming this product over a course of weeks. The supply aspect comes into play after the initial purchase, when this drug user may ‘clear’ small amounts of their substance to friends or acquaintances (see Lenton and Davidson, 1999). The ‘stash user-supplier’ described distributing small quantities of his/her stash to friends, offering them for free or at a

reduced price. This supply act was therefore described as an act of generosity to friends, and similarly to Murphy et al. (2004), was articulated as 'sharing the love'. 'Stash user-suppliers' were widely associated with high recreational drug use and ownership of large quantities of drugs by members of their social group. This was conducive in perpetuating their supply activity, since they were frequently receiving requests for drugs, therefore making them more susceptible to engaging in drug sharing behaviours.

## Financial Profit

Profit is described in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'financial gain, especially the difference between the amount earned and the amount spent in buying, operating, or producing something' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Thematic analysis of this data suggests that the gain obtained by social suppliers falls into three distinct categories: 1. monetary 'profit', 2. free drugs and 3. free alcohol or commodities. Of course, the level of profit taken from a transaction was dependent on the mode of supply entered into, along with the relationship the supplier had with the receiver of the drug.

## 'If I've got the Hassle I'll get the Benefit': Hassle Tax

Although there were a small minority of respondents who articulated an enjoyment of the bravado and status associated with being known as a source of supply, the majority of psychoactive drug suppliers, described the social supply of 'party drugs' as an experience characterised by inconvenience, risk and hard work:

Oh no I don't enjoy it, it's such a pain...I hate it! Me and my friends have quite often been round to either friends or dealers and we just moan about how much of a pain it is and like, why can't they just do it themselves and that's the reason why you might take the discount or some profit...because of that hassle, that's the only reason...it is a hassle.

Luke (25), Somerset Sample

I hate it – I wouldn't say there was any status – I mean, obviously if I was a drug dealer then I'd probably feel that there was some status with that, but I think because it's always like 'oh *Mike* can you get me some', then it's just more of a ball ache especially if there's a big night on and you've got ten or fifteen people who want 1 pill each. It's trying to sort that out it's just like, 'I just want to have a good time', I don't want to be chasing people for a tenner...I think I'm more of a drug mule than anything (laughs)...but then if I was adding a bit on for myself then it would probably make a lot of difference...

*Mike* (24), Somerset Sample

Social suppliers of cannabis largely found the supply transaction a less taxing experience, since it normally included some kind of social aspect. However, despite this, it was also widely conceived as the most tedious feature of the cannabis subculture. Both party drug and cannabis social suppliers, felt that a key theme or rationale for taking small remuneration was linked to acquiring some recompense or reward. This gesture acknowledged the effort and risk a social supplier would take on for the benefit of the receivers of the drug. This benefit was widely referred to by respondents as a '*hassle tax*'. The '*hassle tax*', was most commonly explicated as equating to the 'few quid', or the amount it would take social suppliers to round costs up to the nearest £5 or £10 note:

If someone does want something off me then I'll just round up to the nearest fiver so I suppose that's profit, but it's more just a faff...a 'fag tax' you could call it, an 'effort tax'. It's just because I don't want to have pound coins given to me I want a crisp note, that's all...'hassle tax' you could call it, not really profit

*Nick* (29), Somerset Sample

Social suppliers suggested that taking a '*hassle tax*' from a supply transaction was an unwritten rule within supply culture that was approved and expected by receivers of drugs:

I think so...I think it's just an unwritten rule really, it's not really something that's ever asked, so say if a friends got a gram of MDMA or something, I'd ask how much and they'd be like £40 and I'd be like, fine. Even if it was good friends, I probably wouldn't quiz them that hard on it...

Joe (27), Somerset Sample

The 'hassle tax', in most cases, was not even cogitated when respondents were questioned regarding the amount of gain they acquired from the drugs transaction. Instead, it represented a relatively small amount of financial capital that was described as so embedded within social supply transactions, that it was rarely either considered, or conceived as gain by those who received it.

### **Motivations for Continued Participation in Social Supply:**

While it is true that in most cases social suppliers drifted into social supply and therefore did not make a conscious decision to become suppliers, the reasons for them *continuing* to undertake these activities are listed below:

### **Economies of Scale – Incentivised Discounts and Buying 'More for Less'**

Now the types of social supplier have been detailed, it is also important to explore the main reasons that the respondents gave for involving themselves in drug distribution. The rationale that proved to be the most widely cited, and which appeared in every transcript, was the notion that buying a larger quantity as part of a group to share or to sell on (social supply), was the *cheapest* way of purchasing drugs. Many of the respondents stressed what they saw as 'basic' economic principles, 'economies of scale', stating that buying more always worked out as more cost effective, and in this sense, it was the most 'obvious' and logical option:

You think, hang on a minute, why would I, for example, just go and get an eighth of skunk which could go in a night, if there were four or five of you...or should I go and get a half ounce which is four times that amount and then maybe I can sell two of them to my friends and end up with two myself...that's basically how it works.....a basic economy of scale...

Brady (27), Somerset Sample

For the majority of the social suppliers, particularly those who supplied cannabis, the benefit of buying larger quantities was something that was understood and operationalised at an early stage, rather than an ideal that was learnt through engaging in more and more transactions:

Immediately, when we started doing it, we realised that there was a clear benefit in that if we were going to all do it then it's just a simple hang on a minute, we're doing this, so why don't we get more? It was a rational choice because you're thinking, hang on a minute I'm only going to buy more of this in a day or two, so why don't we just buy more of this now and get it cheaper...that just seemed like a logical thing to do.

*Colin (29), Somerset Sample*

Social suppliers also described the desire from potential customers, particularly cannabis users, to obtain a good deal themselves. This suggests that the need to obtain a good deal and maximise economies of scales in order to buy 'more for less' is prevalent at both ends of the supply transaction:

If people are asking if you've got it, they will also ask if you can do more than the minimal amount, do you know what I mean? Because they want to get the benefit, so if they ask if you've got any then you say 'yeah', and then the next question is 'how much have you got'? not normally 'can I have an eighth?'. So if you've got a lot I'll have a half ounce or I'll have an ounce, because then they'll give it to their mates and do the same as you. So everyone wants to get and make that different breaking point, where you go 'why would I want to spend...why would I want just one transaction when I know my mate wants it as well?'. I'll get enough for him and then...

*Joe (27), Somerset Sample*

By the age of 17/18, despite my best intentions, I had become a daily weed/skunk smoker, as we had moved off the poorer quality hash. I had also started very small scale dealing too. I would often pick up a half ounce (four 8ths) of weed for £60, that I was able to buy from the convicted drug dealer, whom I had known since I was about 10. Therefore, if I sold two eighths for £20 each, I got my remaining two 8ths for half the usual price (£20 instead of £40). This was well worth the extra investment: 100% free compared to buying a single eighth. My rationale was simple: If an 8<sup>th</sup> cost £20 and would seldom weigh the 3.5 grams it should, then why would I pay that when I could pay £60, get four times as much, and have it weighed in front of me? It was common sense.

I had also started mixing with older boys, who also smoked, and one of them and I became good friends. We started buying a bit more regularly as our own smoking

increased, and would get half a 9 bar (4 ½ ounces) in as we had plenty of friends who would always want it. I suppose it was a twofold or threefold benefit: we got our own personal supply much cheaper and maybe made some profit, whilst our friends also got deals that were weighed up honestly and we all ended up smoking together anyway, so it was a social enterprise as well as an economic one. Fundamentally though, the motivation for dealing from my perspective was that I wanted to get my own supply cheaper.

By the time I started University, I had been a regular weed smoker for about 6 years and would also occasionally buy a larger quantity. I would pick up a half bar (4 ½ ounces) and have it sold quickly upon receiving it, as there were plenty of us smoking amongst my group of friends. Again, I was buying it from the guy I had become friends with who was dealing on a relatively large scale (selling multiple ounces instead of small deals) and I would travel from Cardiff to Bristol, as we were both at university, to pick it up.

Whilst he had moved up to larger quantities, I never really ventured beyond buying a 9 bar. I was studying for my degree and had a part time job so for me it was more just to get mine cheaper and sort a few mates out, rather than to try and make money out of it.

After finishing university, I stopped buying larger amounts. This was largely because one of the people I was living with would always buy quite a large personal quantity, so there was no need for me to try and get a cheaper supply. This continued for almost a year before I moved city.

Whilst I would say that I did deal drugs, my motivation was purely to get my own supply cheaper. I never got to the point where it was a source of income for me and never aspired for it to become one. I simply became a weed smoker, and wanted to secure a good steady supply from a trusted source or two to meet my smoking needs at an economically advantageous rate. Whilst this was illegal, it was a normal part of using most drugs as far as I could tell, as there is an instant cost benefit from purchasing any drug I have come across in a slightly larger quantity above the minimum amount. In this sense, it was a normal part of drug use to me, and almost every person in my group. Everyone wanted a cheaper rate or a better deal.

**Figure 3: 'Charlie' Case Study (sic)**

### **Drugs 'for Free'**

As well as taking small financial recompense for occupying a supply role, supporting previous academic studies (see Atkyns and Hanneman, 1974; Coomber, 2010; Lenton and Davidson, 1999; Nicholas, 2008), respondents recalled being strongly motivated to engage in social supply activity as a simple means of acquiring 'free drugs'. For social suppliers that were heavy, or even regular recreational users, buying a larger quantity of drugs in order to sell on to friends, provided a relatively straightforward solution for subsidising their use. This motivation was particularly prevalent within the 'Student Sample' population, and was found to be most prevalent in cannabis users, who were



using on a daily or weekly basis. With an awareness of how the costs of smoking cannabis on a regular basis could mount up, getting drugs for free, through 'sorting' mates out, enabled users, particularly university students, to continue smoking without a sense of guilt regarding the accumulated costs they were spending on the drug. For the respondents who used psychoactive party substances, getting free drugs was seen as a reward for undertaking the risk and hassle of sourcing and collecting Class A drugs for friends and was also viewed as a way of financing a night out:

Something I drifted into to be honest, if someone asks you to help them out, you help them out don't you? I kind of didn't realise early on that if you're getting some pills for a pound and selling them for a pound fifty, which people are more than happy to pay, then you can get your stuff for free. That becomes quite apparent quite quickly, that's probably why I was more than happy to do it as time went on...it was just enough to have free nights because obviously nobody's got too much money when they're in their second and third year

*Jamie (29), Somerset Sample*

The method used in order to obtain free drugs varied between social suppliers according to their level of access, the drugs they were planning to distribute, and who was buying from them. Typically respondents described making 'free drugs' through purchasing a larger quantity of drugs than needed; this immediately brought the cost of each deal down. The social supplier could then choose how good a 'count' he will sell on to the receiver of the drug i.e. whether he/she would sell them the correct quantity of drugs or whether they might 'skim' off the top of the weight (for example selling an eighth which is supposed to weigh 3.5 grams as 3.2 or 3.0):

At the moment, say if we were going out....say if we were sorting out a night out and some people wanted coke then it would be three people who wanted a gram each split between three people and then get a half a gram split between you all for free...so if you bought an eighth, (so there's three and a half grams in an eighth) so everyone would get a gram and then you'd have a gram for free

*Leo (27), Somerset Sample*

Many different ways of getting 'free' cannabis were described; for social suppliers acting at a very low level, who brokered relatively small amounts such as 'eighths' and 'teenths', the amount of free drugs obtained could be relatively minimal. As previously suggested though, for those who were smoking more regularly and were struggling to subsidise this use, namely students, it was not usual for respondents to describe selling quantities ranging from half an ounce up to 4.5 ounces. Although these quantities may appear to be representative of a more serious level of supply, they were often indicative of the level of cannabis consumption undertaken by the social supplier and their friends. Social suppliers selling half an ounce reported selling three out of four eighths in order to get an eighth of an ounce (equating to £20) for free, while a student who obtained an ounce described selling six eighths in order to gain a quarter (two 'eighths' or 7 grams) for their own consumption.

The social supply of recreational drugs... you're probably talking to the right person here to be honest... I supplied everyone's drugs for Glastonbury (I mean our friends, not the whole of Glastonbury...).

I did this for a number of reasons.....

1) Because I knew the guy I was buying off really well, as in I'd call him a mate, French boy, good lad, go for drinks, etc. so I knew he wouldn't try and screw me. Plus he is an absolute sweetheart. sounds weird but when I asked him if I could get the amount I wanted he said yeah no problem, then invited me round to sample it (which basically means going round, ingesting in the living room and chat bollocks and share/talk about music etc. until we're both suitably fucked and then I'd stumble home ringing people saying yep, we're on.

2) It's a lot less hassle to do it that way because everyone's on the same thing so you're 'on-the-same-level'. Basically you know that whatever you've got buzzing round your head is the same as everyone around ya...which makes the whole ordeal much more comfortable. and because there are so many pills and stuff knocking around they've all got a slightly different make up so if you've got yourself mashed up on the 'blue ones' or whatever and Mike's on red ones with little hearts on them you may both be having a great time but you're not quite 'synced'.

3) It made my Glastonbury experience essentially free. With the exception of Mike and Amy I added a 'hassle tax' onto every else's drugs. so I made a bit of cash - this is not a secret, this is just how it's done when you're buying in bulk. If I'm walking out of a house with 15 grams of MDMA, 5 grams of coke,

500 quid and god knows what else. It's me taking the risk with the slight chance of the 'roz' stopping me or worse.... so that's just the way it's done.

Figure 4: 'Tim' Case Study (sic)

### 'Doing Your Bit' for the Group

Apart from acting as a means to subsidise their own use or enable the social supplier to get their drugs 'for free', the idea of supply being undertaken as a means of fulfilling obligation to the group, proved to be a popular discourse. This was most notably exhibited by the 'Somerset Sample', which was comprised of older adults who related long term friendship groups with fellow drug users. This supply motivation was found to encompass related themes of reciprocity and exchange. If a member of a social group was planning to obtain drugs through a source, particularly for an event in which all members of the group were attending, they would then be expected to provide for the rest of the group. Planning access to drugs for events was found to be routine, and therefore, acquiring drugs on an individual basis did not appear to represent a viable option for social suppliers:

Yeah for sure, you know I wouldn't go hunting for pills unless I knew something big was on, if there was a night coming up or...you wouldn't ever go on a night like that on your own, you're always going to go with people and they're always going to be very likeminded so you'd already know other peoples wants and requirements so you'd cater for them because... you're their friend...it's like you wouldn't go to the 'off licence' and just get a load of beer for yourself.

*Nick (29), Somerset Sample*

As the narrative suggests, there seemed to be consistent practices that guided etiquette in the sourcing of drugs, which could be described as 'distribution norms' (Dorn et al., 1992). Following wider structures of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960, Mauss, 1990), there also appeared to be a clear expectation for group members to all take their turn and provide for the group. This theme is consistent with the work of Dorn and South (1990)

and their conceptualisation of 'mutual societies' (see also Dorn et al. 1992) (see page 84). 'Mutual societies' are described as friendship networks of user-dealers, who support each other and sell or exchange drugs amongst themselves in a reciprocal fashion (Dorn and South, 1990: 177). At the heart of this conceptualisation is an expectation that everyone will do their bit, or as Dorn et al., (1992) suggest, 'where every user is a supplier and everyone is expected to help out' (p.10) in order to keep the group supplied. While reciprocity is 'the name of the game' (Auld 1981 as cited in Dorn et al., 1992:182), within the context of this research, rationales for social supply motivation were also reliant on the values and ethos associated with what it means to be a friend. In this respect, rather than a purely functional act, characterised by individuals simply volunteering to 'take supply on', respondents exhibited a desire to *want* to help good friends acquire drugs:

No it feels fine, it doesn't feel risky, it's just like...I don't want to say it but I'm going to say it anyway, you kind of feel like the 'big dog' because you're sorting all your mates out, you like the feeling of helping your mates

*Craig (28), Somerset Sample*

Notions of membership, responsibility and obligation are particularly relevant here. For some respondents, this expectation carried a certain amount of weight, to the extent that certain members of these social groups would actively seek out supply avenues, in order to take their part in providing for the group:

I first started doing it because....it's a hassle for everyone else to get it and you don't want to always be the person that always receives things and that doesn't go out and buy it, so you know, it was more of a...doing my bit I suppose

*Ben (27), Somerset Sample*

The finding of this theme as a key motivation for involvement in social supply activity, relies firmly on the nature of the relationship between the social supplier and the potential receivers of the drug:

It depends what everyone else is doing...I mean, if people are sorted then they might not have to come in on it type of thing, but It's pretty common. So if you're going to a festival particularly, it's common for, if someone knows someone, to get orders for other people, it's just polite (Laughs)...to offer it up. Just like I would if I knew somebody and I was going to see someone...there's an expectation, definitely. It's like, I was just talking to *Tim* and we're going to Secret Garden Party next week and I said 'well if you're going to get something then'...(laughs). So yeah, it's an expectation really that you'd do that for your mates, and I would always ask my friend if I was going to go through the effort and stress of trying to organise something, I would always ask them if they were sorted.

*Andy (29), Somerset Sample*

As suggested previously, this theme was noticeably absent from the 'Student Sample', this is perhaps indicative of the weaker social bonds between these actors, as opposed to the more established friendships of the 'Somerset Sample' demographic.

## The Normalisation of Social Supply

One of the most important themes developed by this research, was the widespread normalisation of social supply activity. Normalisation, on a more general level, has been described as not being concerned with absolutes (Aldridge et al., 2011), and can instead be best understood as representative of a move of deviant activity from the margins of youth culture toward the centre (ibid; Parker et al., 1998). That is not to say that within the context of *wider society* drug supply is normalised. What the data does suggest however, is that drug distribution, particularly smaller-scale social supply acts such as 'designated buying', appear to have become a normalised activity for drug users:

Absolutely, umm just sort of, if you're doing it with friends then they'll want to get some stuff too and if they're already going then they'll ask you if you want any stuff picking up, so do you know what I mean? It's quite easy to get into but it doesn't feel serious at all.

*Shane (25), Somerset Sample*

Supporting findings from the '*Illegal Leisure*' literature (Parker, 2000; Parker et al., 1998; Aldridge et al., 2011), the data widely highlighted that drug supply is perceived as a sign of trust and friendship and rarely conceived as a serious offence. The quote below indicates how important social use and the quality of friendship is at an individual level:

Normal? A lot of us are social users, so if you are getting some then you will get some for your friend. The two go hand in hand. Because they're friends, I know what they've done; I would never entertain the idea of getting stuff for someone I didn't know...it just feels normal getting for friends.

*Mo (25), Somerset Sample*

Apart from normalisation occurring at an individual micro-level, the data supported the idea that the normalisation of drug use (Parker et al., 1998), also, in turn, provides a certain level of normalisation within distribution (South, 2004; Coomber, 2004). Due to the sample being populated by a relatively experienced demographic, it could be suggested that this close proximity with the cultural scenery of the illicit drug culture begets a familiarity with supply:

If you got caught...it's definitely scary, but I suppose that's what's quite exciting... but then thinking back to my uni' days where I did it slightly more regularly, it did become slightly more normalised because you kind of tell yourself that that's part of organising a night out. Like when you go out and put your make-up on or go and buy booze and you just...that's part of organising...I mean I suppose that element of risk and danger makes it quite exciting

*Nicola (27), Somerset Sample*

Along with representing an aspect intrinsically tied with drug use ritual and subcultural events, the normalisation of supply could be noted through a trend in discourse, which suggested that social supply did not represent a conceivable step up the ladder and instead, 'came hand in hand' with use. Similarly to the work of Murphy et al. (1990), moving into supply did not generally represent a conscious decision; instead, the culture

of normalisation surrounding their own use intended (Matza and Sykes, 1957) that the supply aspect was not conspicuous:

I think when it comes to having...I think if every weekend you're doing drugs it means 3 days out of 7 you've probably got drugs on you, so having an extra bit doesn't really make much difference. So literally having that extra bit and an exchange doesn't stand out...I literally hadn't thought about it until now, but yeah....

*Sarah (29), Somerset Sample*

While the normalisation of social supply was a prominent feature within the data analysis, it should be noted that it strongly resonated with the 'designated buyer'. This is perhaps due to the fact that 'party buyers', and 'entrepreneurs' had to seek out alternative contacts in order to secure larger quantities of substance, and therefore they were more likely to obtain these from a less familiar source. The result of these processes is that the social supply transaction becomes a foreign, uncertain process, rather than an extension of the users own consumption. In this respect, traditional ideas of social supply where the supplier buys small amounts for friends, for little or no profit (Duffy et al., 2008; RSA, 2007) and shares or gives 'gifts' to friends, can be well applied to the normalisation framework. It is more difficult to position 'party buys' and 'entrepreneur' supply in this framework, since they represent a social supply type that users 'dip in an out of' periodically, and that despite its frequency, is still on the whole, considered a 'risky' and deviant act by a typical social supplier:

There were obviously risk elements but later...when I was doing coke and stuff, that felt really risky. But with the weed and stuff, I was literally going into college with a big bag and stuff, and everyone sorted me out...I wasn't really worried at all so it didn't really ever feel risky to be honest with you.

*Ben (27), Somerset Sample*

Although it is difficult to say whether social supply is normalised per se, as with the literature describing a societal trend towards normalisation (Parker, 1995, Parker et al.,

1998; Aldridge et al., 2011), the data portrays that there is an increasing tendency towards normalised supply practices where, as South (2004) found, respondents as far as possible, try 'to stay a 'legal' person who happens to use (steps just over the line) and occasionally does some small scale dealing (takes a few steps more over the line but races back again)' (p.537). Indeed, the propensity for *all* of the respondents to, on some level, be involved in supply (through the widespread and popular practices of sharing, drugs gifts and nominated buying) and the increased occurrence of otherwise non-deviant populations purchasing large quantities of drugs in order to distribute to non-strangers, suggests a *meaningful normalisation* of social supply behaviours per se.

### Drifting Into Social Supply?

As well as using normalisation as a theoretical tool to understand social supply behaviour, the idea of drift (Matza, 1964), a theory that is seen to enhance and compliment normalisation in the context of its application to social supply, is thematically suggested to be as important in conceptualising and understanding social supply activity. One of the key factors that appeared to be conducive to drift into supply, particularly for cannabis users, is the propensity for regular drug users to try and gain the best deal possible (see Figure 3). In attempting to get more drugs for their money at a cheaper price, suppliers often described obtaining a larger quantity and distributing excess quantities to friends. Cannabis suppliers largely drifted into supply as a consequence of buying large quantities of drugs, rather than choosing to buy for supply purposes. In this sense, supply can usefully be conceived as a *consequence of the buy, rather than the motivating intention*. Consistent with the work of Murphy (1990, 2004), acting as a 'go - between' (or 'designated buyer') provided key modes of entry, or ways of drifting into social supply. In the case of the 'designated buyers', in line with Blum et al. (1972), once an individual became known as someone who potentially had access to drugs, they swiftly *became* the point of access to drugs (my emphasis, Murphy et al., 1990). With requests from



friends to 'get in on the deal', it 'made sense' for everyone (economically), for social suppliers to purchase for them at the same time. The idea of drifting into supply by virtue of strategies involved in trying to access a criminalised substance (Murphy et al., 1990) was also prevalent in the research.

For users of psychoactive substances, as suggested previously, it was commonly noted that commercial dealers would only supply in 'larger quantities' (i.e. 3.5g or more). Therefore, buying for others meant that psychoactive users, dissimilarly to cannabis users, would be left with a suitable amount of substance for that event, and additionally, would be able to split the cost of more expensive 'party drugs'. This perhaps inadvertent introduction to social supply, portrays how isolated strategies for acquiring drugs can easily develop into what can be conceived as social supply activity. Indeed, in line with Murphy (1990), here, initial positive experiences of first use, as well as first drug gifts and distribution, can be understood as leading to a 'mastery of the illicit' (ibid, p.114), contributing to a decrease in nervousness and thereby encouraging further participation. Significantly, supporting the findings of Murphy et al. (1990; 2004), the data suggests that because their use and distribution of recreational drugs was so established and normalised (Parker et al., 1998; Parker, 2000; Aldridge et al., 2011), they found it hard to definitively define at what point they began to supply. This theme was particularly widespread within the sample ('Somerset' and 'Student'), and again provides a strong indication that drift may feature in the transition from user to social supplier of drugs. The key point here is that, in line with the findings of Murphy et al. (1990), involvement in social supply was not *considered 'a major leap down an unknown road'* but rather, represented 'a series of short steps down a familiar path' (my emphasis, p.325).

## Just Sorting their Mates Out? Conceptualisations and Neutralisation

When questioned regarding how they conceived their supply actions, perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of the sample did not perceive themselves as drug dealers, with many verbalising the feeling of being 'uncomfortable' taking on this deviant status. Indeed, consistent with the findings of Mohamed and Fritsvold (2010), respondents actively de-stigmatised themselves through 'mental gymnastics' (p.102), neutralising their acts through providing justification of the reasons why their actions could not be compared to drug dealing (proper). Consistent with previous research (Murphy et al., 2004; Jacinto et al., 2008), this process involved the counterpoising of commercial drug dealing narratives of 'dodgy', and 'immoral' characters - who were stock holding, had no preference regarding who they sold to, and made their living from dealing drugs - with their own non-commercial, socially orientated activity. A common rationale for the 'neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1957) of social supply behaviours was related to the *inevitability of future transactions* by known contacts, this appeared to provide a justification for perceiving their actions in a less problematic way:

I don't know, I guess I don't really think about it...it's just second nature. It's just like when people know you're going to pick up pills they'll be like 'oh can you get me some?'...it just comes with...I don't know, I imagine if you're the only person doing drugs then it doesn't matter, but if you've got a friend that wants it as well, then you get it...there's no harm in getting it for someone else, if you're already getting it. That's all it is isn't it?

*Shane (25), Somerset Sample*

Interestingly, a few respondents reflected on their actions through a wider context, isolating their supply act and again engaging in 'mental gymnastics' (Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2010) as a means of justifying their involvement in supply:

No never [think of myself as a drug dealer], because, when buying in bulk and supplying friends, you're supplying to people who are buying anyway, so all you're doing is getting a reduced price from a dealer and sorting your

friends out. If I go down to Tesco's and buy a big packet of Mars Bars and give them to my mates, I don't see myself as a grocer

*Rich (29), Somerset Sample*

For many, the comparison of their conduct to that of drug dealing was problematic, to the point of been perceived as an offensive notion. Many had never considered their actions as supply in any way, and the idea of these acts as comparable to drug dealing evoked a response characterised by shock, disbelief and query. The narrative below, taken from a respondent who was familiar with the legal apparatus, displays one such response:

Only in the legal sense because I study law. Unfortunately, I'm aware of where I stand legally, I understand how what I do makes...I don't know (laughing), just the idea that I know what I do is regarded as that, and I mean even listening to the way you're describing some of the things you're reading here makes me think, "Christ is that...?" I've never thought about it like that, Christ! (Laughing).

*Duncan (29), Somerset Sample*

The common rejection or avoidance of the dealer label by social suppliers has been conceived as a means of diverting attention away from the illegality of the supply act (Pearson, 2007; Potter, 2009) and as a means of reducing the risk of being captured by law enforcement (Potter, 2009). However, for the social suppliers interviewed within the context of this research, this theme appeared to have less credence. Most social suppliers appeared not to have any real idea of the legal consequences of their activity and saw their offences as more akin to possession. In this respect, they were perhaps unlikely to be purposefully using the social supply label as a means of deflecting deviance, or minimising potential risks from law enforcement. However, it should be noted, that for 'entrepreneurs' and 'party buyers' in the 'Somerset' and 'Student Samples', there was broad acknowledgement, particularly for 'entrepreneurs' that their supply activity was moving into 'dealer territory'. This was accepted as part of the parcel when

buying large quantities of substance, regardless of their relationship with the receiver of these drugs.

## Chapter Conclusion

The thematic analysis has provided much data that can contribute to our understanding of social suppliers and the scope of activities in which they participate. The data suggests that first social supply activities take place in the school environment. The university context is presented as an environment that cultivates social supply, providing opportunities for increased and varied drug use. It also offered interconnected social networks that allow the flow of drugs to friends as acquaintances, who otherwise had no means of securing drugs. The scope of social supply activity was found to be wider in range than currently portrayed in the research literature in relation to quantities supplied, profit taken and the relationship with the drug receiver. Respondents were found to participate routinely in 'designated buying', along with drug sharing and gift giving practices. There was also strong evidence of higher scale social supply practices, such as 'party buying', and 'entrepreneur' roles. The pervasive nature of small-scale supply practices and the increasing prevalence of otherwise law abiding citizens 'dipping in and out' of supply suggest that there exists a relative normalisation of social supply, as well as use. Findings also indicated that social supply initially represented a practice into which respondents would 'drift'. Rationales for continued participation in social supply related to gaining 'free drugs', subsidising drug use, fulfilling an obligation to the friendship group and reducing risk. In regard to profit, some element of gain was suggested to be implicit in all transactions. In this respect, the relationship between social supply and profit can be conceived as consistent with Potter (2009), who proposes that social supply is 'supply that would happen even if profit were not to be made, but that may entail some profit if the option is there' (p.63).

## Chapter Six: Earning a ‘Score’: Exploring the Small-Scale Supply of Heroin and Crack Cocaine to Fund a Drug Habit

Following the social supply analysis, this chapter will explore the data gathered from 30 user-dealers of heroin, crack cocaine and amphetamine. To give some context in regard to the demographic user-dealers within this research project, this analysis will describe the drug use career of the respondents, as well as outlining the different ways in which user-dealers operate supply. This data provided evidence to suggest that user-dealing incorporates a number of different behaviours. These activities will be outlined through constructed ‘user-dealer typologies’, which conceptualise the dominant ways in which dependent drug users distribute drugs to support their drug habit and why. Key emergent themes are also presented, with the chapter documenting how findings support and converge with the literature review as it relates to drug dependency and supply. In order to understand user-dealing theoretically, Bourdieu will be employed, as it is felt that ‘*The Logic of Practice*’ (1990) and concepts of habitus, field and capital provide an applicable means of understanding and explicating the ‘practical logic’ of participating in supply (as a means of funding drug dependency). A Bourdieusian framework offers theoretical consideration to the relative position of the heroin or crack cocaine user in the drug supply market. It also acknowledges the possible lines of action (doxa) open to an actor, and how their access to resources (capital), and their disposition (habitus), unite in broadly determining practice for that individual. This appears to be the first time Bourdieu’s theoretical framework has been applied directly to the practice of user-dealing, and as such, this chapter will provide an opportunity to demonstrate the merit of understanding this type of supply through this distinct theory.

## Drug use Careers and Characteristics

User-dealers interviewed in this research tended to represent a slightly older demographic. Respondents averaged 37 years of age (mode 51) and problem drug users' careers were found to span an average of 10 years. Previous research has indicated that males have a greater opportunity to purchase drugs compared to females (Storr et al., 2004; Semple et al., 2011); my research bears similar findings with 65% (n=20) of the sample being occupied by males compared to 35% (n=10) females. The sample was comprised, overwhelmingly, of heroin users (50% n=15) and heroin and crack users (40% n=12) but there were a smaller number of crack (7% n=2) and amphetamine users (3% n=1). Four of these users self-classified as abstinent. While 87% (n=27) of the sample all initially cited heroin as their primary drug of use, it became clear that the respondents could also be understood as 'polydrug' users. This is because the vast majority of the sample also combined their heroin use with occasional to regular stimulant and 'downer' consumption. Heroin and crack users described using crack cocaine and amphetamines as a way of obtaining the high they could no longer gain from heroin use. In a similar way, benzodiazepines (Valium and Xanax) as well as analgesics (dihydrocodine and tramadol) obtained on prescription and from drug suppliers, were used in a functional manner by crack cocaine users as a way of easing the negative effects of stimulant 'come downs'. Of the sample, 50% reported currently being prescribed heroin substitutes, such as methadone or Subutex.

The amount of heroin and crack cocaine consumed by user-dealers was characterised by enormous variance. A typical response when questioned on how much heroin or crack would be used on a particular day was '*as much as possible*' (Lisa). More precisely, respondents were most likely to use three £10 bags of heroin per day (mode), which equates to around 0.6g. Respondents who described having more serious or chaotic

habits reported using up to an eighth (3.5g) of heroin a day. Although over half the sample did not use crack, those who had the money were also more likely to use one or two rocks of crack (most commonly valued at £20 per rock). Due to both the wide perception of the drug as being expensive and a primary need to acquire heroin 'in order to function', crack was widely described as being reserved for times when the user felt able to 'treat' themselves. The relatively controlled additional use of crack cocaine by heroin users in this sample, supports US research which suggests that many who try crack do not remain regular users (Briggs, 2012; Jackson-Jacobs, 2001). It also provides further support for the idea that the pharmacological qualities of this drug do not necessarily always promote chaotic use (Briggs, 2012; Morgan and Zimmer, 1997; Hart, 2013).

### Doing User-Dealing: The Logistics

The average age for first user-dealer experience ranged from 17-38, but on average, similarly to the findings of May et al., (2005), respondents were found to be 22 years of age when they first supplied a drug to support their addiction. Suppliers estimated that the average number of customers to whom they supplied was 12. The substances supplied to these consumers by suppliers were heroin (50% n=15), heroin and crack (40% n=12) crack (6% n=2) and amphetamine (3% n=1). Notably, all respondents described the *primary substance for supply as the drug they were addicted to*. Although a small number of respondents reported the isolated and opportunistic supply of drugs such as ecstasy and cannabis, without exception, user-dealers were found to be supplying the drug they use. Supporting the findings of Dwyer and Moore (2010), user-dealers articulated the most important rationale for supplying their drug of addiction as enabling close proximity and quick access to the drug of addiction. When questioned regarding their experiences of the proportions of user-dealers within the drug market, respondents were unanimous in stating that user-dealing was rife. Respondents reported the user-dealer group as dominating the heroin and crack cocaine market (at street level),

suggesting that user-dealing represented an activity in which most addicts had participated:

I think most people get involved in supply in some way, even if it's just a case of them seeking out other people [to purchase drugs] for those without contacts. So they could, by going off and scoring for them, they could get some money off them...or...gear. Most addicts, I think, that I've come across, would have done that. Even if it wasn't a regular thing, they would have picked up the chance to do that...

*Dean (48), crack and heroin user*

Of the user-dealer sample, 64% described their customer base as being made up of individuals described as 'acquaintances' or more broadly, other known heroin/crack cocaine users. 36% of respondents described drug receivers as friends and there were no reports of respondents selling drugs to strangers. Regular custom was most commonly obtained through introductions from existing receivers of drugs. As described below, the quantity of the drug acquired for supply and the way the user-dealer obtained the substance, was predominantly dependent on the scale of the operation. Transactions by these user-dealers tended to take place in differing localities, with suppliers responding to calls from potential customers and then arranging convenient and discrete areas to meet and complete the transaction. Suppliers exhibited caution when taking part in these transactions and would commonly take only the supplies that they had agreed to exchange with customers.

## Supply Typologies

Having outlined some of characteristics of user-dealing, this chapter will provide a more detailed look at the common modes in which user-dealing is operationalised. While the typologies are not offered as an exhaustive list of user-dealer supply behaviours, they broadly explicate what are considered to be the key modes of distribution identified in this



study. As well as delivering an overview of the scale and style of these different modes of distribution, there is also some discussion of common pathways into these roles.

### ‘The Dealer’s Apprentice’

The ‘dealer’s apprentice’ refers to a drug user whose journey into supply is a result of a close working relationship with a commercially motivated ‘dealer’. This supplier is effectively employed by a commercial dealer, receiving a ‘weight’ (typically an ounce) of crack cocaine or heroin to sell and in return, gaining financial capital or a ‘cut’ of the drugs as payment for their supply labour and risk. The distinctive aspect of this mode of supply relates to an arrangement where the commercial dealer will provide an initial quantity of drugs ‘*on tick*’ (on credit) to the ‘dealer’s apprentice’. This is always based on the proviso that payment for the substance will be returned latterly after sale of the drugs. Largely consistent with Small et al.’s (2013) ‘freelancer’, the attraction for becoming involved in this mode of supply was suggested as associated with the fact that the ‘dealer’s apprentice’ would not have to *initially* fund the weight of drugs that they would then go on to sell. This represented a feat that as a dependent drug user, was articulated as near impossible to achieve. A key theme related to the activity of the ‘dealer’s apprentice’ was the level of control that the dealer who ‘lays on’ (initially provides drugs for free) this initial amount of heroin or crack holds over the user-dealer. Several respondents described a scenario where they were regularly in the debt of their dealer and in this sense, were drawn into user-dealer supply because of the need to satisfy their drug habit and pay their supplier back.

The initial thing for me you know, was get it laid on, so then you’re talking a couple of grams, you know...then you get a bit of trust, you know. You see the thing with heroin is, I don’t know who you’ve been talking to, but this is my experience, you’ve got these goals, you set these goals for yourself...so if you lay me on 5 grams you know, and I make this amount of money. And then you sit down with the dealer and he says ‘and yeah, when you’re selling ten grams you’ll be able to pay me back and you’ll be able to put your own money in’. But it never gets to there....it never...I’ve not known a person yet

who started off the way I did [selling to keep your own habit going], you know, who's actually managed to achieve that not owing the dealer.

*Ed (52), ex-heroin user*

As the narrative suggests, the process of owing a commercial supplier, whilst also being in possession of a large quantity of drugs, can be problematic for the user-dealer. The close proximity to crack or heroin, which has been relayed as a positive aspect of participating in supply, also provides further temptation for the addict in terms of using further quantities of drugs that are intended for sale. Elaborating on this theme, respondents described how succumbing to temptation and using the drugs they have on 'consignment' often leads to a 'dangerous' cycle. Here, respondents described being forced to deal larger and larger quantities of drugs in order to raise money to repay their increasing debt to commercial dealers.

### **'The Opportunist'**

The 'opportunist' can be considered as similar to the 'dealer's apprentice', in the sense that they may also acquire a substantial quantity of heroin or crack cocaine for distribution. However, in contrast, this typology differs in the sense that there is not a sustained relationship between the opportunist and the supplier of the substance. Therefore, as a result of this, the supply transaction is largely considered a 'one off' by the individual in question. The 'opportunist' was most popularly characterised as someone, who on hearing of a chance to buy a weight of heroin or crack cocaine, would take this opportunity as an alternative to other illegitimate ways of funding their habit, such as theft or burglary. This typology also includes users, who on receipt of their prescription of heroin substitutes (such as methadone and Subutex) and other medications (benzodiazepines, notably Diazepam), would periodically supply them to other known users and use this revenue to buy heroin or crack. The opportunist role also

encompasses 'giro junkies', suppliers described by respondents as individuals who save up their state benefits in order to buy a larger quantity of drugs and distribute them. Similarly to the 'nominated buyer', once the 'opportunist' had learned that this supply activity offered a viable way of acquiring their drug of addiction, the data was suggestive of the idea that they would be more likely to partake again, should the opportunity rise:

To be truthful I think I just drifted into it, because like one day, a mate of mine was selling weights and got a large amount of gear and started selling weights and I just started turning it over, do you know what I mean? And on the second time, when I had the money, I'd find someone that I know and I'd work my way up from an eighth to a quarter.

*Tony (43), heroin user*

While many respondents (n=17) described becoming involved in opportunity selling at some stage of their drug use careers, it should also be noted that a few of those interviewed had taken similar opportunities to buy weights, but were unsuccessful in their distribution of the substance. These individuals attributed their relative 'failure' in supply to a lack of know-how and 'experience in drug selling'. Unsuccessful experiences were associated with the difficulties of managing weights, finances and relations with customers; furthermore, these respondents also described struggling with self-restraint when surrounded by large quantities of heroin or crack cocaine.

### **'The Nominated Buyer'**

The 'nominated buyer' earns his/her drugs through purchasing substances on behalf of their social group, or at street level, using their contacts to access drugs for other known heroin or crack cocaine users. The 'nominated buyer' provides a sourcing and collection service, and is therefore rewarded for their contacts, their ability to access desired substances, and above all their risk:

I was someone who made it my business to know as many dealers as possible. So if people came to me and couldn't score, I would know someone

who would always have something. So I would do a lot of middlemanning, so people would come to me and say 'I can't get nothing, can you help me?' and I'd say 'yeah, alright, just give me a sorter' and I'd earn my bit that way... I'd say, 'have you got a car? Ok, well drive over this way and I'll give someone a phone call and then hang on here a minute and I'll go and sort it out'...waiting on street corners for half an hour putting myself at risk from the police...its mad.

*Baz (50), crack and heroin user*

Conceptualised elsewhere as 'middlemanning' (see Small et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2000; Caulkins et al., 1998), 'nominated buyers' occupied an important role, purchasing on behalf of ill connected users (Johnson et al., 2000), or on behalf of an acquaintance group. Both 'street level' and 'social nominated buyers' described being given a proportion of the drug as recompense for purchasing on behalf of the group or drug user. The amount of substance obtained by the 'nominated buyer' was said to be dependent on the quantity the buyer acquired and the attendant risks involved. One respondent, who purchased an 'eighth' (3.5g) of heroin provided an example of her expected payment as a £10 bag (about 0.2 grams), this would increase to three £10 bags if she sourced a 'quarter' (7.0 grams). Many 'nominated buyers' described initial entry into this mode of supply as a situation where they were approached due to their association with good drug connections ('social nominated buyers'), or in an opportunistic way, for example, with a known user hoping that they be able to secure drugs on their behalf ('street level nominated buyers'). The data indicates that once these individuals had engaged in this practice for the first time, they were invariably requested to provide this service again, since they were now recognised as a point of access. In addition, once learning that this buying practice required little extra effort (since they needed to 'score' anyway), nominated buyers were inclined to agree to further requests from known sources, as well as other members of the heroin community.

## User-Dealer Themes

### Limited Distribution

All of the respondents interviewed indicated that they distributed drugs to a mixture of friends and acquaintances. Many respondents struggled to define their relationship with the receivers of their drugs, very often emphasising how drug receivers were 'known' in the sense that they were recognised as fellow heroin and crack users, but at the same time, were not really known in any personal capacity. There were a number of reasons for user-dealers adopting a relatively selective style of selling. Principally, the sale of crack and heroin to only 'known users' was described to be a response to the pro-active targeting of small scale user-dealers by various police operations in Plymouth:

It's always people who you know, I would *never* sell to people I didn't know, not in this day and age. It's unbelievable now, people are getting done for selling to the police but I've never...I've come out of that world, I would never – if I went into town and someone said, 'have you got anything on you' I'd never – I don't carry any drugs on me at all.

*Ian* (38), heroin user

I know there's a lot of people getting done for heroin and they're just getting set up by the old bill, and you wouldn't even recognise them, these undercover coppers, they're scruffy as whatever...I know loads of people have been busted. They're hitting all the vendors in town that sell the Big Issue, because they know they want to make their tenner so they can score heroin or whatever, so they're saying 'can you get me anything', it's crazy...and then before you know it, you're in front of the old bill, you're going to get 2-3 years first time, 3-7 next time, it just goes on really.

*Jed* (41), crack and heroin user

This experience or perceived threat of undercover police officers seems to contribute to what may be described as a 'climate of paranoia'. Here, visible and proactive law enforcement activity appeared to have a powerful effect on the community, ensuring that heroin and crack cocaine transactions occur in a 'closed' rather than 'open market'. As

May and Hough (2004) note, in this context, 'sellers and buyers will only do business together if they know and trust each other or a third party vouches for them' (p.550):

They'd be people that I'd know though they wouldn't be strangers. I wouldn't bother, if I didn't know they were users, I just wouldn't bother, because the risks are too high, someone you've never met before? No chance...unless you're stupid.

*Mick (48) heroin user*

Apart from fearing repercussions from law enforcement, many of the respondents displayed strong moral objections toward supplying drugs to non-users. Furthermore, in the same way that drug dealers have been suggested to be concerned about the quality of the drugs that they sell (see Coomber 1997, 2006, 2010), this research highlighted that worries regarding reputation featured strongly within the user-dealer sample. Respondents drew attention to their desire to be respected within their community, and selling to unknown or non-users was widely perceived as reckless, immoral and irresponsible. As a pragmatic response, user-dealers described vetting processes where they would assess potential customers for physical and social signs of drug use. Similarly to the findings of Coomber and Moyle (2012), it was also common for potential customers to be introduced to user-dealers by a trusted source, who would vouch for their authenticity as a fellow heroin or crack cocaine user. This data largely complimented wider research (see Johnson et al., 2000), which also describes a referral process (of sorts). Contrary to myths surrounding the unscrupulous selling practices of dealers (see Chapter Two), instead, supporting Fields and Walters (1985), informal supply rules observed by user-dealers appeared to contain distribution within this particular community, whilst also protecting non-using populations from exposure to drug offers.

## User-Dealer Supply as Preferential

### Accessibility and Control over Drug Use

The idea that user-dealer supply was conceived as the preferred way of funding an individual's drug habit was an exceptionally popular narrative within the data and was employed by *all* respondents. Supporting the findings of previous research (see De Beck et al., 2007; Jacobs, 1999; Johnson et al., 1995), the sample described drug supply as the one of the most prevalent means of generating an income to buy drugs. Despite a minority highlighting what they considered to be the 'high risk' nature of drug supply, the majority saw the distribution of drugs as an 'easy', 'obvious', and 'convenient' option. In line with the recent work of Small et al., (2013), respondents all commented on the attractiveness of always having drugs available. In this respect, drug supply symbolised an income generating activity that offered the apparent ability for them to control their habit, a feature that was not associated with acquisitive crimes. Involvement in shoplifting, sex work, grafting, burglary and begging, was in most cases side-lined for supply opportunities. Furthermore, theft, a common means of generating income (Debeck et al., 2007; Small et al., 2013; Degenhardt et al., 2005; Bennett and Holloway, 2009), was perceived by almost all respondents as less appealing than participating in supply, due to practical issues that came hand in hand with addiction:

You have got more control over your security than if you went and robbed someone...there are probably more guarantees as well, if you go out stealing then there's a lot of work involved, you've got to pass on what you sell or what you've sold and then the money from that will go....But as I say, if you're ill, that takes time and you've got a period of being ill before you can get things sorted, whereas if you're supplying you've got the drugs there so you can just go and pick them up, so you're well and can be supplying other people. That's probably the biggest aspect of control, controlling your addiction that was and controlling your well-being that way.

*Ed (52), ex-heroin user*

Significantly, such sentiments were echoed by the remainder of the sample, where there was consistent emphasis of the 'hard work' involved in shoplifting. Respondents highlighted the extra 'hassle' of selling on stolen goods, where the process would require them to take part in various meetings and transactions before they were able to obtain their drugs. In contrast, consistent with the findings of Small et al. (2013), accessing drugs through supply allowed respondents to avoid opiate withdrawal through being able to immediately obtain heroin, or by setting aside precautionary quantities. The idea of small-scale supply representing a more convenient option than theft also relates directly to an idea relayed by the majority of user-dealers, *that involvement in user-dealing at a low level does not change a user-dealer's routine*. For example, many user-dealers described how they would go out with the aim of purchasing drugs two or three times a day. Through their own participation in buying drugs as a drug user, user-dealers had already established a range of contacts and acquaintances. These individuals were described as providing a reliable and convenient customer base, many of whom the user-dealer would have already participated in group buys with or had some level of acquaintanceship. For the majority of respondents, small-scale user-dealing was therefore verbalised as doing 'just a bit more' than using. It was widely conceived as an extension of heroin or crack cocaine users' consumption, an activity implicit in heroin use, as well as an 'obvious way' of overcoming the lack of legitimate funds to fund a habit.

### **User-Dealing as Less Harmful and Risky**

As well as representing a more convenient means of funding a drugs habit, several respondents indicated avoiding acquisitive crimes and choosing drug supply, since they had a *moral objection* to committing crimes such as theft and robbery. When this theme arose in interviews, it was very often followed with a resolute narrative from the respondent, distancing themselves from stigmatising notions (see Yorke, 2010; Coomber and Simmonds, 2009) of what it meant to be a heroin or crack cocaine user. Several



respondents claimed that rather than engage in what they conceived to be immoral acts, such as theft and burglary, they were able to 'use within their means'. This largely entailed managing their addiction to the point where they would only utilise legitimate funds to fund their habit:

...A lot of people will just go and rob a house innit, know what I mean? But I didn't want to do that, you know? So when I worked I would pay for it myself and...I'm not that kind of person, I couldn't rob...I'm sort of like *a junkie with a conscience* but I dealt a little bit, I didn't want to get involved [in theft and robbery], because I've been around my girlfriends at Christmas and people have come around trying to sell stolen Christmas presents. To me that wasn't right, I shouldn't have been in this game really. People will do anything to get some gear, literally anything, and I couldn't...

*Harry* (48), ex-heroin user

Complementing the work of Decorte (2001), who describes rituals and rules as key determinants of the drug use self-regulation process, a few respondents described being able to control their drug use through implementing rules based around their moral boundaries. Whilst in the absence of legitimate opportunity, crime was widely conceived to be the *only way* to fund drug dependency, these rules appeared to function in order to protect against involvement in property crime. Here respondents verbalised avoiding acquisitive crimes (see Harry), reducing any other criminal activity they might be involved in (Small et al., 2013; May et al., 2005). It was widely suggested that drug supply was not considered to be 'real crime' and therefore, it was a preferable option. In this sense, contrary to media discourse portraying heroin and crack-cocaine users as 'dope fiends' (Lindesmith, 1941; Preble and Casey, 1969), stereotypical images of the drug addict (see Murji, 1998; Boyd, 2002; Taylor 2008; Speaker, 2002) were again challenged. While several respondents described having been involved in acquisitive crime to fund their habit, they highlighted their preference to try and avoid crimes to the person or property as much as possible, since for example, 'they didn't want to hurt anyone' (Frank 47, ex-heroin user). For the women interviewed, supporting recent literature, involvement in

drug supply also offered an opportunity to temporarily avoid or reduce their involvement in sex work, and thereby moderate their exposure to the risk of violence and abuse (see Small et al., 2013; Shannon et al., 2008).

For the majority of the sample, supporting the findings of May et al. (2005), supply was perceived as a less dangerous activity in terms of perceived risk of arrest. Certain individuals, however, admitted that supply wasn't for them, since they found drug distribution to be intimidating and stressful, due to the lengthy sentences associated with it and constant fear of being 'busted' by the police. Those who subscribed to this view point were overwhelmingly individuals who were involved in a different activity; they had worked directly for commercial dealers (see 'dealer's apprentice'). The respondents who engendered negative perceptions were therefore involved in supplying *larger* weights (e.g. 'quarters' and ounces), rather than supplying smaller amounts. For the vast majority however, shoplifting was an activity that carried much higher potential for arrest. Here respondents highlighted their perceived visibility to the police and security staff through their *physical appearance*, their homelessness or their status as 'known addicts', all of which increased their levels of anxiety:

It stops the stress levels, anxiety, it just...I'm not saying that it was perfect, selling and doing heroin, because there were times where you couldn't get heroin, or you had to travel to get heroin or things didn't work out as they were meant to. It wasn't a picture postcard, but I've been out robbing and it wasn't for me, I'd rather sit back...I've done it when, when needs must. I've been out and been dishonest, burgled, commercials, whatever, it all just increased my anxiety... but I think for me, how can I put it...then, it's like, fucking hell...you can quickly see how imprisoning it becomes...you're out, you're robbing, because what you're looking at is £20 bags, £10 bags, you're going to have to go back to the shop 15-20 times a day, because you're getting a hit and then you're out again, you're out again, you're out again...so you're just on the radar all the time...because again, it's a small area, people are on you, *how is that not going to affect your stress*, you know what I mean? How is that...you know, people calling you scum, because you're always in the public eye, you don't want to be, *you just have to be...*

*Aaron (37), heroin and crack cocaine user*

## Addiction and Desperation for Drugs

Although the data suggests that some modes of user-dealing are opportunistic in nature, users often described finding themselves 'sliding' into regular supply. Here, consistent with Simpson (2003), respondents' anxieties surrounding risk of arrest were often outweighed by the desire to buy more heroin or crack cocaine:

It's the sort of thing where its act first and ask questions later, you just do it and after a while you realise what you're doing. You think hang on a minute, bloody hell, if I get nicked for this, this is...woah...but it's too late, you're already doing it, because you've got an addictive nature, because that's your routine, when it gets bigger and bigger and you don't really realise it...then you think woah, hang on a minute I've just shifted all this gear and I'm thinking, what am I doing...slow down. But because you get so far into it, it's easier to carry on than to stop, plus there a load of people who are like 'what's happening?' You've clientele, who you know, want to know where you are so you've created a cycle and to stop that would be hassle, it's just hassle...so it's easier to carry on.

*Mikey (42), heroin and crack cocaine user*

Supporting the findings of Brookman et al. (2007), the data also highlighted dependent drug users' need for 'fast cash'. Consistent with Bennett and Holloway (2009), this sense of urgency associated with obtaining drugs, so resolutely articulated by user-dealers (particularly users of heroin), was suggested to be driven more by the desire to 'feel normal' than to get 'high'. A small number of participants (n=3), who used in a less problematic way, were able to control their habit so they would use within their means. However, the remainder of the sample described adopting supply as the sole means of gaining capital for drugs. Here, respondents related the sheer urgency inherent in obtaining the next 'fix', whilst also describing their lifestyle as commensurate with 'living for the drug'. The style of these narratives supports the work of Nettleton et al. (2011), who describe the 'using body' as a 'seized' one, that through addiction becomes relatively 'repetitive, routinised and relentless' (p.347). In this respect, the pursuit to

'score' drugs also represents a habitual action (ibid), described by participants as an 'automatic' reflexive routine that respondents were almost unaware of:

You don't think about it you just do it you know, because it's your habit you know, you've got to make enough money, because your giro turned up yesterday and you've spent it all and today you're rattling, and you're thinking well I've got to do something so you go along that road....

*Jules (34), heroin user*

However, in line with the work of Hart (2013) on rationality in addicted crack users, despite the urgency of obtaining drugs, there appeared to be some logic in the respondents' decision making in regard to how they funded their habit. Examples of this include respondents offering evidence of thought processes that evaluated the convenience, ease, risk and harm of participating in user-dealing. However, regardless of the degree of logic or control exhibited by respondents in relation to their income generating behaviour, there was also a strong recognition from respondents that addiction acted as a barrier against profitable forms of supply:

Not really, no. I wouldn't be able to [stock pile heroin], do you know what I mean? Because of my addictive nature, like I wouldn't be able to have gear there and not be able to touch it. The people that can do that, they're very clever...to have that will power, do you know what I mean? You can make a lot of money, if you're like the scousers innit...they stick to their weed and that and come down here and sell crack and gear, that's why they've all got nice motors and what not...

*Kelly (30), heroin user*

While it was suggested by respondents that there were some known 'user-dealers' who were able to use, sell and make some meaningful profit, these suppliers were widely acknowledged to be *recreational users* who were not dependent on the drug. Respondents were keen to emphasise that they saw addiction as the factor that separated them from 'real' suppliers. Whilst not condoning their activities, user-dealers

highlighted how addiction, the lack of legitimate options available to them and the non-predatory nature of their distribution, provided some form of mitigation for their actions.

## Applying a Theoretical Framework to User-Dealing: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

For respondents addicted to drugs and who are without the legitimate means to acquire them, Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' (1990) provides a theoretical lens through which we are able to move towards understanding this distinct supply behaviour. An appropriate theoretical position for user-dealing requires a framework that appreciates drug supply as a 'natural' or 'obvious' response to the user-dealer's social circumstances. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' has been taken to represent a useful way of conceptualising user-dealer activity, because it describes how structures become internalised in the form of lasting *dispositions* and propensities to think (Navarro, 2006). It also goes some way in explicating how constant exposure to an environment in which crime is normal, results in the formulation of aspirations that are compatible with that sense of normalcy (Allen, 2005). Most significantly however, the theoretical application of Bourdieu (1990) goes some way in aiding our understanding of the interplay of internalised structures and possible courses of action, for addicted users *without* the economic capital to support their drug dependency. The mutual dependency of habitus and capital also portray how there are *limited courses of action available to the problem drug user*. In this respect, the theoretical gaze also supports the notion of constrained options for these actors, as well as the subsequent tendency for this to shape practice.

### 'Like Making a Cup of Tea': Habitus and Behaving 'Naturally'

A key theme to emerge from the user-dealer sample was a sense that small-scale user-dealer supply (e.g. 'nominated buying' and some 'opportunistic' selling) represented a 'natural', 'obvious' and 'normal' response for drug dependent users who could not

legitimately fund their habits. In some respects (at a micro-level) it may be possible to apply aspects of the normalisation thesis (Parker et al., 1998) to this theme in the same way as it has been applied to social supply. This is because, arguably, user-dealing has moved from the peripheries to the mainstream of heroin and crack users income generating activities (Debeck et al., 2007; Parker et al., 1998; Aldridge et al., 2011). However, at a wider level, this theory cannot adequately be utilised to understand these themes. This is because normalisation encompasses broader notions of cultural accommodation, and is largely incompatible with subcultural practices associated with heroin and crack addicts (see Harding and Zinberg, 1977). In contrast, Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus can offer some understanding of how user-dealers 'naturalise their daily conduct with situations as a result of particular social influences and interactions' (Parkin and Coomber, 2010:635). This link between the social structure and practice (Mouzelis, 2007) is related to the idea that external 'schemes' are 'deposited' within individual bodies to take the form of 'mental and corporal schemata' (Wacquant, 1992:16) of 'perception, thought, and action' (Bourdieu, 1990 [1980]:54) Therefore, schemes that form cognitive and motivating structures are socially constituted within the body (Bourdieu, 1977:76), and more specifically, in 'the heads' of actors (Jenkins, 1992:75), providing 'know-how and competence' (Swartz, 2002:625). This theoretical positioning can be reasonably applied to '*Phil*', who describes the process of becoming involved in crime to fund his heroin dependency. Although *Phil* initially describes participation in acquisitive crime as an inconceivable action, after becoming established within a community where acquisitive crime was routinely enlisted as a means of funding drug dependency, it soon became internalised as a feasible option that was entered into with little reflection:

When I was 22-23 I moved to Devonport. I remember seeing all the other boys and girls going out shoplifting every day and I'd think fuck me having to do that every day...know what I mean? And before I knew it, I was doing it without even realising. The times I went out shoplifting...I was always

expecting to get caught, but later *I didn't care if I got caught*, I'd just fill my bag, do you know what I mean? And I've been in and out of prison 7 or 8 times now, so it catches up with you in the end.

*Phil* (46), heroin user.

Although the characteristics of the habitus - that of practical sense or 'feel for the game' - are largely taken for granted, agents are, however, understood to have 'an intimate understanding of the object of the game and the kinds of situations it can throw up' (King, 2000:419). Examples of this 'matter of a fact' approach are provided below:

Initially it felt risky, but then when I knew who I was selling to, it was just an everyday thing really, it was just routine, it was just everyday life. As normal as having a cup of tea, just another item on the agenda of your daily routine I suppose

*Ryan* (34), heroin and crack user

I didn't really care that much, I was just, it was just my way of life...it's like people who shoplift, it becomes normal, like going to prison and stuff...it's just what you do...you can get used to anything innit? I mean people lie on their backs all day and it becomes normal to them, as horrendous as that might sound...

*Helen* (29) ex-heroin user

The practical sense associated with the habitus can be understood as the structure that allows actors to respond to social conditions in a reasonable way, providing a sense of which actions are appropriate, (and those which are not), in a given circumstance (Thompson, 1991:13). Through utilising Bourdieu's theory, the data obtained from '*Ryan*' and '*Helen*' and the social actions that they describe, may therefore be understood as guided by this 'practical sense' or 'feel for the game' (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986:111). According to Bourdieu, for actors displaying a 'traditional' or non-reflexive habitus, operating in accordance with the habitus implies behaving 'naturally' and in an unselfconscious way (1990a:73). This notion could be argued to have considerable value in explicating how user-dealers in this study, consider their role in the supply of Class A drugs as 'normal' and 'routine'.

## The Group Habitus of User-Dealers

While the literature review offers justification for why user-dealing is often conceived as preferential to acquisitive crimes by user dealers, it is necessary to locate these ideas theoretically. Many of the theories explored in the literature review were considered a useful basis for understanding elements of user-dealing. However, Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' (1990) was deemed as most appropriate, since it encourages us to look for ways in which seemingly individual habits or activities have some element of 'collective dimension' (Swartz, 2002). In addition, it also provides a holistic theory of action, bridging the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism (Bourdieu, 1989:15). This is deemed as especially important as Bourdieu describes individuals as unconsciously *predisposed* to act out particular practices, but importantly, not as *determined* (Sweetman, 2003). While not everyone encounters the same experiences and events, and therefore, do not develop similar habitus, communities of dispositions (Richardson and Skott Myhre, 2012) or *group/collective* habitus (Sweetman, 2003) are likely to be found where individuals are found to have analogous backgrounds and values. Despite the fact that habitus is embodied within agents, it is also a collective and shared, social phenomenon (see Bourdieu, 1990:54) and can be thought of as the 'collective individuated through embodiment' (Wacquant, 1992:18). Although pathways or trajectories into user-dealer supply are invariably very complex and cannot be generalised as such, the data suggests that in the context of this study, drug dependent users who become involved in user-dealing, are characterised by a number of common factors. Significantly, user-dealers appeared to be *more likely* to own a habitus in which they have *previous history of supply events*, characterised by adolescent experiences of social supply, or by later (irregular) opportunistic sales of recreational drugs. User-dealers also tended to have some sense of *familiarity with supply* as a response to



having illegitimate means of purchasing drugs, this resulting in them conceiving supply to be a logical, common sense response to their predicament:

I've always been quite resourceful so like because of my drug selling experience when I was younger, it was kind of my *default position* to make something out of nothing, so like...I'm not a particularly good thief, I don't want to sell myself, so it was my default position really, I'd grown up as a teenager learning quite fast how lucrative things could be so really like, *it just made sense*

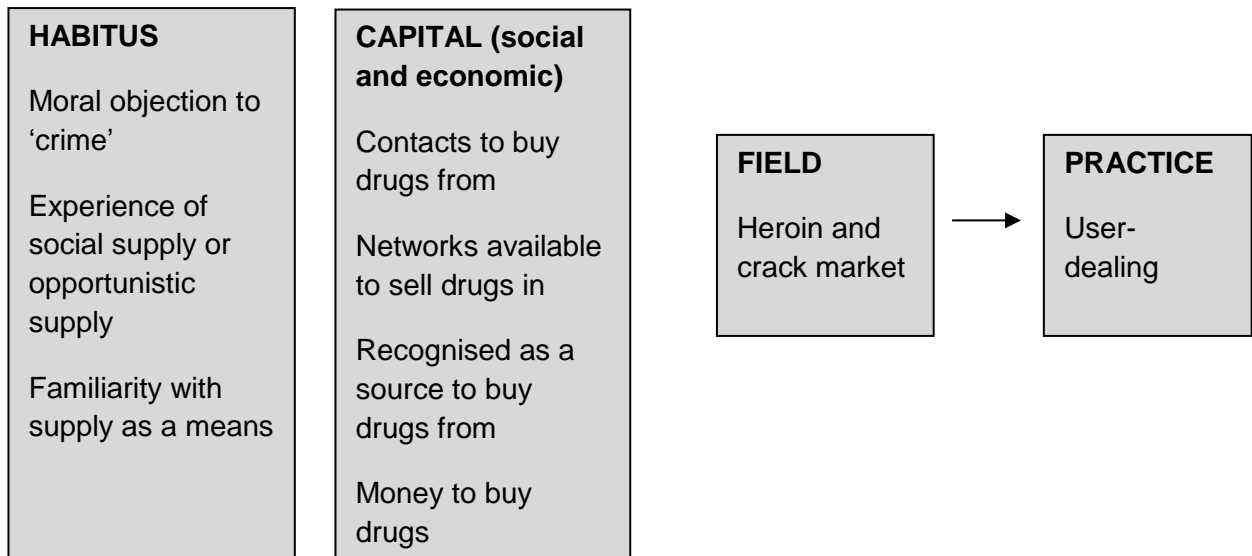
*Laura* (30), crack user

Supporting the findings of Dunlap et al., (2010), as is the case with *Laura*, respondents commonly articulated growing up in an environment where supply is considered a relatively normal part of life for a particular community, and a common way to fund addiction. User-dealers were also *increasingly likely to have experienced an upbringing, culturally or through their own personal experiences, which fashioned a moral objection to crime*. In line with Bourdieu (1990), '*Laura's*' narrative again highlights how the habitus, whilst internalising the social structure, can in part limit what is and what is not possible for one's life (Mouzelis, 2007), subsequently shaping this group's practice (Dumais, 2002). Since Bourdieu does not see human action emanating from habitus (dispositions) alone (Swartz, 2002), the ultimate course of action or practice undertaken by the individual is reliant on two remaining concepts: capital and field.

As discussed within the literature review, the field is the arena in which agents use the capital available to them in order to safeguard, or improve their position (Jenkins, 2003). In the case of drug dependent users, the social space in which action takes place would probably be best understood as the drugs economy, more specifically the heroin and crack cocaine market. Within this particular field, the 'players' are complicit in struggles and manoeuvres in order to access specific cultural goods (Dumais, 2002), in this case, (principally) heroin or crack. Drawing on Bourdieu (1990), the different types of capital

available to agents (see Chapter One), an individual's own distinctive habitus and the context of a particular field, all combine in what has been described as a complex intersection (Swartz, 2002), which explains the regularity of much human conduct, and the irregularity of some (p.665). Through examining the themes emerging from the field research, it appears that the action of the drug dependent user may vary according to their habitus *and* the type of capital which they were able to access. For the user-dealers interviewed, the type of capital harnessed in order to supply drugs, was found to be that of *economic* and *social capital*. The data indicates that social capital is incredibly important in allowing the user to operationalise the supply event. This is because it provides the means in which drugs are both acquired and distributed, with participation and access to supply networks instrumental in this endeavour. Findings also suggest that generally, if there is an initial lack of social or economic capital, or the subsequent loss of social capital, the supply event *cannot* be sustained, regardless of the habitus of that particular actor.

**[(Habitus) (Capital)] + Field = Practice**



**DOXA:** Sex work, 'grafting', theft, robbery, drugs running, begging, enforcement

**Figure 5: A Bourdieusian Framework of User-Dealing**

Figure 5 could be argued to present a fairly deterministic way of understanding of problem drug users' participation in user-dealing, due to an absence of rational calculation in regard to the actors at the centre of his theory (Sweetman, 2003). However, in the context of this research, the implicit nature of drug dependency and the lack of legitimate resources (capital) to fund the purchase of drugs, render the limiting and somewhat deterministic qualities of Bourdieu's theory as appropriate. While there may be opportunities for reflexive strategy (Mouzelis, 2007), in line with Bourdieu, this is only suggested as evident in exceptional circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990), where there is 'a lack of fit' between dispositions and positions (Mouzelis, 2007:1.3). It would not be unreasonable to suggest that for small-scale supply behaviours in particular (i.e. the 'nominated buyer' and the 'opportunist'), there appeared to be a close fit between the habitus and the field position, and therefore, user-dealing was undertaken in an unconscious, taken for granted fashion (Mouzelis, 2007). In this respect, crucially, there appears to be a 'relative *irreversibility* and a relative closure to the system of dispositions that constitute habitus' (my emphasis Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:133). Drawing on Bourdieu's theory, this suggests that for addicted drug users who have no legitimate means of supporting their habit, and for whom other criminal acts are less of an option, participation in user-dealing may be considered a relatively automatic or instinctive response to their social context. This represents a finding that may have particular significance when considering the culpability of this group.

### **'Using' the Profit**

Arguably, one of the most important themes to emerge through thematic analysis of this data, was the propensity - regardless of profit levels - for user-dealers to fail to achieve a consistent discernible increase in living standard. This was a finding that was highly associated with their inability to use this currency on little else than their drug of addiction, and what were considered as basic human needs. The findings present evidence of

profits spanning from a 'free hit', 'smoke', or up to £700 cash a day, depending on the mode of supply. Further analysis suggests that for the average user-dealer (for example 'the nominated buyer' or the 'opportunist'), the individual would be selling around an eighth (3.5g) of heroin (mode), although members of these groups cited selling up to a quarter (7g). Themes relating to profit for these small-scale user-dealers supported wider literature (May et al., 2005; Stewart, 1987), highlighting that sellers would retain as much of their drug as possible, and keep a nominal sum of capital. The amount of money kept by the supplier was indicated as ranging from £50-£100 a week. However, it is probably best qualitatively understood as representing the sum that would cover the cost of electricity, heating and other commodities required for what were considered as basic living costs. Consistent with the findings of May et al., (2005), this research indicates that all respondents spent the majority of their earnings on personal drug use:

Out of an eighth I'd probably get half a tenth, sometimes a tenth, I'd always make sure I'd have some cash to put petrol in the car or get some beers or something, so I'd probably get £60, £70...£80 [per week] something like that, and the rest I'd spend it myself, so I'd get £50, £60 and a tenth to use myself.

*Steve* (36), heroin user

I'd spend all my money on, all of it on drugs, I'd just have enough for electric and a little bit of food that was it, *as long as I got my drugs, I couldn't give a fuck about anything else.*

*Nicky* (44), heroin and crack user

Interestingly, another key theme to emerge in the data was that the difference in 'profit' earned between those who sold an eighth (3.5g) or those who sold an ounce of heroin was suggested to be marginal. The key point being, that in most cases, *regardless of the quantity of the drug sold by the user-dealer*, the sheer strength of a habit served to ensure that the only divergence between these sellers is the amount of heroin they consume and in rare cases, their ability to also be able to buy alcohol, cigarettes and certain commodities, such as TV's or DVD players:

I'd say I broke even really, I was sometimes making quite a bit of money but I'm on my ass again now so...as soon as it comes in on one hand, it's gone out again...I bought clothes and things like that, just basic things for healthy living really. But saying that, if I did have any extra profit after that, it would go towards drugs, everything I had went towards drugs.

*Jimmy (52), amphetamine user*

Could be an ounce of smack a day...I've gotta be looking at an ounce you know...and I'd be looking at 15-30 people. With gear that would probably be about £850, so I'd probably be looking at making 6, £700, that's what I'd want to be looking at. If I was to have it in pound notes, it's nearly double, once you get up to an ounce of gear, you can literally double your money, so if you're paying £800, you should be able to make 16...and yeah I got that laid on, but again, I didn't start by saying can I have an ounce, I built the trust up...So yeah that 6, £700, that *purely* would have gone on my habit...I own nothing, know what I mean? *I own nothing*. I might have a few quid in my wallet to go to the pub to get a few pints, but do you know what I mean, *it was literally just funding my habit, that's all it was doing...*

*Darren (51), heroin user*

As the data illustrates, the potential profits available to heroin and crack cocaine sellers are considerable, with sellers widely noting the ability to 'double your money'. For the respondents, the inevitable loss of any possessions gained through supply was an aspect of the narrative that was especially stressed. In this respect, respondents were reluctant to elaborate on their own experience of occasions where commodities could be purchased as well as their drugs. This appeared to be because they saw it as being insignificant in the wider context of their situation. Data does, however, suggest the *potential* for user-dealers to regulate their use, providing the opportunity to use drugs *and* have some disposable income to spend on things other than basic living expenses. In this respect, it is not certain that user-dealers will always be found to be characterised by a lack of material gain. However, findings here strongly indicate that supply was always undertaken with the intent to fund a habit. Due to the inelastic demand associated with addiction, after investing their profit back into heroin and crack cocaine, respondents reported only keeping small amounts of money because drugs were their priority. The cash that was not reinvested in drugs tended not to represent disposal income, since it

was regularly spent on necessities and basic living expenses. If disposal income was secured, this was not a consistent or stable condition, and in this respect, financial gain cannot be conceived as meaningful in the same way it can in non-addicted commercial drug dealing populations.

## Chapter Conclusion

Analysis of the user-dealer interviews has provided valuable insight, which both substantiates existing themes and provides original contributions to the knowledge base regarding the behaviour of this group. While other research has provided considerations of the different ways individuals can both use and deal, this analysis provides an inclusive typology of the various roles user-dealers are suggested to occupy. This data suggests that user-dealing can encompass small-scale 'nominated buying' practices and opportunistic supply events, *but also* includes the sale of larger quantities of substance on behalf of a commercial dealer. Regardless of the scale and quantity of the drugs supplied, the data suggests profit is almost always 'consumed' by the user-dealer and in this sense, irrespective of the potential rewards available, if the user-dealer is physically dependent on the drug he or she sells, tangible financial profit (and improvement in lifestyle) is highly unlikely. The data also provided evidence to suggest that myths surrounding unscrupulous selling practices (Coomber, 2006) are tenuous, as user-dealers are highly suspicious and often morally opposed to selling to strangers in a predatory fashion. User-dealing was suggested to be conceived as a more convenient, less risky and easier way of funding a habit. Respondents strongly conveyed a desire to avoid acquisitive crime and described user-dealing as an activity that was conceived as an extension of their own use and easily incorporated into the drug user lifestyle. Significantly, respondents saw supply as a less harmful option than engaging in theft, robbery and sex work. The findings indicate that the user-dealer was therefore committing less of, or committing no other crimes commonly attributed to those

dependent on heroin/crack in pursuance of securing funds for their next 'hit'. The data analysis also presents a setting for applying Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' (1990) to user-dealing. Here the concepts of habitus, field and capital provide valuable explanatory power in exploring how the context of the field, the style of the habitus and levels of capital combine in rendering user-dealing as a relatively automatic and instinctive practice. Ultimately, findings suggest that user-dealing does not conform to the same harms or intent as conventional commercial dealing, and in this respect, user-dealers in this study are suggested to be less culpable than drug dealers (proper).

## Chapter Seven: Discussion

This chapter shall outline the key findings from the social supply and user-dealer analysis. There will be a focus on entry into social supply, with particular examination of the university as a site of transition to more evolved participation in distribution. Exploring fundamental aspects of these supply behaviours, the discussion will outline the various roles and motivations that characterise social supply and user-dealing. In order to examine the widespread nature of low-level 'nominated buying' practices and the increasing prevalence of more risky social supply styles (e.g. party buying), the discussion analyses the value of the concept of normalisation (Parker et al., 1998). Furthermore, there will be some exploration of the social context of user-dealers, utilising Bourdieu (1990) as a means of understanding the drug supply action. Here, attention is paid to how access to resources, limited possibilities for action and an individual's social history arguably lead to participation in user-dealing. The associated motivations and the harms associated with social supply and user-dealing are directly contrasted with conventional understandings of drug supply outlined in Chapter Two and Three. Significantly, drawing on these findings, this discussion delivers definitions of social supply and user-dealing through presenting 'ideal types' of social supplier and user-dealer. This chapter will also provide some space for considering the appropriateness of the new *Drug Offences Definitive Guideline* (2012). This is undertaken through evaluating to what extent the new guidelines sufficiently understand the scope of these behaviours and cater for social suppliers and user-dealers in a proportionate way.

### Journeys into Social Supply: The University as a Micro-Site of Transition

Complementing the literature base, which describes social supply as emerging in adolescence and through cannabis exchange and transactions (Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Hough et al., 2003), the findings indicate that social suppliers first engaged in a



supply role at a school age (mode 15 years old). Interestingly, reports of first experiences of social supply were dominated by 'designated buying' roles, where an individual would buy on behalf of their social group. These transactions were so embedded in adolescent cultures of exchange that they appeared to become a seemingly normalised act, to the point that these first social supply acts were not even considered to be supply. These initial social supply events were found to be isolated, irregular and in line with previous research (Hough et al., 2003; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007), largely confined to cannabis. A key finding, as yet notably absent from the literature base, relates to the university setting as a key context, or *specific risk environment* for social supply activity. For a large proportion of the sample (both 'Student' and 'Somerset Sample'), after quite often inadvertently becoming involved in initial social supply experiences at a school age, the university campus presented the perfect environment for transitions into more frequent social supply behaviours. Here, similarly to the findings of Mohamed and Fritzvold, (2011), data highlighted the way in which the university effectively protected respondents from the threat of law enforcement, whilst providing a captive audience and a supply arena where for many, there was little need for contact with the wider drugs market (Coomber and Turnbull, 2007).

These findings also provide insight into the lived experience of transition into social supply, with respondents relating the interconnectedness of the student population, the like-mindedness of their peers, and the liberty of independent living; all of which proved to be conducive to the operationalisation of social supply transactions. In a novel environment, where students had limited contacts or established supply avenues to gain drugs, supply through friends and other known users was regarded as a practical and safe way of acquiring substances. The highly social and interconnected student network enabled connections in which social suppliers could buy larger quantities of drugs, which would allow them to 'sort out' friends and acquaintances as well as themselves. The data

highlighted that transitions into more involved social supply in the university environment were most apparent and likely for those respondents who *had previous experience of drug experimentation* at school and college age. The data also portrayed the extent to which these social suppliers broadened their drug use repertoires within the university context (Measham and Moore, 2009). Therefore, since social supply was always found to be supply of a substance that the supplier used, this also appeared to translate into the scope of substances that they would later supply, in a more evolved fashion.

## Exploring the Nature of Social Supply and User-Dealing

### The Normalisation of Social Supply

While a general process towards the normalisation of drug *use* (Aldridge et al., 2011; Measham & Shiner, 2009) has become tentatively accepted in academic circles, and widely expounded in media outlets (Taylor and Potter, 2013), it has not, thus far, been widely theoretically extended to involvement in drug *supply* or drug markets. This research provided data that supports Parker et al., (1998), and latterly South (2004) and Coomber's (2004) conviction that the normalisation of drug use is also conducive to a relative normalisation of drug supply. Theoretically, my analysis suggests social supply practices can be usefully conceived as 'normalised' (Parker et al., 1998). The reason for this being that drug supply was regularly considered an extension of their use, a practice that goes 'hand in hand' with frequent drug consumption and furthermore, an activity that must be engaged in, (at least periodically), in order to make recreational use possible for the social group. The relative normalisation of social supply practices became apparent due to the fact that all social supply roles (apart from the 'entrepreneur') were commonly perceived as activities respondents routinely 'drifted' into (Matza, 1964). Supporting the work of Murphy et al. (1990) and contrary to Weber (1971) and later theories of rational social action (see Clarke and Cornish, 2001), respondents did not report consciously choosing to become involved in social supply activity. Instead, consistent with the work of

Jacinto et al., (2008), they drifted into supply by virtue of finding practical solutions in order to enable their own drug use. Importantly, in line with Murphy et al., (1990), respondents could therefore be widely understood as taking 'short steps down a familiar path' rather than a 'long leap down an unknown road' (p.325). Given that *all* social suppliers had widely participated in sharing and gift giving behaviours, this again indicates that the disjunct between use and supply is less distinct or observable. Significantly, the idea that the data suggests users are easily able to slip into drug supply and routinely involved in small-scale social supply practices indicates a certain *culture of normalisation* (South, 1999). Here social suppliers can be conceived as blurring boundaries between conventionality and criminality and actively managing their drug use (and supply) in the context of an otherwise largely licit lifestyle (South, 2004). This research, consistent with the findings of Taylor and Potter (2013), also indicates that supply behaviours considered more serious, such as buying in large quantities, are becoming increasingly prevalent.

While a generalised culture of normalisation is tangible through the involvement of users in sharing, gift giving and small scale 'designated buying' practices, the findings also portray increasing involvement by otherwise non-deviant, regular recreational users in 'party buying' and 'entrepreneur' activity. While these particular (higher level) social supply roles do not symbolise normalised supply practices per se, the propensity *for recreational users* to become involved could also be suggestive or indicative of a relative micro-normalisation of more 'involved' levels of social supply *but in the context of recreational drug subcultures* (see Duff, 2003, 2005; Holt, 2005). This again adds more evidence to support the value of normalisation as a conceptual tool to understand the prevalence of social supply. In policy terms, the relative 'normalisation' of drug supply as well as drug use (Parker et al., 1998; Parker, 2000; Aldridge et al., 2011) suggested in this research points towards a blurring of the boundaries between the roles of user and

supplier (Potter, 2009). Arguably, this finding has much consequence both for the way we conceive drug supply and also, how we deal with it in policy and sentencing (Coomber, 2004).

### **The Social Context of User-Dealers**

This research has presented some interesting findings in regard to the social contexts of addicted user-dealers, an area that is often insufficiently addressed in research focussing on drug dealers and drug markets. In order to understand the actions of agents, it is not only important to understand the position of the agent in the social space, but also, how they 'got there' and from what 'original point' they did so (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:136). Drawing on Bourdieu (1990) for a theoretical framework, has provided a means to deconstruct user-dealing as a practice. This has enabled a focus on class, social position, and personal history (habitus), whilst also considering actors' access to economic and social resources (capital). Consistent with the findings of Dunlap et al., (2010), respondents frequently articulated growing up in an environment where supply was considered a relatively normal part of life, and a standard means of funding addiction (in the absence of legitimate opportunity). In this sense, following Bourdieu (1990), user-dealers were argued to possess a group habitus. Here members of the same class are suggested to have confronted 'situations most frequent for members of that class' (Bourdieu, 1990:60). In this respect, user-dealers will have experiences more similar than with members of other classes and therefore, a similar habitus.

The 'practical sense' associated with the habitus can also be appreciated as a structure that allows actors to respond to social conditions in a reasonable way, by providing a sense of which actions are appropriate (and those which are not) in a given circumstance (Thompson, 1991:13). Therefore, a Bourdieusian framework offers a means of understanding respondents' consistent proposition of user-dealing as 'normative' and

'obvious' solution to the situation of being dependent on drugs, but not having the financial capital to purchase them. More generally, the findings suggest that the action of the drug dependent user may vary according to their habitus *and* the type of capital they were able to draw on. For the user-dealers interviewed, the type of capital harnessed in order to supply drugs that will support their addiction, was found to be that of *economic* and *social capital*. This data suggests that social capital is of great importance in allowing the user to operationalise the supply event. This is because social capital provides the means for drugs to be both acquired and distributed, with participation and access to supply networks and acquaintances instrumental in this endeavour. Significantly, application of Bourdieu's (1990) theory to these research findings suggests that for addicted drug users who have no legitimate means of supporting their habit and for whom other criminal acts are less of attractive option, *participation in user-dealing may be considered a relatively automatic or instinctive response to their social context*. This represents a finding that has particular significance when considering the culpability of this group in sentencing.

### **Roles Undertaken by Social Suppliers and User-Dealers**

Previous research has both overtly (Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Duffy et al., 2008; Murphy et al., 1990; Small et al., 2013; DeBeck et al., 2007) and inadvertently (Blum et al., 1972; Dorn and South, 1990; Dorn et al., 1992;) deciphered different roles that social suppliers and user-dealers occupy. Supporting the notion that drug selling is not a 'homogenous job classification' (Caulkins et al., 1998:14), this data has aimed to provide a framework for exhibiting the differing styles of social supply and user-dealing behaviours. Consistent with this, thematic analysis enabled the production of new typologies (for example 'party buyers', 'entrepreneurs', 'opportunity sellers'), as well as developing roles that have been identified in previous research such as 'brokers' (Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Duffy et al., 2008; Police Foundation, 2000) and 'stash

user-suppliers' (Murphy et al., 1990; Lenton and Davidson, 1999). In this research context, 'stash user-suppliers' were typically drug users who would buy large quantities of cannabis, cocaine or MDMA as a more cost effective way of participating in regular recreational use. This group would distribute excess amounts of their substance to friends and acquaintances for free, for favours and for cash but they were not profit motivated and instead, supply was found to be secondary to gaining an economically advantageous deal on their drugs. Supporting previous research (Police Foundation, 2000, Hough et al., 2003; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007) broker or 'go-between' activity was found to be evident throughout the data analysis and its prevalence was seemingly so widespread for both social supplier and user-dealers, it was developed and extended into a typology of 'the designated buyer' (social suppliers) and the nominated buyer (user-dealer). Traditional conceptualisations focus on this supply act simply as facilitation, or helping others to access drugs (Duffy et al., 2008). Moreover, this act has previously been conceptualised mostly in relation to cannabis transactions (see Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Hough et al., 2003) and is not generally explored in relation to other psychoactive drugs. Along with this, in contrast to previous studies, this research has produced data suggesting that social suppliers – even those in 'designated buyer' roles - often receive some element of gain as a symbol of recompense for their effort and risk. This gain may encompass a free proportion of the buy, a trade of another substance (e.g. alcohol) or a minimal financial 'bonus' (known widely as a 'hassle' tax). In a similar way, heroin and crack cocaine user-dealers often take an intermediary role, where they are appointed, or self-appointed, to buy either at 'street level' or on behalf of the social group. The 'nominated buyer' provides access for their social group, or for another known user who may be unable to access drugs themselves, and who will provide a 'cut' of their own drugs as means of payment for their efforts. Participation in this transaction was found to always be predicated on the acquisition of a quantity of those drugs, in order to satisfy their addiction.

## Blurring the Boundaries? Higher Level Supply Roles

In contrast to traditional conceptualisation of social supply, data from social supply and user-dealer samples provided evidence of supply forms which appear to be noticeably less small-scale in type than previous descriptors. Again, breaking from the traditional social supply literature, which has principally described small-scale transactions, this research has highlighted the increasing prevalence of individuals undertaking 'party buyer' roles. The data illustrated the common requirement for drug users to make bigger buys of Class A and B substances such as ecstasy, cocaine, mephedrone and MDMA on behalf of the group, for 'club nights' or festivals. While 'party buying' was by no means an activity engaged in regularly, it represented an activity that regular drug users - particularly those whose use was strongly centred on group activity - felt that they must take part in. Again, complimenting the work of Dorn and South (1990), the reciprocal nature of this sentiment has strong parallels with 'mutual societies', where supply signified an action that was perceived as helping to foster further group drug use. Findings indicate that 'party buyers' were found only to be taking a proportionately small 'hassle tax', or proportion of the drugs supplied, for embarking in a large buy for a sizeable group of friends and acquaintances. However, it is clear that in policy and legal terms, given the quantities the research suggests they may be in possession of (for example: 200 pills, 10 grams of cocaine), this group would undoubtedly be treated by the police and courts, as a commercially motivated drug dealer.

The 'entrepreneur' typology, describing individuals that periodically take advantage of an opportunity to distribute a large quantity of substance, demonstrates perfectly how far the boundaries can be blurred between social supply and drug dealing proper. Although these sellers were still known to be distributing to friends and largely non-strangers, and they may not be distributing significantly more in quantity than the 'party buyer', the

primary motivation for participation was to gain profit. However, the data highlighted that for 'entrepreneurs', like 'party buyers', supply represented an act that was only *sporadically* undertaken, with these respondents suggesting they had participated only once or twice in the history of their supply careers. If we were to take on the recommendations of the Police Foundation (2000) - who suggested that drug dealing proper should be both understood and charged as a continuing offence where the defendant has been dealing over a period of time - it could well be argued that on this basis, 'entrepreneurs' should be omitted. Nevertheless, with the absence of further research in this area and without a more focussed look at the activities of this group, at present this remains a grey area that requires more research attention.

In a similar manner, the data has also provided sufficient indication that user-dealer supply roles such as 'the dealer's apprentice' and 'the opportunist' are typologies in which the supplier may be in possession of large quantities of substance (user-dealers cited having up to an ounce of heroin or crack cocaine in their possession). However, like the 'party buyer', both these modes of distribution could be conceived as non-commercial, since the motivation for these roles arguably, are not profit orientated ones. Instead, in the context of this research, findings have suggested categorically (in the absence of legitimate opportunity), that the primary motivation is to obtain the drug to which the actor is addicted. Similarly to studies that have noted user-dealers selling on 'consignment' (Fields and Walters, 1985) or 'freelancing' (Small et al., 2013), the 'dealer's apprentice' signifies a typology where the user-dealer holds a large quantity of heroin and/or crack cocaine. However, significantly, the data has suggested that the user-dealer has no ownership of the drugs they possess, and instead, they are ultimately controlled by their dealer, who has purchased the drugs in the first instance, and whose debt they remain in until they pay back the value of the drug 'weight'. In this respect, the findings relate that there exist user-dealers who could outwardly be considered to occupy a commercial



dealing role. However, in contrast to this image, the 'dealer's apprentice' is working in a minor but visible supply role, on behalf of commercially motivated dealers. Supporting the suggestions of the IDPC (2011), this again reiterates the common discourse that all street dealers are assumed to be in leading roles, when actually many will act as subordinates, under coercion, *and not for financial gain* (my emphasis, Harris, 2011a).

## Comparing Social Supply and User-Dealing to Drug Dealing (Proper)

### Harms Relating to Distribution Styles

This research illustrates that the scope of social supply and user-dealer supply behaviours are perhaps much wider than have been previously found in the existing literature, with the reality of these practices broader in range than may typically be expected. However, while wider in scope, by comparing these findings to legal and academic understandings of the main associated harms of drug supply – for example, commercial profit making, large/stock holding quantities and wide distribution of the drug, wider criminal involvement and supply over time for gain (Ashworth, 2010; New Zealand Law Commission, 2011; Police Foundation, 2000; Sentencing Council, 2012; Moyle et al., 2013) - this research suggests that the motivations and harms implicit in social supply and user-dealing activities are still *considerably different and lesser in scale* than drug dealing (proper). In the UK, social supply has always been strongly associated with sharing and distribution to friends (Hough et al., 2003; Duffy et al., 2008; RSA, 2007), a description which arguably invokes an idealistic expectation of a relatively small-scale operation.

Although social supply was found not to be strictly limited to friends - and in any case notions of friendship could be ambiguous - it was still found to be *principally* undertaken with long-term 'good' friends. When social supply was undertaken for more distant social

contacts, these contacts were mostly described as members of a larger recreational drug using group and therefore typically, these individuals did not represent vulnerable non-using populations. Furthermore, substances were normatively pre-ordered and therefore effectively, the drugs already had some level of ownership. In this respect, when supply was extended to wider networks, it was not undertaken indiscriminately. This is an important finding, since indiscriminate distribution is a supply feature that the law is found to be particularly concerned with (see Sentencing Council, 2012; Ashworth, 2010; Moyle et al., 2013). The traditional conceptualisation of social supply is at odds not only with the style of social supply, but with the quantities of substances distributed by these actors. Findings highlighted that the quantities associated with social supply activity could not always be measured as 'small' amounts, as has been conventionally assumed (see Moyle et al., 2013). This research has drawn attention to the routine supply of larger quantities of psychoactive drugs to friends and acquaintances ('party buying') for events such as festivals and 'club nights'. It should be noted however, that larger purchased quantities do not necessarily equate to a higher level of culpability, as much as a commercial dealer found with a small quantity of drugs, but evidence of involvement in a larger scale of operation, corresponds to a low level of culpability (Coomber and Moyle, 2012; Moyle et al., 2013; Harris, 2011b). Another aspect of harm that has been associated with social supply, relates to the idea that social supply supports commercial suppliers, since social suppliers may well purchase their drugs from them and in this sense, social supply is not unconnected from the wider drugs market (Potter, 2009). While this 'boundary fudging' idea (see Potter 2009:65) is noted, it has been suggested as consequentialist to conceive supply in this way (Ashworth, 2010). The reason for this is because the approach outlined, arguably disregards notions of proportionality, by placing unnecessary weight on secondary factors, rather than the immediate harm of that particular offence.

## Social Supply Motivations

The research findings have been suggestive of the idea that social supply and user-dealing are characterised by an incompatibility with the main harms associated with drug supply. In a similar way, this research provides evidence to suggest that unlike commercial dealing, where supply is engaged with solely for profit (Akhtar and South, 2000; Dorn and South, 1990; Dorn et al., 1992; Police Foundation, 2000), financial gain is not necessarily the primary intention or motivation behind involvement in the social supply or user-dealing act. Instead, for social suppliers, supply is employed instrumentally, either as a means of reducing recreational drug costs, a strategy for minimising risk (Measham et al., 2001), or a way of optimising convenience and fulfilling reciprocal responsibilities to buy on behalf of the group (Murphy et al., 1990). In this respect, supply becomes something that for many, is inseparable from use. Examples of social supply becoming 'entangled' in the recreational drug repertoires of drug users, ranged from cannabis users routinely buying large quantities in attempt to get better deals and subsidise their use, to psychoactive substance users who periodically took their turn in buying on behalf of their social group. Consistent with Measham et al. (2001), social supply was also conceived as a *risk reduction* strategy. Here, respondents articulated the attraction of having some sense of knowledge and control regarding the quality and safety of their substance. It also allowed the social supplier to effectively *regulate individual use* through keeping drug use as a group activity where buying and use was shared. In this sense, drug use was perceived to be purely social, recreational, and therefore controlled (and therefore less problematic).

The data showed *high recreational drug use or a costly habit* to be a key push factor into finding strategies in order to purchase substances in a more economically efficient way. Respondents reported learning very quickly of the financial benefit of buying in bulk and

distributing excess quantities on to friends and acquaintances. The self-disclosed motivations presented by social suppliers commonly related to *economies of scale* or *incentivised discount*. In this respect, supplying a substance was secondary to the principle incentive of buying more drugs for a cheaper price – conceived by respondents as an obvious economic principle. In a similar way, consistent with wider research (Lenton and Davidson, 1999; Aldridge et al., 2011; Murphy et al., 2004), getting *drugs for free* (a kind of profit) was cited as a key motivator for moving into social supply, enabling cannabis users and psychoactive drug users to engage in economically viable regular use.

### Friendship, Reciprocity and Social Supply

While social supply was found to be broader in reach than simple distribution to friends, it was nonetheless understood as being grounded in notions of obligation, expectation and symbolism. Reciprocity and obligation featured routinely through gift giving and sharing practices, all of which were found to be widespread among the social suppliers. Here, respondents commonly compared the need to ‘return the favour’ through drug shares and ‘gift giving’, to ‘buying a friend a drink’. It should also be noted that these findings have complimented previous research (see Blum et al., 1972; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Hammersley, 2001) by highlighting that social supply (particularly that of cannabis) can be conceived as an activity that may be situated amongst other identity building practices. This theme was found to be particularly resonant in contexts such as the university environment. Here, the sharing of drugs and gift giving practices conceived in law as ‘supply’ (Section 4, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971), can be compared to ‘borderwork’, introducing opportunities for intimacy that are otherwise difficult to attain in individualistic neoliberal society (Foster and Spencer, 2013). The findings also highlight how problematic conceptualising these activities in the same category as drug dealing (proper), affirming the ideas of other researchers (Foster and Spencer, 2013; Duff et al.,

2007; Moore, 1990, 1992), who recognise the difficulties of extricating drug use from friendship (Foster and Spencer, 2013) and argue that drug policy must be sensitive to the social and cultural contexts of drug use.

Reciprocity also proved to be a key theme and push factor in supply, with respondents reflecting on the importance of helping out friends, both in a university context and beyond. Narrative surrounding reciprocity was found to have many similarities to the work of Dorn and South (1990) (see also Dorn et al., 1992) in regard to ‘mutual societies’, where everyone is expected to help out, ‘*supporting each other in a variety of ways including co-operating to ensure the supply of drugs*’ (my emphasis, Dorn et al., 1992:10). The research highlighted respondents attributing comparable importance in respect to ‘taking your turn’ in providing drugs for the group. Functionally, the ability to supply for friends seemed to strengthen friendships, indicating that individuals were prepared to gain access to drugs for one another, despite the illegality of the act and the potential risks (Parker et al., 1998; Parker, 2000; Measham et al., 2001). On the one hand, in certain contexts (for example the university) social supply (particularly of cannabis) was reported as undertaken in a casual way to a range of potential drug receivers. However, on the other, it was often found to be an activity imbued with symbolism, commitment and trust in established friendship networks. In this respect, consistent with Nicholas (2008) (see Chapter Three), given the increased dependency on friends in contemporary society (Pahl, 2000), it is perhaps not unsurprising that individuals increasingly participate in supply roles on behalf of their friendship group.

### User-Dealing as Harm Reduction?

Drug dealing (proper) and its perceived harms, have been defined through various academic and legal sources and have been suggested to be associated with commercial profit making, large/stock holding quantities, haphazard distribution of the drug, wider

criminal involvement and supply over time for gain (Ashworth, 2010; New Zealand Law Commission, 2011; Police Foundation 2000; Sentencing Council, 2012; Moyle et al., 2013). The research findings strongly suggest that not only are user-dealers non-profit motivated (Dwyer and Moore, 2010), but other aspects of their supply behaviour are also *inconsistent with the key harms attributed to drug dealing*. Significantly, the user-dealer sample ardently advocated supply as the most preferential way of funding a drugs habit. Similarly to Small et al. (2013), user-dealing allowed users to avoid less preferred forms of crime – such as robbery, theft and sex work. While addiction featured heavily in respondents' explanatory narratives, in accordance with Dwyer (2007), user-dealers were not found to be enslaved to the demands of heroin or crack cocaine. In contrast, user-dealers, whilst citing the desperation and habitual, automated routine (Nettleton et al., 2011) associated with gaining more drugs, also demonstrated a preference to avoid acts such as person and property crime when possible. Consistent with Decorte (2001), who describes rituals and rules as key determinants of the drug use self-regulation process, a few respondents described being able to control their use through implementing rules based around their moral boundaries, in regard to funding their dependency.

Through analysing these themes, the theoretical application of the work of Bourdieu (1990) also offers for comprehension of the social forces and constraints on user-dealers. By applying Bourdieu's (1990) theoretical framework, it is possible to gain some understanding of how the habitus, shaped by the particular individual's class and past experiences provides unconscious limitations on action and the way in which each respondent 'chooses' to fund their heroin or crack cocaine dependency. In this sense, user-dealing *must* be conceived as a fundamentally different activity from drug dealing proper, since it is explicitly motivated by the desire to gain drugs, representing *one of few options* for survival for addicted drug users (Dwyer and Moore, 2010). Moreover, this

research has found evidence to suggest that small-scale supply activity is an attractive option for heroin and crack cocaine users. The reason for this relates to the idea that it is easily incorporated into an addict's lifestyle, and preferable, due to offering a drug user closer proximity to their drug and signifying a less problematic action in terms of its wider effects. Significantly, in harm reduction terms, it also represents an act, that in terms of criminal impact, has less potential for damage to the community than theft, burglary or begging (for example), due to the closed nature of distribution (Coomber and Moyle, 2013).

### **'Undercovers', Reputation and Vetting: Limited Distribution of User-Dealers**

Consistent with historic and more recent literature (Preble and Casey, 1969; Stewart, 1987; Coomber and Moyle, 2012), on the whole, distribution of crack cocaine and heroin by user-dealers was contained to a relatively small group of established users. With the threat of undercover officers engaging in 'test purchases' and proactively targeting street dealers, respondents articulated significant anxiety in regard to supplying unknown buyers. In attempt to seemingly minimise risk, user-dealers described employing 'vetting' processes such as using another known user to vouch for them, questioning potential buyers and analysing physical appearance to ascertain authenticity. Apart from fears surrounding police detection, respondents also articulate the importance of being respected within the 'heroin community'. Selling to unknown or non-users was widely perceived as reckless, immoral and irresponsible and was therefore considered to be detrimental to the reputation of user-dealers. The research therefore presents data, which is consistent with existing literature that has described the heroin and crack cocaine markets as 'closed' (May and Hough, 2005; Coomber and Moyle, 2012). Adding to this, the majority of user-dealers were suggested to be *non-stock holding*, buying slightly bigger 'deals' and selling small amounts such as 'ten bags' (0.2g) in order to gain some 'free' drugs for themselves. Therefore, regimes of truth (Foucault, 1977) that

advocate drug dealers as individuals that 'pursue and entice' the lay public, regardless of their 'age, experience and demeanour' (Coomber, 2006:34) evidently appear to be somewhat unfounded within the context of this research. Conversely, this data indicates that harm to the wider community, arising from the open availability of heroin and crack cocaine sales by user-dealers, is in fact, relatively restricted.

## **Working towards Conceptualising and Defining Social Supply and User-Dealing**

### **Explicit Definitions**

As well as highlighting new areas for further research and enquiry, this data has also emphasised how social supply and user-dealing can perhaps be considered as underdeveloped concepts. Current social supplier definitions are predicated on the absence of financial gain and an emphasis on friendship. However, the findings have illustrated that these concepts may in fact be insufficient in accurately describing the key features of social supply. In relation to user-dealing, historical definitions have also failed to precisely encompass the particular contextual circumstances in regard to the personal circumstances of the user-dealer. In seeking to provide a definition of social supply and user-dealer distribution behaviours, the discussion will now offer a succinct qualitative definition of the terms. These definitions will take the form of 'ideal types', offering a more accurate description of social supply and user-dealing concepts.

### **A Research Based Framework for Social Supply**

In contrast to the recommendations of the Police Foundation Report (2000), but consistent with wider research (Nicholas, 2008; Shearer, 2005; Joe-Laidler and Hunt 2008), these findings have found social supply to be an activity that is not only present in cannabis networks, but also highly prevalent in psychoactive Class A (and B) drug



markets (particularly cocaine, ecstasy, MDMA and ketamine). While the Police Foundation (2000) noted that 'social supply' may involve some element of gain and Potter (2009) has pointed to social supply as representing distribution where profit is not the *primary* motive, the current literature base is far from definitive in depicting social supply as typified by some aspect of financial gain (Coomber and Moyle, 2013). This research has found the *acquisition of gain as routine and implicit to all transactions*. Interestingly, the data here not only suggests that gain is a central aspect of social supply transactions, but it also indicates that the vast majority of this gain can be classified as financial. In contrast to previous research, the findings have highlighted a strong prevalence of 'hassle tax', where suppliers take some small recompense from the transaction as a reward, or some level of compensation for their effort. Social suppliers have also been found as inhabiting a number of roles: 'designated' buying, where one individual will purchase drugs on behalf of a group of users; 'party buying' where an individual will buy a large quantity of drugs for themselves and others for a specific event and 'stash user-supply' where an individual will supply as a result of engaging in cost effective bulk purchases for their own consumption.

Traditionally, social supply has been conceived as a mode of distribution limited to friends (RSA, 2007; Police Foundation, 2000) and acquaintances. In contrast, this data has highlighted that although social suppliers will almost certainly have a core group of close friends that they will routinely distribute to, they may also supply to other acquaintances or 'known faces', who have been directed to the supplier by other contacts. This research presents evidence of complexity in regard to supply relationships, with social suppliers often describing '*becoming friends*' with drug receivers (through the supply relationship) and consistently demonstrating an inability to recall which came first, drug supply or friendship. Similarly to Hough et al. (2003), findings from this study suggest that the customer base for social suppliers is constituted by a complex mix of

close friends, friends of friends, acquaintances and 'known faces'. Consistent with Potter (2009), this results in a 'grey area' in the conceptualisation of the behaviour. In this respect, these findings also indicate that relying on the relationship between the supplier and the receiver of the drugs as a core component of the definition is problematic, particularly in a legal context (Potter, 2009). Another key finding relates to the fact that it is *not* the quantity of substance that is of import when defining social supply. As a result, a threshold based definition is perhaps not the most suitable basis for deciphering between a social supply and commercial supply offence, and instead the intent or motivation should be considered as the primary indicator of the nature of the purchase (social supply or commercial supply). The scope of the social supply act is therefore perhaps wider than has been portrayed in the current research base (see Duffy et al., 2008; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007; Hough et al., 2003). Undoubtedly, the roles undertaken by social suppliers are characterised by a certain level of diversity in regard to the quantities and nature of the drug purchased, the way the substances are distributed, and the relationship with the receiver of the drug. However, while there is an underlying variance in the context or rationale for social supply events, this research has located some common characteristics that were found to be present in every role. Therefore, a social supplier can broadly be understood as:

***'A drug user who distributes substances to non-strangers where financial profit is not the primary motivation'***

As a means to providing a framework that offers additional social supply features, likely characteristics of a social supply transaction are outlined below. As a result of thorough thematic analysis of the data, this research suggests that a social supply offence would likely entail:

- The social supplier using the drugs that were being supplied

- Some element of gain such as ‘free drugs’ or a small sum as means of recompense for the social suppliers effort
- The transaction as *not primarily* motivated by the aim to gain financial profit.
- The social supplier distributing drugs to friends, acquaintances or ‘known individuals’ (non-strangers).

### User-Dealer Definitions: An Ideal Type

The findings suggest that user-dealer behaviour is broadly consistent with the wider literature, which has situated user-dealers as more than simply users that deal and incorporating notions of addiction (Akhtar and South, 2000; Lewis, 1994; Coomber, 2006). This research has further broadened the scope of the user-dealer term, presenting empirical evidence which suggests that this behaviour is characterised by numerous other common traits and circumstances that also warrant consideration as part of the conceptualisation. As such, the research has found that individuals who sell drugs in order to support their habit share other common factors – principally, that regardless of the amount of revenue they accrue from selling drugs, sellers make little in the way of discernible profit, prioritising the purchase of substances and spending practically ‘everything’ they have on drugs (aside from small amounts reserved for necessities such as electricity, subsistence and in many cases, alcohol). As Cyster and Rowe (2006) propose, there exists a ‘glass ceiling’ (p.72) of sorts that limits the user-dealer from becoming financially successful. Similarly to a landlord drinking their profits (ibid), close proximity to their drug was found to be concomitant with increasing dependency, leading to a cycle where the profit and product is consumed and user-dealers are eventually propelled to the bottom of the chain. Other key features of user-dealer behaviour found to be prevalent in the findings relate to the constrained nature of user-dealer supply (see above), along with the variance of quantities sold, due to the propensity for user-dealers

to supply on behalf of others. Following Akhtar and South's (2000), and the guideline case of *Afonso* [2004] EWCA Crim 2342, the findings unequivocally illustrate that involvement in small-scale user-dealer supply represents one of *limited options* available to drug dependent offenders, including sex work, 'grafting', theft or robbery (for example). As a means of reducing these results for the sake of policy into an 'ideal type', the research findings have produced a basis from which an offender could be assessed against. The 'ideal type' or inclusion criteria for user-dealers would therefore comprise of addicted heroin and/or crack cocaine users who:

- Are selling in a limited way to other established regular/existing heroin/crack cocaine users
- Are supplying drugs with the primary aim/motivation of funding their own drug habit
- Are selling as a substitute for committing other crimes (that many dependent heroin/crack users are involved in to support their habit), which in terms of criminal impact or victim impact, may be considered to be of a lesser degree
- Are making little by way of discernible financial profit over time after their own heroin/crack consumption was deducted and perhaps some other basic consumables

While it is more likely that a user-dealer would be a heroin or crack cocaine user, it is the nature of the transaction process and the existence of drug dependency that is of import here, not the specificity of the substance (Coomber and Moyle, 2013). This notion was exemplified in the research process when a respondent who was interviewed on the basis of being a crack cocaine user, who supplied in order to fund his habit, described using crack occasionally but used amphetamine - a drug not traditionally classed as a problem drug in the same way heroin and crack cocaine is - in a chaotic way.

## Moving Towards '*Minimally Commercial Supply*'

For both sample groups, while the supply transaction cannot be solely characterised by the desire to obtain commercial profit, the research findings have displayed the notion that some form of gain is appropriated, whether that be the acquisition of 'free drugs' (a principle motive for user-dealers and for many social suppliers), or a small 'tax'. These findings have many implications, which challenge traditional academic and policy based understandings of what social supply is, providing a problematic contrast to idealist notions of social supply as a not-for-profit transactions (Hough et al., 2003; Duffy et al., 2008; Sentencing Council, 2012; RSA, 2007). As explored previously, although primarily motivated by their need to purchase drugs to feed their addiction, this research suggests that user-dealers take a relatively small proportion of drug supply income in order to finance basic living requirements. While traditionally, it would be hard to conceive social suppliers and user-dealers of problem drugs like heroin and crack cocaine as similar, the data has *provided evidence that the two activities may not be so different as first assumed*. Interestingly, as portrayed above, there are parallels between these two behaviours. This congruence occurs in relation to the contained distribution of substances to non-strangers, non-commercial intent, and perhaps most importantly, in relation to minimal levels of 'profit' taken from the supply transaction. This thesis is suggestive of the idea that for both supply groups, financial gain is an innate feature of the transaction; however, the motivation for participation is attributed to other objectives, rather than profit alone.

Consequently, this project has therefore proposed that the key foundations of the social supply term, those relating to distribution *without* any gain, financial or otherwise (Sentencing Council, 2012; RSA, 2007; Police Foundation, 2000), do not represent the best way of understanding social supply. Analysis of the findings has provided research

'weight', which suggests that within a context of prohibition, a more accurate way of conceptualising non-commercially motivated supply offences, would be under the broader term of '*minimally commercial supply*', since the notion of non-commercial supply is too rigid in the real world (Coomber and Moyle, 2013). Utilising the concept of 'minimally commercial supply' recognises that profit of some kind will be taken from most transactions. Despite all supply transactions involving 'some' gain, financial profit is neither the motivation, nor found to be meaningfully contributing to an overall improved consumption lifestyle of the supplier and can be seen as no more than 'minimal'. The minimally commercial supply term is defined *through its relationship to the sellers lifestyle and intent* (Coomber and Moyle, 2013; Moyle et al., 2013). In this way, the concept could therefore effectively act as an umbrella term that encompasses both these modes of supply, recognising the implicit gain (including hassle tax, free drugs and alcohol) taken from transactions. The 'minimally commercial supply' term could then categorise supply offences that are not primarily financially profit motivated (Moyle et al., 2013), rather than continuing with a reliance on inaccurate terms, which appear to fail to accurately characterise the realities of supply transactions for both of these groups.

## **Dealing with Social Supply and User-Dealer Supply in the Criminal Justice Context**

### **The Definitive Drug Sentencing Guidelines**

The implementation of a differentiated sentencing framework that considers role, harm and aspects of social supply behaviours, represent a significant step forward in drug policy. However, the intention by the Sentencing Council (2011) to provide a more proportional approach to drug sentencing through offering some distinctions between the social supplier and commercial dealer is found to be unfit for purpose. The findings from this thesis provide evidence to suggest that the potential of the *Drug Offences Definitive*

*Guideline* (2012) is undermined by a limited understanding of *the nature of social supply transactions as they take place in a real world context* (Coomber and Moyle, 2013; Moyle et al., 2013). In essence, this relates to (i) a misunderstanding of social supply as characterised by non-profit transactions rather than, as illustrated clearly in the research findings and wider literature, by small reparations for their efforts (see Moyle et al., 2013; Measham et al., 2001; see Parker et al., 1998). It also relates to (ii) a failure to understand that quantity thresholds do not reflect, at the levels they are currently set, whether supply is commercially motivated or not. For example, the least serious ‘harm’ category within the supply guidelines (arguably the threshold aimed at including social suppliers), is only able to capture individuals who are convicted in possession of up to 5g of cocaine, MDMA and ketamine and 20 ecstasy tablets. This research provides evidence to suggest that social suppliers engage in a range of roles, with ‘party buyers’ commonly purchasing quantities to supply a number of people, sometimes, for example at a festival, over a number of days. Existing research supports the findings from this thesis in respect of the amounts of drug taken on one occasion, reporting high levels of individual consumption in relation to ecstasy pills (see Eiserman, 2005; Winstock et al., 2001), cocaine, ketamine and mephedrone, where users have been found to take a gram ‘per session’ (Global Drug Survey, 2012). This finding serves to substantiate the idea that the threshold categories put forward by the Sentencing Council (2012) are ‘unrealistically low’ (Harris, 2011a) and, moreover, may be conceived as far removed from the real world conduct of drug users (Moyle et al., 2013).

As a way of highlighting the real effects of the guideline’s construction of ‘role’, when following the new drug sentencing guidelines, any individual found with more, for example, than 5g of ketamine or cocaine and who had supplied these substances to peers – and taken even a small amount of profit – could effectively be captured within the ‘significant’, rather than ‘lesser’ role category 3. Here, the sentencing range is quantified

between 2 and 4 years and 6 months in custody, with a starting point beginning at 3 years in prison (p. 12). Considering that proportionality is suggested to have a major role in sentencing guidelines generally (Ashworth, 2010) and overarching proportionality principles have been further legislated for through the human rights apparatus (Moyle et al., 2013), the construction of role category within the sentencing guidelines in relation to social supply, which excludes those who have taken minimal recompense, appears to be at odds with the entire philosophy of proportionality policy. Indeed, social supply characteristics such as the relatively limited distribution of drugs to friends and peers in social supply (Winstock et al., 2001) – all reflect lesser culpability in respect of the main harms associated with drug supply, namely that of commercial profit making, large quantities and wide distribution of the drug (Ashworth, 2010; New Zealand Law Commission, 2011; Sentencing Council, 2012). Adding to this, the penal aim of presumption of custody in such cases does not reflect notions of equity and commensurability associated with proportionality legislated for through the Criminal Justice Act 2003. This is due to the fact that such sanctions contravene philosophical laws of proportionality, since the severity of punishment does not ‘connote the degree of blame’ (von Hirsch, 1996: 320).

### **How the Definitive Drug Sentencing Guidelines Impact User-Dealers**

An assessment of how the new *Drug Offences Definitive Guideline* (2012) caters and affects user-dealers provides some equally interesting findings. Continuing with an appraisal of the quantity categories (which relate to harm), considering the threshold quantities put forward for heroin offences in conjunction with the research findings raises similar issues relating to proportionality. With the least serious category quantity set at a maximum of 5g, the guidelines appear to neglect that a heroin user with an average tolerance would be able to consume around 500 mg a day (Uchenhagen et al., 1999; Coomber and Moyle, 2013), and therefore, the possession of this amount of heroin for



personal consumption would not be unduly excessive. Furthermore, this research has found strong indication of user-dealers 'clubbing together' to buy larger quantities in order to avoid practices such as skimming (see also Walters, 1985; Preble and Casey, 1969), and also, participating in roles where they could be selling up to an ounce of heroin or crack cocaine on behalf of a commercial seller. Again, this represents a reality of user-dealing practice that has little appreciation in the guidelines. More generally, physical or psychological addiction has also been suggested by Release (2009) to be as compelling as fear of or pressure or coercion from a third party, *a finding that is consistent with the findings of this thesis*. Indeed, the lack of acknowledgement and exclusion of users-dealers within role categories instead limits drug dependency as a mitigating factor, rather than a 'motivation' that affects the degree of culpability of a given offender (see Release, 2009; Harris, 2011b) a feature that is deemed *especially problematic* (ibid, my emphasis). Adding to this, the positioning of 'street dealing' – a form of supply this research has found to be strongly associated with user-dealers – within the 'leading' role category (with a starting point of 5 years 6 months in custody), regardless of quantity, has been articulated as 'grossly disproportionate' (Harris, 2011b) and elsewhere related as offering inadequate understanding of the real context in which users-dealers act (Moyle et al., 2013; Harris 2011b; Coomber and Moyle, 2013). Similar conclusions may be offered in relation to the fact that for (Class A) user-dealers who are subject to their 3<sup>rd</sup> conviction, the Power of Criminal Courts Sentencing Act (2000) legislates for a seven year custodial sentence, unless it would be 'unjust' to do so (Harris, 2011b).

As well as taking issue with the design and scope of the sentencing guidelines in relation to user-dealers, custodial sentencing options for drug addicted offenders have elsewhere been criticised in relation to their proportionality. The Sentencing Advisory Panel (2009) for example, suggests that where an offence is triggered by an addiction, the court may decide on a sentence aimed primarily at the reform and rehabilitation of the offender, with

a view to reducing the risk of reoffending. Furthermore, where drug users are seen to be 'addicted', and criminality is therefore seen as beyond the full control of the offender, it is suggested that drug treatment, rather than punishment, offers a more suitable response, being both more morally justifiable (treating rather than punishing the sick) and more successful in preventing future offending (Potter and Osiniagova, 2012). Despite this, it appears that unlike Greece, Cyprus, Hungary and Slovenia, for example (EMCDDA, 2013) - who have incorporated user-dealer supply characteristics within statute and judicial practice (Harris, 2011b) - the United Kingdom has displayed a reluctance to incorporate effective measures that sufficiently capture this group. This research has provided further basis for emphasising the centrality of addiction for user-dealers, along with the consequently limited options available to heroin and crack cocaine user-dealers. By failing to sufficiently incorporate addiction in the sentencing framework and through providing inaccurate consideration of user-dealer activity, rather than promoting proportionality through statute, this framework arguably provides a rigid and inappropriate sentencing matrix, that removes judicial discretion through robust 'must follow' definitive guidelines (Roberts, 2011; Moyle et al., 2013).

## **Potential Ways Forward and Recommendations**

### **Implementation of a 'Minimally Commercial Supply' Offence**

Given that current social supply and user-dealer definitions are insufficient in portraying the complexities and scope of these behaviours, these research findings indicate that social supply and user-dealing need to be conceptualised in a more nuanced and sophisticated way. Therefore, the creation of a 'minimally commercial supply' offence would sufficiently incorporate the existence of small gain, whilst also avoiding reliance on ambiguous notions of friendship as a means of differentiating between social supply and commercial supply offences. The implementation of a 'minimally commercial supply'

offence would therefore focus on *intent* as a means of dealing with these lesser forms of supply. By way of analogy, there is scope for arguing that social supply and user-dealing are as much of a point on an overall continuum of the overall offence of supply, as manslaughter is compared with murder in relation to a homicide (Moyle et al., 2013). While in relation to the former there is no de facto difference in the drug supply act, significantly, the difference lies in the *moral culpability, motivation and harm* (ibid). This is arguably similar in a situation where a verdict of manslaughter – for the same dead body – carries significantly less perception of wrongdoing than a verdict of murder. The application of a murder or manslaughter charge is essentially decided through deliberation of the '*mens rea*', that is, whether a defendant had intent to kill (Mitchell and Mackay, 2011). At each stage, a court deals with nuanced factual scenarios, making qualitative decisions in relation to the defendant's 'fit' for a particular offence. Those decisions are consequences of the offences charged or pleaded, which in turn are consequences of the perceived culpability of the offender (Moyle et al., 2013). If the courts, the Crown Prosecution Service and the police are able to make this distinction in complex homicides, then it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that drug supply cases could likewise be separated into gradated offences (ibid).

As a way of operationalising this possible way forward, a framework similar to that proposed by the New Zealand Law Commission (2011) could be established. Here the supply offence would be determined by its conformity to, and provision of evidence for, social supply/minimally commercial supply characteristics, utilising evidence based frameworks (See page 218-222). There already appears to be relative agreement over what constitutes greater harm within supply policy, with commercial supply, stockpiling, sale to vulnerable groups and criminally organised supply put forward as factors that equate to seriousness in supply (Ashworth, 2010; Sentencing Council, 2012; Police Foundation, 2000; Dorn et al., 1992). This research has provided evidence to suggest

that social supply and user-dealer behaviours *are not* characterised by the same harms. Furthermore, with reference to the findings from this research, I agree with the New Zealand Law Commission (2011) who suggest that the absence of any significant commerciality makes its criminality more analogous to possession. In this sense, the circumstances of the offending tend to justify a more lenient (or proportionate) sentencing response, with less reliance on imprisonment and greater use of all other options, including diversion into treatment (particularly for user-dealers). A more nuanced operational space would therefore enable a more relevant sentencing framework (Moyle et al., 2013) and give rise to improved legal certainty and proportional sentencing. In taking this approach, the courts could move towards ensuring that the State and the legal structure, is not violating the fundamental principle of proportionality – by imposing on an offender a sentence more severe than he deserves for the crimes he has committed (Brand-Ballard, 2009). The minimally commercial supply offence may also be extended to include other supply offences, which also do not fit comfortably with conventional understandings of the motivations and activities of drug dealers. Therefore, this offence may have the potential to incorporate other ‘minimally commercial’ supply roles, including drug running, or ‘drug mule’ offences (see Fleetwood, 2011), where individuals become involved in supply under coercion, or as a means of funding their drug dependence

## Chapter Conclusion

The discussion has outlined some of the key findings to emerge from this fieldwork. The data collected provides evidence to suggest that social supply and user-dealing are qualitatively different from drug dealing (proper), both in regard to the motivation of the actor and the harms associated with the supply act. While conventional understandings of drug dealing (as outlined in Chapter Two) are associated with rational calculated action, with economic profit as the end goal, social supply was described as being enacted as a way of managing the difficulties associated with gaining access to a

prohibited substance. Respondents described remaining in a social supply role as a pragmatic means of maximising economies of scale, subsidising drug use and also minimising the risks of acquiring drugs. Social supply was also suggested as having important symbolic value within friendship groups and also engendered notions of obligation and expectation in regard to undertaking supply on behalf of the group. User-dealers reported being solely motivated by the need to fund their drug dependency. However, rather than being 'slaves' to the pharmacological properties of the drug, respondents were suggested to exhibit moral reflexivity, choosing user-dealing as a less harmful way of funding their habit. Sociological theory has offered valuable perspective in exploring these modes of supply. A Bourdieusian framework (1990) enables an understanding of the user-dealer practice with consideration of an individual's social history, their access to resources and the possible lines of action available to them. In regard to social supply, normalisation theory was considered to have application in relation to the distribution as well as the use of drugs, explicating a blurred distinction between user and supplier roles. Significantly, in comparing the data to the new *Drug Offences Definitive Guidelines* (2012), the findings suggest that there is an unsatisfactory incorporation of addiction and social supply characteristics within the lower categories of the new guidelines. This thesis has produced broad frameworks that offer research based 'ideal types' of user-dealer and social supply behaviours. Most significantly however, it offers the concept of '*minimally commercial supply*' as a more effective and accurate means of conceptualising distribution types that are non-commercially motivated and characterised by small levels of gain. This is a concept that is also suggested to offer, in the context of prohibition, a potential way of removing non-commercial offences from the ambit of conventionally conceived drug supply offences, as well as the high tariffs traditionally associated with them (Moyle et al., 2013).

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Rather than acting as a space to further examine the findings, the conclusion chapter will instead provide critical analysis of this study, evaluating its importance and contribution to the knowledge base. In this chapter the research methods will be considered in terms of their appropriateness and their ability to address the research aims. The value of this research will also be assessed through offering a rationale of why it was felt to be especially important to conduct this study. The conclusion will then move on to provide some discussion of how social supply and user-dealing converge through highlighting common themes found in both samples. Following this, there will be some discussion of the contribution this thesis has made to knowledge. This will be delineated through examining the theoretical, socio-legal and broad contribution to knowledge in this field. Finally, the chapter will sum up the conclusions of this thesis by posing suggestions that present some ideas (in view of the findings of this project) as to how we can move forward in regard to future research. Adding to this, there will also be some recommendations offered, relating to how policy approaches may be altered through the implementation of a new 'minimally commercial supply term', which, it is argued, has the potential to provide more proportionate outcomes for social suppliers and user-dealers alike.

### Critical Reflection on Research Methods

While the research process faced certain challenges in relation to the recruitment of social suppliers, the epistemology and the consequent choice of methods were found to be very successful in regard to their ability to fulfil my research aims. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest, in depth semi-structured interviewing allowed me to follow up existing themes found in the literature base, as well as offering the freedom to explore emerging narrative relating to structural conditions and circumstances. The interview schedules

were relatively lengthy due to the fact that there was an absence of baseline data regarding respondents' level of recreational use, as well as amounts and types of drugs supplied. While this was challenging in terms of the time taken to transcribe the interviews, this was largely unavoidable since it was critical to provide a rudimentary picture of these groups in terms of their drug use careers and their average levels of participation. One of the most obvious limitations of my research relates to the fact that my findings cannot be stated to be representative of social supply and user-dealing behaviours *per se*. As outlined in my methodology chapter, I cannot and never have claimed to provide an exhaustive outline of exactly what social supply and user-dealing is. However, I can make an empirical contribution in displaying what social supply and user-dealing *are not*, as well as challenging and widening existing debates around these issues (Letherby, 2002). Further to this, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that it is futile to strive for generalisation, since there are always factors that are distinctive to a particular context. Accordingly, we are therefore thought to be able to establish a 'fittingness' between two contexts (Searle, 1999) and in this respect '*transferability*' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:316), rather than generalisability, becomes a research aim. In this sense, even if transferability between two settings is problematic, key findings can still be utilised as a heuristic device that would allow the wider application of key concepts and findings.

While I attempted to the best of my ability to be sensitive to issues of power and influence throughout the fieldwork and analysis process, I am aware that this involves 'carving out pieces of narrative evidence that we select, edit and deploy to border our arguments' (Fine, 1994: 22). With this in mind I endeavoured to be as reflexive and critical as possible. Basing my work on a constructivist epistemology, I strived to promote rigour through drawing on aspects of the naturalistic enquiry paradigm (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, rather than aiming for conventional notions of internal and

external validity, reliability and objectivity, this research strived to be credible, transferable and dependable (Searle, 1999). In order to meet these criteria, I produced a reflexive research journal and implemented 'member checks' (see Searle, 1999:45) where I asked participants to review my understanding of their narrative through relaying their answers in my own words.

## Limitations of the Study

Recruitment through snowball sampling produced a social supplier demographic principally made up of middle class university educated males, and was accompanied by evidence from the student social supply sample. Due to the prevalence of this demographic, I acquired strong data regarding the university as a micro-site of social supply and also as an arena for transition from use into social supply - an important and overlooked aspect of research in this area. However, while data saturation was conceived as conducive to fruitful thematic exploration of the university as a micro-site, it was felt that the inclusion of non-university educated respondents would have offered some understanding of alternative arenas of transition. It may also have proved to strengthen the idea of social supply being resonant in all echelons of society, an idea that my research cannot provide any real insight into. Again, due to the reliance on snowball sampling methods, my social supplier sample was confined to a particular age range that did not involve individuals over the age of 32. Moving to the user-dealer population, while data touched on this group supplying heroin substitutes and medical prescriptions, findings were limited in being able to explore how far these substances were routinely included in user-dealer transactions. Due to the fact the *Drug Offences Definitive Guideline* has only relatively recently been implemented (February 2012), the data was unable to capture how the new sentencing structure is currently affecting social suppliers and user-dealers. For those who had experience of prosecution for supply related offences, they had been sentenced prior to the implementation of the new sentencing



guidelines. Therefore, while I could - using the data and the sentencing framework - estimate how the guidelines would likely impact on social suppliers and user dealers, I did not have first-hand evidence of recent sentencing outcomes.

## Importance of the Research

This research is timely in the sense that it was undertaken in a period (2010-2013) where the disproportionality of sentencing all drug supply offences under the same legislative instrument (Section 4 Misuse of Drugs Act 1971) was recognised and addressed through the implementation of the Sentencing Council's *Drug Offences Definitive Guidelines* (2012). Recent research has also highlighted the escalating prevalence of polydrug use repertoires (Aldridge et al., 2011; Measham and Moore, 2009; Winstock, 2012), along with increased reports of individuals buying on behalf of, or receiving drugs from friends (Murphy et al., 2004; Duffy et al., 2008; McElrath and O'Neill, 2010; Fowler and Kinner, 2007). Such trends - which imply a relative departure from utilising conventionally imagined 'drug dealers' as a sole source of supply - highlight the importance of understanding the realities of these practices and employing an effective and proportionate approach. There is also currently a widespread perception that social supply *should* be seen as being different to 'real' dealing. Here commentators have suggested that conceiving non-profit distribution to friends and acquaintances as 'drug dealing' is problematic both at a conceptual and policy level (Coomber & Turnbull, 2007; Coomber, 2010; Duffy et al., 2008; Hough et al., 2003; Police Foundation, 2000; RSA, 2007; Potter, 2009). Due to recent focus on the equity and effectiveness of drug sentencing tariffs, this empirical work provides an important basis for considering these new sentencing arrangements and how far they meet statutory guidelines of proportionality in regard to outcomes for social suppliers. Despite social supply therefore encompassing a key issue of importance both in the UK and internationally (Coomber, 2010), with little explicit study of social supply behaviours, this project has provided some

comprehensive qualitative findings, which expand current knowledge around the scope of this activity.

### The Importance of Researching Addicted User-Dealers

Along with increased acknowledgement of social supply activity, there is currently recognition of supply by heroin and crack cocaine dealers as qualitatively different from conventional notions of dealing (Harris, 2011a, 2011b; Release 2009; Lai, 2012). User-dealers, as addicted problem drug users, are *characterised by multiple and complex needs* (Neale et al., 2012; Briggs, 2012). They are also understood to have lengthy drug use careers (Van Melick, 2013; Dennis et al., 2005) and represent a group commonly associated with relapse (Neale et al., 2012) and subsequent recidivism (UKDPC, 2008). The proportion of crimes committed by problem drug users is argued to be overstated (see Stevens, 2007; 2011; Potter and Osinagova, 2012). However, user-dealers are thought to occupy a large proportion of the heroin and crack cocaine markets (DeBeck et al., 2007; Small et al., 2013; Cyster and Rowe, 2006) and are suggested to place considerable strain on our already overcrowded prison population (MacDonald et al., 2012). All these factors, together with the fact that user-dealing has been suggested to be characterised by differing motivation and culpability to conventional ideas of drug dealing (Harris, 2011b; Moyle et al., 2013), provide a context in which the pursuit of empirical research that can add to our understanding of this group is *especially pertinent*. This study is also important since it supports recent calls (see Harris, 2011b; Lai, 2012) for proportionate sentences for drug addicted suppliers, supporting claims of reduced culpability for this group. These research findings therefore provide further evidence of the realities of street based user-dealing, offering support for the notion that the new drug sentencing guidelines (2012) have implemented a framework that exhibits insufficient understanding of how user-dealers commonly operate in the real world. This research may be argued to be especially significant since it ultimately recommends

reconceptualising social supply and user-dealing into '*minimally commercial supply*'. The implementation of this umbrella term as a concept and as potential offence offers a more inclusive means of conceptualising social supply and user-dealing behaviours, along with a more proportionate approach to dealing with these groups.

## Common Research Themes Found in Social Supply and User-Dealer Samples

Although social supply and user-dealing are largely undertaken by two very different populations (that is recreational drug users, and drug dependent crack cocaine and heroin users), while there are notable differences - largely a result of the distinct context of user-dealers - there are also key crossovers and similarities. One notable area of convergence lies in the practice of buying on behalf of a social group. Data analysis indicated that both social suppliers and user-dealers attempt to take advantage of 'economies of scale' through 'pooling' their money and buying a larger quantity of drugs for a cheaper price. When undertaking this practice, invariably one individual would buy on behalf of the group and would be rewarded for their risk, or hassle, through taking a small mark up ('designated buyer') or through obtaining a 'hit' or taste of the buy ('nominated buyers'). While 'nominated buyers' were found to engage in this practice purely as a means of funding their dependency, essentially both suppliers were found to be buying on behalf of others, motivated by factors other than profit, receiving relatively small rewards. In spite of this, due to the quantities of which they may be in possession, if caught by the police, these suppliers would probably be treated as commercial sellers (Police Foundation, 2000). In a similar way, both social supply and user-dealer typologies inhabited behaviours that may appear to blur the boundaries between non-commercial supply and conventionally imagined ideas of drug dealers. 'The entrepreneur' for example, whilst supplying primarily to friends and acquaintances and always using the drug he/she purchases, was found to be motivated by financial reward. Focussing on

user-dealers, the 'dealer's apprentice' reported commonly being in possession of at least an ounce of crack cocaine or heroin and had the potential to make £700 profit per ounce. At a superficial level and through reference to the 2012 sentencing guidelines, both these acts may be conceived as larger scale operations. As this data illustrates however, the 'dealer's apprentice' possesses no ownership of this drug and is effectively working on behalf of a commercial supplier, while the 'entrepreneur' may only 'dip' into this mode of supply periodically – therefore not conforming to the Police Foundation's (2010) notion of commercial supply being committed over a period of time. Another theme that was found to be resonant in both groups related to the relatively constrained distribution of drugs by social suppliers and user-dealers. In contrast to the commonly described unscrupulous selling practices of dealers (Coomber, 2006), who are believed push their drugs on to the young and vulnerable (Kohn, 1992; Murphy et al., 1990; Speaker, 2002), both social suppliers and user-dealers described supplying to friends, acquaintances and 'known individuals'. For user-dealers, this was largely related to minimising risk of arrest from undercover officers. For social suppliers it again appeared to be related to risk and limiting the amount of individuals who might conceive them in a negative way. Adding to this, unlike user-dealers who commonly viewed supply as part of the package of using heroin or crack cocaine, supply to acquaintances was sometimes viewed as unnecessary hassle for social suppliers, who were often more inclined to become involved in social supply as a (reciprocal) favour to friends or to gain better deals.

### **Minimal Gain and Non-Commercial Motivations**

The research also highlighted the theme of minimal profit. In contrast to previous studies that have considered social supply to be an activity undertaken on behalf of friends and characterised by the *absence of financial profit* (Hough et al., 2003; RSA, 2007), this thesis suggests social supply transactions routinely involve an element of gain. This gain was not necessarily always financial; in contrast, it was often suggested to take the form

of free drinks, free drugs or cigarettes. That is not to say that monetary profit didn't feature. It often did but was conceptualised as a 'hassle tax' and was regularly regarded as so insignificant (for example rounding up to the nearest £5 note), that it was frequently not even conceived as profit. While the potential for making financial profit from selling heroin and crack cocaine is reported to be relatively high (Pearson and Hobbs, 2003), this research suggests that like social suppliers, user-dealers were also left with little discernible profit from the supply transaction. This group were found to spend practically all their profit from selling substances in funding their dependency. Although the vast majority of this profit was reinvested into drugs, respondents did however report keeping small extra sums of money, in order to pay for things such as alcohol, electricity, food, petrol and sometimes televisions. While this could technically be viewed as commercial profit, instead this thesis emphasises the idea that due to the presence of addiction, profit was principally utilised to pay for basic human needs. Examples of user-dealers having enough excess funds to buy commodities (such as cigarettes, alcohol and televisions) may be considered luxurious in some contexts. However, the lack of tangible change in lifestyle and the reported inevitability of losing any benefit that should be gained through the need to fund a drugs habit (in the majority of cases), have been found in this study to effectively protect against profits increasing to anything more than 'minimal gain'.

Both social suppliers and user-dealers were also found to be primarily motivated by factors other than financial profit. For social suppliers (apart from 'the entrepreneur typology'), financial profit was largely considered as a subsidiary issue, and supply was entered into with the aim to keep a group of drug users supplied at a lower cost, to help out friends and to get better 'deals' (particularly for cannabis, cocaine and MDMA users). Gaining a financial bonus may be a consideration for some social suppliers, but financial profit was not cogitated as a *primary* rationale for engaging in supply. For user-dealers,

the sample unanimously stated that they were involved in supply to fund their drug dependency. While there may have existed some secondary motives, user-dealers struggled to verbalise any, reiterating supply as a vehicle for acquiring drugs.

## Contributions to Knowledge

### Contributions to the Knowledge Base

This project has provided an original contribution to the knowledge base. There has been a relative deficit in empirical research focussing specifically on non-commercial modes of drug supply. This study fills in many of the gaps that have been identified through the literature review and broadens the empirical evidence base for social supply and user-dealer activity. While the literature review provides evidence of social supply and user-dealer behaviours, these are often included in research papers as supporting detail when focussing on adolescent or adult drug using behaviours (see for example Measham et al., 2001; Hough et al., 2003; Joe-Laidler and Hunt, 2008; Winstock, 2012) and are predominantly based on cannabis distribution (see Duffy et al., 2008; Hough et al., 2003; Coomber and Turnbull, 2007). In a similar way, data put forward in the literature review relating to user-dealer behaviours is mostly acquired through research focussed on the lifestyles of heroin and crack cocaine users (Lalander, 2003; Jacobs, 1999), or as a product of exploring the relationship between drugs and crime (see Allen, 2005; Bennett and Holloway, 2005; Inciardi et al., 1996 etc.). This research provides valuable insight into aspects of social supply and user-dealer behaviours. In exploring social supply, this research, for the first time, provides a typology of the varying modes or levels of social supply, ranging from 'nominated buyers' to 'entrepreneurs' and 'party buyers'. It also examines social supply in regard to a *range* of substances including MDMA, ketamine, ecstasy and cocaine. The qualitative data collected in this study is also particularly important since it debunks some of traditional characteristics of social supply, which have

been argued to be over reliant on themes of friendship and non-profit transactions (Potter, 2009). In contrast, the findings from this research provide in-depth insight into the broad scope of the activity, developing the social supply concept to something more nuanced than simply buying on behalf of the group, or supplying to friends for no profit.

While other authors have touched on some of the rationales relating to the reasons why an individual would buy *from* a social supplier, significantly, this research has provided comprehensive discussion of the key motivating factors that social suppliers *themselves* give for continuing to inhabit a social supply role. In a similar way, with a lack of any in-depth qualitative research that provides insight into the activities of user-dealers, this research provides an important data rich insight into the social circumstances of heroin and crack cocaine users who supply in order to fund their drug habit. This research emphasises themes such as constrained choice, limited distribution and minimal profit, rather than reporting simply on the ways in which user-dealers generate income. Significantly, it also provides a typology of different styles of user-dealing. While different levels of supply have before been noted (see Small et al., 2013; Fields and Walters, 1985; May and Hough, 2005), this thesis offers a thorough presentation of the key user-dealer typologies, displaying the complex ways in which user-dealing can be operationalised. Locating discursive constructions of the drug dealer (see Coomber, 2006; Taylor, 2008; Speaker, 2002) together with some of the common presentations of the main harms related with drug supply (see Ashworth, 2010; Sentencing Council, 2011; Harris, 2011), this thesis also provides empirical data which directly and critically compares social supply, user-dealing and conventional notions of drug dealing.

### **Original Application of Theory to Data**

While the theoretical concept of 'normalisation' has been considered in regard to the supply of drugs by previous research (Parker, 2000; South, 2004; Potter, 2009), this

study builds on these themes by providing strong qualitative evidence indicating that supply is also relatively normalised for drug users. This thesis utilised a combination of the notion of normalisation with 'drift' – a theory that has also been previously applied to drug supply (see Murphy et al., 1990; 2004). This framework was believed to represent a valuable theoretical tool in conceptualising social supply. Although some higher level supply roles such as the 'entrepreneur' fit within this framework less comfortably, acts such as sharing, gift giving and 'nominated buying' can be well conceptualised through normalisation. This is because these practices were often drifted into without respondents consciously recognising their acts as 'supply'. Modes of social supply such as 'party buying' may not represent a social supply act that could be reasonably suggested to be drifted into, since it was often associated with risk and the possibility of reprimand. Nonetheless, in line with normalisation theory, social supply could be argued to represent an activity that moved from the peripheries towards the centre of drug use culture. This finding is based on data that suggests a relative embeddedness of sharing and small-scale social supply practices, together with a willingness of otherwise non-deviant users to buy relatively large quantities on behalf of the group, a practice that was conceived as a necessary aspect of recreational use.

While normalisation has previously been applied to supply practices as well as use (South 2004; Potter 2009; Parker, 2000), this appears to be the first time that Bourdieu's (1990) 'Theory of Practice' has been applied to user-dealers. In the apparent absence of the application of any theoretical framework to this group, applying a Bourdieusian framework provides a very useful way of understanding the way structures becomes deposited in the body in the form of dispositions and propensities of thinking and acting (Wacquant, 2005). Chapter One displayed how many other theories can be useful in understanding aspects of user-dealer behaviour, particularly in respect of the impact of social and economic marginalisation (Neale, 2002; Seddon, 2005). While these theories



are helpful, they do not adequately explore the pathway of initiation from user to supplier. In contrast, focussing on the habitus provides opportunity to consider how factors such as our socio-cultural history, education and personal biography go some way in constraining an agent's possible course of action in the field. Furthermore, rather than reducing important themes relating to the 'naturalisation' of supply to fit within a normalisation framework, the theory of habitus instead acknowledges how individuals 'naturalise their daily conduct with situations as a result of particular social influences and interactions' (1990: 635). In focussing on user-dealing as a practice, a Bourdieusian framework also contributes valuable explanatory power in acknowledging how there are *limited courses of action available to the problem drug user*, describing the possible lines of action (doxa) open to an actor (sex work, theft robbery, supply etc.) and how their access to resources (social and economic capital) and their disposition (habitus) unite in broadly determining practice for that individual.

### Socio-Legal Contribution

In a context where there is little fusion of empirical findings relating to social and user-dealer supply activity being evaluated against current policy guidelines, this project delivers a basis for considering the appropriateness of the current legal treatment of these groups. This research offers insight into the realities of social supply and user-dealer behaviours in terms of the quantities, the relative profits and the relationship between buyer and seller. Through doing this it enables an important comparison between the different categories of the new sentencing guidelines (2012) and the real nature of social supply and user-dealer activities as they occur in the drugs market. The findings have also led to a technical consideration of a more suitable method of dealing with these groups in drug policy and sentencing. This has resulted in the proposal of a 'minimally commercial supply' offence, accompanied with pragmatic suggestions for how it may be reasonably be implemented in the criminal justice context.

## Key Findings

With this study essentially studying two separate (but similar) populations, and a wealth of findings collected from each group, for the purposes of clarity, the key findings of this research project will now be emphasised:

- Social Supply and user-dealing are qualitatively different from conventional understandings of commercial drug dealing.
- Conventional ideas of drug dealing are associated with commercial profit making, large/stock holding quantities, extensive distribution of the drug, wider criminal involvement and supply over time for gain. Both social supply and user-dealing were found to be *incompatible* with these harms. Instead, overall, social supply and user-dealing were found to be characterised by minimal financial profit, limited distribution and non-commercial (primary) motivations. As such, social suppliers and user-dealers should be conceived as owning lower culpability than commercially motivated drug suppliers.
- Along with drug use, there is now a relative normalisation of supply practices, with drug users routinely engaging in sharing, gift giving and small-scale designated buying practices. There is also an increasing prevalence of otherwise law abiding citizens partaking in riskier larger-scale buys, a practice that is reasonably normalised within the context of recreational drug subcultures. In this respect there now exists a blurring of user and dealer.
- Addicted heroin and crack cocaine users are faced with limited options to fund their drug habit. User-dealing presents a less harmful, more convenient option that is easily incorporated into their daily routine and allows users close proximity to their drug of addiction.
- '*Minimally commercial supply*' arguably provides a better means of conceptualising social supply and user-dealing. This term departs from idealist notions of non-profit and friend supply, offering a more realistic way of capturing social supply and user-

dealing activities, situating them conceptually and legally, outside the realm of dealing (proper).

## Potential Ways Forward and Recommendations

These findings are not just important on a societal level, they also have significant implications on an individual level in regard to the potential punishments incurred for social supply and user-dealer offences. Significantly, as suggested previously, past reliance on the idea of 'non-profit' supply transactions provide an unrealistic way of deciphering between social supply, user-dealing and conventional ideas of drug dealing. This is due to the existence of 'hassle tax', 'mark-ups' and 'free' drugs frequently associated with social supply transactions and the small profits that are sometimes accrued by user dealers (after their drug use has been considered). This thesis has also demonstrated that the quantity of drugs supplied and relationship between the supplier and receiver of drugs does not represent a sufficient indicator of the seriousness of supply. This is because it was found that many social suppliers routinely buy a large amount of drugs on behalf of the group (see 'party buyers' and 'nominated buyers') for little or no profit. Adding to this, user-dealers (see 'dealer's apprentice') were also found to commonly be consigned an ounce of heroin or crack cocaine, selling it on behalf of a commercial dealer but making little discernible profit after their drug use is considered. Furthermore, due to the propensity for social suppliers to become friends with those they supply with drugs, and the interconnectedness of heroin communities, the relationship between supplier and receiver is felt to be a particularly blurry area in which to base a conceptualisation of social supply or user-dealing around.

## Reconceptualisation of Social Supply and User-Dealing into '*Minimally Commercial Supply*'

Due to the incompatibility of the findings of this research and official concepts of social supply and user-dealing, a more plausible way of attempting to distinguish between social supply, user-dealing and drug dealing (proper) (the supply of drugs over time for monetary gain) may involve a focus on *intended consequences* rather than notions of profit, quantity or friendship (Moyle et al., 2013). This research suggests there is a relative consistency and rationale for extending the concept beyond simple social supply to pragmatically accept that some gain is often involved. In addition, it is also posited that it would be naive to develop policy around some idealised and/or pure notion of social supply that involves no gain at all. Therefore, in the current context of prohibition, in order to assure the proportionality of sentence for these groups, it is proposed that there should be a separation of offence. This separation should occur between those supply offences that equate to a broader concept of '*minimally commercial supply*' (an umbrella term that would include behaviours that conform to the characteristics of social supply and user-dealer minimally commercial supply) and dealing (proper) (Moyle et al., 2013; Coomber and Moyle, 2013).

By extending the concept to '*minimally commercial supply*' user-dealers that otherwise often fit the characteristics of social suppliers can be brought into a sentencing framework that acknowledges their relative separateness from the commercial drug dealing market and allows interventions more appropriate to their situation to be utilised. Logistically, police and sentencers may charge and prosecute though assessing whether an offence was *primarily motivated by financial profit*, (judging intent in a similar way to when residing between murder and manslaughter). They may also be further guided by judging how far the offence meets research based guidelines of what constitute social supply and user-dealing offences (see discussion chapter). Whilst acknowledging the

logistical challenges associated with this new approach, notwithstanding this, if social suppliers were sentenced through a separate sentencing apparatus, then they could then be identified as such at an earlier stage in the prosecution process. This would allow offenders to be sentenced appropriately according to a framework that takes consideration of mitigating and aggravating elements of social supply, rather than under a wider and largely inappropriate set of general supply guidelines (Coomber and Moyle, 2013; Moyle et al., 2013). Further research could effectively delineate the different aspects of social supply behaviours and would thus be key to creating guidelines that could situate different roles in social supply behaviour (for example 'party buyers', 'nominated group buyers', 'dealer's apprentice') in terms of their relative seriousness. There will always be variable circumstances and factors to be considered by those sentencing, but this system could create a standard, enabling separation from conventional notions of drug dealing and thus formally recognising 'minimally commercial supply' as a conduct that in essence is entirely different to drug dealing (proper).

## Directions for Future Research

This thesis has provided a wealth of supporting data and emergent themes that have stimulated the need for further enquiry into both social supply and user-dealing behaviours. Directions for further research could involve engaging in some comparative study of how social supply and user-dealing manifest in overseas drug markets. It may also investigate how different legal systems respond to non-commercially orientated supply offences. The EMCDDA (2013) has suggested that countries such as Greece, Slovenia and the Czech Republic have incorporated a statutory acknowledgement of addiction in their supply offences. Furthermore, in a review of their Misuse of Drugs Act, the New Zealand Law Commission (2011) put forward recommendations for how a social supply offence might work. Further exploration of these progressive approaches may prove valuable in generating moves toward a more effective and proportionate response

to these groups in the UK. The borderline or grey area between social supply and commercial dealing has been put forward as a cause of concern, particularly when considering how to effectively create an offence for social supply (see Potter, 2009). Further research that focusses explicitly on this transition -perhaps through interviews with commercial dealers - may be useful in further examining this area. While this research, as a result of the findings, has presented the idea of *intent* as a means of differentiating between social supply and commercial dealing, future research may provide insight into the processes or factors that elevate supply to a commercial level (for example see Taylor and Potter, 2013). There were very many areas that this thesis touches on, but due to the limitations on word length, could not be developed. Future studies could further investigate the policing of heroin and crack cocaine user-dealers and social suppliers, focussing on pro-active policing of user-dealers and arrest decisions in regard to the distinction between possession and supply offences. Focus on micro-sites of social-supply would also be expedient. Many social suppliers spoke of the necessity of being involved in supply for festivals; in this sense, the implications of many otherwise law abiding citizens effectively encompassing a supply role in the festival context need to be explored. While the semi-structured interviews provided a wealth of information in regard to the ways in which heroin and crack cocaine users operationalised supply, there appeared to be so much more to learn about this group. This may be best understood through ethnography or through utilising field observation and following this subculture over an extended period of time (see Briggs (2012) study of crack cocaine users and Dwyer's (2009) ethnographic study of a heroin marketplace). Finally, it is crucial that research investigates how the *Drug Offences Definitive Guidelines* (2012) affects outcomes for social suppliers and user-dealers. While it is surmised that the framework is unlikely to lead to more equitable sentencing of this group, further research is required to substantiate this notion. If it is the case that the new guidelines still promote disproportionate outcomes for these offenders, providing

empirical evidence that highlights this disregard for proportionality must be put forward as a research priority for academics in this field.

## Chapter Conclusion

In the absence of any recent in-depth studies which evaluate the scope of social supply and user-dealing, this thesis compares these distinct modes of supply to conventional understandings of drug dealing. Locating discursive constructions of the drug dealer, together with some of the common presentations of the main harms related with drug supply, this thesis has found that neither social supply, nor user-dealing, exhibit these characteristics and in fact, these groups have entirely different motivations for becoming involved in supply. While social supply and user-dealing are arguably more complex than mere 'profit free' transactions, and while gain may often feature, this thesis suggests that profit is arguably better conceived as a secondary factor. Social suppliers were suggested to be affected by reciprocal structures such as expectations for members of a group to 'do their bit' through taking their turn in supplying the group (and thereby facilitating use). For more frequent users, it simply made logical sense to buy larger amounts since this partly subsidised use, particularly if the subsequent cost saving enabled them to have their drugs for 'free'. For user-dealers, profit was found not to represent a motivating factor, and instead, supply was entirely bound up with funding their drug dependency. In contrast to projections of heroin users being entirely mediated by the demands of heroin, while user-dealers emphasised the urgency of gaining more drugs, they also demonstrated in some circumstances, an ability to implement rules around what activities they would and would not become involved in to 'score' heroin or crack cocaine. Here user-dealers generally described supply as representing a less harmful, more convenient and therefore preferable option to crimes against the person or property. This thesis has contributed to presenting a more nuanced understanding regarding the scope of social supply and user-dealer behaviours. It also provides a

broader context for understanding the transitions, rationales and wider social factors that draw recreational and problem drug users towards a supply role. Significantly, this research also provides evidence that suggests the current policy response to supply offences in the UK, whilst now attempting to capture non-commercial sentences in the new sentencing framework, exhibit an insufficient understanding of the realities of social supply and user-dealing. In a context where the average recreational and problem drug user has been involved in supply on some level, creating a separate offence of '*minimally commercial supply*', may present a plausible means of promoting more proportionate outcomes for social suppliers and user-dealers.



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## Appendix 1 Interview Schedule: An Exploration of How The Social Supply Of Illicit Drugs Should Be Understood In Relation To Drug Dealing Proper.

Thank you for agreeing to take part. On completion of this interview you will receive a contribution of **£10 for your time and involvement**. Everything you tell us in the interview is **confidential**. Nothing on this form can identify you and no individuals will be recognisable in any of the outputs that may be produced by the research

### SECTION ONE: SOME DETAILS ABOUT YOU

1. Gender    Male                                        Female
2. Age    \_\_\_\_\_
3. How do you describe your ethnic origin? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you currently :  
                 Attending University        Working in PT/FT employment        Unemployed
5. Can you tell me where you currently live? \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION TWO: YOUR EXPERIENCE OF DRUG USE

#### FIRST EXPERIENCES OF DRUG USE

6. How old were you when you first tried drugs? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was the first drug you tried? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What drugs have you used? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How old were you when you first used...? (each drug) \_\_\_\_\_

#### CURRENT USE

10. What is/are the main drugs you use? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Which of these drugs have you used in the last 3 months?

Drug	When last used	How often used	Amount used	Price


12. How long have you been using in this way?

- All the time       The last month       The last 3 months   
 The last 6 months       The last year       Other \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Who do you normally use drugs with? (Tick all that apply)

- Alone       Friends       Brother(s)/sister(s)   
 Acquaintances       Strangers       Other family members   
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Generally, how much a month might you normally spend on drugs, and for what amount?

- A week         A month     
 Amount \_\_\_\_\_      Amount \_\_\_\_\_

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**SECTION THREE: BUYING AND SHARING WITH FRIENDS**

15. Have you ever **bought** drugs with friends?

- Yes       No

16. Why do you do this? (Prompt: wouldn't be able to access without; to get more drugs for your money, easier to do it this way, don't have enough money to buy on my own, just happens etc; SAFER/all same drug)

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**17. When did you do this last?**

- In the last couple of days       In the last week       In the last month   
In the last three months       In the last six months       A year ago   
Over a year ago

**18. How often do you do this?**

- All the time       Most of the time       Some of the time   
Every now and then       Hardly ever

**19. Can you explain a little bit more you did this (Prompt: planned or spontaneous ,how many chip in together; do one or all go to buy, how much (weight/money) do you normally buy when you all chip in together etc)**

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**20. Do you prefer to buy/ access drugs in this way or do prefer to do it on your own?**

- With a group       On my own       No preference

**21. Why?**

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**22. GIFTS:** Have you ever **shared or (given)** drugs to friends?

- Yes       No

**23. Why would you do this? (Prompt: to be to share an experience; sociable; so others are on the same high [harm reduction], just happens; helping each other out – returning a favour [reciprocity])**

24. When did you do this last?

- |                            |                          |                        |                          |                   |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| In the last couple of days | <input type="checkbox"/> | In the last week       | <input type="checkbox"/> | In the last month | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In the last three months   | <input type="checkbox"/> | In the last six months | <input type="checkbox"/> | A year ago        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Over a year ago            | <input type="checkbox"/> |                        |                          |                   |                          |

25. How often do you do this?

- |                    |                          |                  |                          |                  |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| All the time       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Most of the time | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some of the time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Every now and then | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hardly ever      | <input type="checkbox"/> |                  |                          |

26. Can you explain a little bit more about the process of when you gave/ shared with friends (Prompt: planned or spontaneous, how many was it shared between, do you take it in turns to share, how much is shared, is it always one person sharing etc)

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#### SECTION FOUR: SELLING/BROKERING ACCESS TO DRUGS (SUPPLIER)

**To the interviewer:** Explain to the young person what selling and helping people access (brokering) mean. Selling is exchanging drugs for goods or money. **Helping get access means buying drugs for others without making a profit.**

#### GENERAL SUPPLY BEHAVIOUR

27. Have you ever sold/ helped people get access to drugs yourself?

- |           |                          |                         |                          |                      |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes, sold | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes, sold once or twice | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes, brokered access | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, both | <input type="checkbox"/> | Neither                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |                      |                          |

#### INITIAL SS/BROKERING EXPERIENCES

28. How long ago did you first do this (how old were you) \_\_\_\_\_

29. Why did you start selling/ helping people get drugs? (**Prompt:** to fund own use; earn money; influenced by friends/family; thought it looked good, etc)

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30. How long after you first started *using* drugs did you start to **broker** (help people access) or **supply**?

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31. If you have **both brokered and supplied**; when you first started brokering, how long after brokering did you begin to supply for profit?

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32. Was your involvement in supply a conscious decision or something you drifted into?

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33. If you have **both brokered and supplied**; what led you to move from brokering to supplying for profit? **Prompt:** Felt it was fair to gain something for effort/level of risk warrants payment/others asked for payment.

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### SOCIAL SUPPLY

34. Where do you **currently** you get your drugs (that you go on to supply from)?

- |                                    |                          |                                |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Direct from a 'drug dealer'        |                          | A friend gets it from a seller |                          |
| Direct from a seller               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grow my own                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| From a friend who sells            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Brother/sister                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strangers (open markets- club)     | <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't buy it, I'm given it   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other relative (cousin, uncle etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |                          |
| Other _____                        |                          |                                |                          |

35. How do you get drugs? (Tick all that apply)

- |  |                          |                                   |                          |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Phone seller and arrange place to meet | <input type="checkbox"/> | Phone and go visit seller's house | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Buy from strangers on the street       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go round sellers house            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Seller drops off at my house           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Buy it at school/youth centre     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family member buys for me              | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friend buys for me                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grow it myself                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | I buy in lots of different ways   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other _____                            |                          | Don't buy                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |

36. Where do you meet to get your drugs? (**Prompt:** Street, park, their home, sellers home, university grounds, union bar, club). If someone else buys for you where do they meet; do you go with them; where do you meet your friend)

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37. Could you describe a bit more about the way you get drugs (**Prompt:** How easy is the seller to get hold of; how long do they have to wait before they can get it, do they have to travel, if so how far etc)

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38. **DISTRIBUTION:** How much (chosen drug) do you normally buy in one transaction (weight/ money) and for how many people?

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39. Do you buy only when only when you intend to use or do you buy on request? (**Prompt: is your supply a direct product of your use/ would you ever supply a drug you weren't intending to also use?**)

---

40. How much of the drug you purchase do you keep for yourself (grams/cash value)?

41. How do you sell/ broker access to drugs? (Tick all that apply)

- |  |                          |                              |                          |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| People phone me and I arrange to meet them | <input type="checkbox"/> | People come to my house      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| People phone me and I drop at their house  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sell to people on the street | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sell in lots of different ways             | <input type="checkbox"/> | No fixed way                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Describe:

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42. How long have you been selling/ brokering in this way? \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLIERS RELATIONSHIP WITH DRUG RECEIVERS**

43. How many different people do you **currently** sell/ broker to? \_\_\_\_\_

44. How many people **have** you sold/brokered to? \_\_\_\_\_

45. Are those you sell/ broker to mainly :

- Friends                  Acquaintances                  Strangers              
Mixture

46. If a *friend* how do you know them/ how did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

47. If *acquaintance* how do you know them/ how did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

48. If you have become friends why do you think that is? (Prompt; common interest; trust; spent time together)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

49. **USER/DEALER:** Have you ever used drugs with these friends/acquaintances? (if so how often?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

50. Do you use the (particular) drugs you supply with them? **Prompt** (do you use as part of the transaction) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

51. Do you supply drugs you don't use? (Do they advertise different/or regular supply drugs?)  
\_\_\_\_\_

52. Are the people you sell to / help access drugs generally

- Younger         Older         Same age         Mixture

53. What is/are their occupations? \_\_\_\_\_

54. **PROFIT:** How much on average are you selling/ brokering per week/month? -  
\_\_\_\_\_

55. Average amount per week/month buying at \_\_\_\_\_

56. Average amount per week/month selling at \_\_\_\_\_

57. How much do you earn from selling drugs in an average week? \_\_\_\_\_

58. How do people pay you?

Only money   
Alcohol

Drugs (same substance?)   
Other \_\_\_\_\_

59. If you get 'free drugs' what quantity or value do you get? \_\_\_\_\_

60. Do you give credit? Yes  No

61. Do those you supply know that you gain profit from providing them with drugs? If so, are they happy with this?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

62. Can you expand on this? (Prompt: **what quantities do they sell /broker in**; do they vary the amount they sell/ broker every week etc)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

63. How do you go about dividing your drugs up? (Drug paraphernalia?) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

64. **NORMALISATION:** Does being involved in supply feel risky or quite normal? Does it feel any riskier than using drugs? (Do you think that use and supply can be reasonably separated?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

65. **MOTIVATION/INTENT:** Why do you continue to supply drugs? (**Prompt:** making too much money to stop; enjoy the status; still need to sell to fund own use; avoiding the drug dealer; want to help friends; helped to establish social relations/SYMBOLIC; Buy for myself and get rid of excess)

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**SECTION FIVE: SOCIAL SUPPLY AS NEUTRALISATION?**

66. Some people would call what you do dealing, have you ever thought of yourself as a drug dealer?

Yes  No

67. Why/ why not? **Prompt:** only sorting friends out; not making any profit; sell drugs to make profit.

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68. If yes, when did you start to see yourself as a drug dealer/ supplier?

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69. If caught with an amount of drugs considered larger than for personal possession what do you think the legal response would be? (**Are they aware that they could be sentenced for supply?/ Aware some SS characteristics could be used as mitigating circumstances**)

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## Appendix 2 Interview Schedule: Exploring Aspects of User-Dealing

Thank you for agreeing to take part. On completion of this interview you will receive a contribution of **£10 for your time and involvement**. Everything you tell us in the interview is **confidential**. Nothing on this form can identify you and no individuals will be recognisable in any of the outputs that may be produced by the research

### SECTION ONE: SOME DETAILS ABOUT YOU

70. Gender    Male                                        Female                   

71. Age    \_\_\_\_\_

72. How do you describe your ethnic origin? \_\_\_\_\_

73. Are you currently :

(And) working in PT employment, unemployed, at school \_\_\_\_\_

74. How long have you lived in Plymouth? \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION TWO: YOUR EXPERIENCE OF DRUG USE

#### CURRENT USE

75. What is/are the main drugs you use? \_\_\_\_\_

76. How often do you use these drugs and –if you know- roughly what amounts?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

77. What do you pay for each drug and for what amounts? \_\_\_\_\_

78. How long have you been using in this way?

All the time                                        The last month                                        The last 3 months                      
The last 6 months                                        The last year                                        Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

79. Who do you normally use drugs with? (Tick all that apply)

Alone                                        Friends                                        Brother(s)/sister(s)

Acquaintances  Strangers  Other family members   
Other \_\_\_\_\_

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**80.** How much a week/ month might you normally spend on drugs, and for what amount?

A week 

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 A month 

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Amount \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_

**81.** How long will this amount of drugs last you? (**Prompt:** a night; a weekend; a week)

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**SECTION THREE: HOW DO YOU GET DRUGS (RECEIVER/SUPPLIER)** Explain to supplier that this will focus on how *they* get their drugs to supply *their* contacts; the receiver will talk about the process of getting drugs from their supplier.

**To the interviewer:** Remind the student that the interview is confidential and that nothing on the form can identify them.

**82.** Who do you buy your drugs from? (Tick all that apply and rank supply by the most commonly used)

Direct from a 'drug dealer'		A friend gets it from a seller	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct from a seller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grow my own	<input type="checkbox"/>
From a friend who sells	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brother/sister	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strangers (open markets- club)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't buy it, I'm given it	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other relative (cousin, uncle etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other _____			

**83.** If your main supplier is unavailable how many other suppliers or contacts would you be able to call?

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**84.** Do you trust all these sellers in the same way as your main supplier? Why, why not?

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85. Can you describe the type of seller the person is who gets you your drugs. Are they a stereotypical dealer, is he or she a friend or become your friend; do they sell to make a good living or just to get by and support their habit?

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86. Is your seller essentially a street or house dealer or a little further up – do they do other sellers as well or just users?

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87. If you don't buy drugs, can you explain a bit more about how you get them?

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88. Could you describe a bit more about the way you get drugs (**Prompt:** How easy is the seller to get hold of; how long do they have to wait before they can get it, do they have to travel, if so how far etc)

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89. How much (chosen drug) do you normally buy in one transaction (weight/ money) and for how many people? **Press:** So you buy it just for yourself?

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90. How easy is it for you to get drugs?

Very easy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairly easy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairly hard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very hard	<input type="checkbox"/>

91. How many people do you get drugs from/through? \_\_\_\_\_

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92. How do you get drugs – do you/they drop – how long do you have to wait?



**RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPPLIER** (Again emphasise confidentiality and anonymity of student and any information given about their supplier)

93. You mentioned earlier that (insert appropriate term) is the main person you get drugs from/through. How did you first come into contact with them (**Prompt:** through friends; acquaintances; word of mouth)

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94. How long have you been getting from/through this person? \_\_\_\_\_

95. How old is the person you get from/through? \_\_\_\_\_ years

96. Which of these terms would describe your supplier best?

Friends  Acquaintances  Strangers   
Mixture

97. How well do you know this person? (Prompt: are they friends; acquaintances; fellow students; don't know them at all; knew them before; **PUSH: have got to know them better since buying/ brokering drugs from them?**) Are they friends independent of supply relationship?

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98. How would you describe the person you get drugs from/through? (Prompt: only sells to friends; sells to make money; only sells to pay for own use; do they access drugs for other people; do they make anything through accessing drugs; do they know where they get their drugs from etc)

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99. Have you ever used drugs with your supplier (friends/acquaintance)? \_\_\_\_\_

100. How often have you done this? \_\_\_\_\_

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101. Do you consider this person a drug dealer? (Prompt: why/why not?)\_\_\_\_\_

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102. Would you ever buy drugs off someone you don't know? (Prompt: Why/why not?)  
What do you prefer?\_\_\_\_\_

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103. Does this person sell/ broker access to other drugs? Yes  No

104. If yes, which drugs do they sell? (Tick all that apply)

Solvents	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ecstasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amphetamines	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poppers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ketamine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Magic Mushrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cocaine	<input type="checkbox"/>	LSD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Benzo's	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heroin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Methadone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Crack	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	_____				

105. Have they offered to sell you other drugs? Yes  No

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**CHECK – is this the same seller you buy drugs to sell on from?**

#### **BUYING AND SHARING WITH FRIENDS**

106. Have you ever **bought** drugs with friends?

Yes  No

107. Why do you do this? (Prompt: to get more drugs for your money, easier to do it this way, don't have enough money to buy on my own, just happens etc)

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**108.** When did you do this last?

- In the last couple of days       In the last week       In the last month   
In the last three months       In the last six months       A year ago   
Over a year ago

**109.** How often do you do this?

- All the time       Most of the time       Some of the time   
Every now and then       Hardly ever

**110.** Can you explain a little bit more about the last time you did this (Prompt: planned or spontaneous ,how many chip in together; do one or all go to buy, how much (weight/money) do you normally buy when you all chip in together etc)

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**111.** Do you prefer to buy/ access drugs in this way or do prefer to do it on your own?

- With a group       On my own       No preference

**112.** Why?

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**SECTION FOUR: SELLING/BROKERING ACCESS TO DRUGS (SUPPLIER)**

**To the interviewer:** Explain to the young person what selling and helping people access (brokering) mean. Selling is exchanging drugs for goods or money. Helping get access means buying drugs for others without making a profit.

**GENERAL SUPPLY BEHAVIOUR**

113. Have you ever sold/ helped people get access to drugs yourself?

- Yes, sold       Yes, sold once or twice       Yes, brokered access   
Yes, both       Neither

**INITIAL MCS EXPERIENCES**

114. How long ago did you first do this (how old were you)  
\_\_\_\_\_

115. Why did you start selling/ helping people get drugs? (**Prompt:** to fund own use; earn money; influenced by friends/family; thought it looked good, etc)

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---

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116. How long after you first started *using* drugs did you start to **sell**?

---

117. If you have **both brokered and supplied**; when you first started brokering, how long after brokering did you begin to supply for profit?

---

118. If you have **both brokered and supplied**; what led you to move from brokering to supplying for profit? **Prompt:** Felt it was fair to gain something for effort/level of risk warrants payment/others asked for payment.

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119. How easy is it to find heroin/crack to sell on?

---

120. Was your involvement in supply a conscious decision or something you drifted into?

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**SUPPLIERS RELATIONSHIP WITH DRUG RECEIVERS**

121. How many different people do you **currently** sell/ broker to? \_\_\_\_\_

122. How many people **have** you sold/brokered to? \_\_\_\_\_

123. Are those you sell/ broker to mainly :

Friends  Acquaintances  Strangers   
Mixture

124. If a *friend* how do you know them/ how did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

125. If *acquaintance* how do you know them/ how did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

126. Are the people you sell to / help access drugs generally

Younger  Older  Same age  Mixture

127. What is/are their occupations? \_\_\_\_\_

**USER/DEALER:**

128. Have you ever used drugs with these friends/acquaintances? \_\_\_\_\_

129. How often do you this? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

130. Do you supply drugs you don't use?  
\_\_\_\_\_

131. **DISTRIBUTION:** How much do you normally buy in one transaction and for how many people?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

132. Do you buy only when you intend to use or do you buy on request? **Prompt: is your supply a direct product of your own use or do you buy on request?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

133. How much of the drug you purchase do you keep for yourself (grams/cash value)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PROFIT**

134. How much do you sell/ broker? \_\_\_\_\_

135. How much on average are you selling per week? \_\_\_\_\_

136. Average amount per week buying at \_\_\_\_\_

137. Average amount per week selling at \_\_\_\_\_

138. Can you expand on this? (Prompt: what quantities do they sell /broker in; do they vary the amount they sell/ broker every week etc)

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---

139. How do you go about dividing your drugs up?

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**RISK**

140. How much of chosen drug do you carry on you at one time?

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141. Do you feel that this is risky? \_\_\_\_\_

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142. Do you feel that your friends (receivers) appreciate the risk? \_\_\_\_\_

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143. Do you feel that supplying drugs is worth the risk and why (Prompt: what is the incentive?)

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144. How do people pay you? (Money/types of stolen goods/sex/etc.)

- |                       |                          |                        |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Only money            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Money and stolen goods | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Money and other goods | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____            |                          |

145. Do you give credit?      Yes                          No   

146. Have you ever given out free drugs?

---

**CHOICE**

147. If you didn't sell small quantities of drugs, how would you fund your habit? (**Prompt: what are the possible alternatives?**)

---

148. Do you think selling small amounts of drugs is the easiest way to fund a habit? Why?

---

**149. NEUTRALISATION**

Some people would call what you do dealing, have you ever thought of yourself as a drug dealer?

Yes                                  No           

150. Why/ why not? **Prompt:** only sorting friends out; not making much profit; sell drugs to pay for drugs.

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151. If yes, when did you start to see yourself as a drug dealer/ supplier?

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**SECTION FIVE: DRUGS AND THE LAW (Receiver/Suppliers)**

152. Are you conscious that you are committing an illegal act when you supply / receive drugs from friend/acquaintance (**Prompt:** does it feel risky/normal?)

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